

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 14, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 15 to 33, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 34 to 45, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Departmental Strategies

46. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress she is making with regard to the implementation of the 33 actions of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities that she has responsibility for; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26534/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Comprehensive Employment Strategy (CES) for People with Disabilities (2015-2024) was developed in consultation with Government Departments, State Agencies, the National Disability Authority, the Disability Stakeholder Group and the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group, and adopted by Government in October 2015. The ten year strategy is a cross-Government approach co-ordinated by the Department of Justice and Equality and provides a roadmap to ensure that people with a disability who are able to and want to work are supported and enabled to do so.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has been assigned direct responsibility for progress under 20 actions in the CES and shares responsibility for delivery of another 13 actions with other Departments and Agencies. I would point out that the initial year of the CES was very much a foundation year and involved the completion of a number of key pathfinding reviews and evaluations including the Review of the DACT (Disability Activation) programme, the Review of EmployAbility and the completion of the Survey of Disability Allowance recipients. The outcomes and learning from these evaluations and the survey data has informed subsequent progress including the development of the Ability programme, the Make Work Pay Report, and the progressive extension of Intreo supports to people with disabilities.

My Department has compiled 2 tables charting progress against the actions in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy. One table outlines progress on the recommendations assigned specifically to my department while the other provides a summary of progress where the department has a shared responsibility for an action.

Examples of progress include:-

- My Department has progressively rolled out its full Intreo service to people with disabilities who wish to avail of the service on a voluntary basis. This service is being provided across the national network of Intreo Centres.

- A Benefits of Work Estimator has been developed and is available on MyWelfare.ie and can be accessed through Welfare.ie.

- A Review of Partial Capacity Benefit has been completed and published and will be progressed in the context of the broader Make Work Pay recommendations (in particular the recommendation on early engagement).

- The Make Work Pay Report is complete with recommendations directed at DEASP and other agencies. Some actions have already been implemented while some others are subject to further consultation process for persons with disabilities.

- A fast track return to Disability Allowance has been implemented following the recommendations of the MWP Report. Information on how to avail of the fast track return is provided on DEASP website.

I hope that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Table 1: Update on CES actions allocated solely to DEASP**

Action	Action Details	Progress to Date
1.12	Enhance process to engage with people with disabilities using results of analysis of existing database of people with disabilities receiving income supports from DSP (to be carried out in 2015), to include outcomes of the DACT Projects and the review of EmployAbility service.	- Evaluation of DACT has been completed and published- Review of Employability has been completed and published- Survey of a Disability Allowance sample has been completed and published- Ability Programme developed and launched
1.13	Learning from relevant Disability Activation Projects, which addressed the needs of younger people with disabilities and the transition from education into work, will inform policy development.	- Evaluation of DACT has been completed and published- Ability Programme developed.
2.2	Implement recommendations from the review of Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS)	- Revision of WSS Scheme Operational Guidelines completed and implemented- DSP Staff Development Unit have revised eLearning module to ensure consistency in administration of the scheme
2.3	DSP to promote work sampling for a defined period of time through programmes including the EmployAbility Service	- The EmployAbility work trial programme provides EmployAbility participants with the opportunity to try out a job in the open labour market.
2.4	DSP to work proactively with employers to provide work placements.	- DSP Employer Engagement promotes workplace supports for people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.- EmployAbility enables employers to support the progression and retention of people with disabilities and facilitates recruitment while facilitating the development of innovative employment and progression opportunities- Information pack available for employers on employment of persons with disabilities
2.5	DSP to explore the idea of expanding internships as a recruitment route for the private sectors. (DPER to explore alternative recruitment routes see action 6.7)	- DA recipients were avail of opportunities through JobBridge and the First Steps programme was available to people with disabilities who were under 25.- A new Youth Employment Support Scheme will be introduced in 2018. It will be open to people with disabilities who are in receipt of Disability Allowance, or Blind Pension and who have been out of the workforce for 12 months or more or who experience a significant barrier to work.- AHEAD works with graduates and employers through the GET AHEAD Graduate Forum and the WAM Mentored Work Placement Programme. AHEAD coordinates LINK, a worldwide network of professionals promoting the inclusion of students & graduates with disabilities in Higher Education managed by 6 European partner organisations.

Action	Action Details	Progress to Date
2.6	Use Intreo as a gateway to employment activation for people with disabilities. On a phased basis from February 2015 a person with a disability will be offered an interview with an employment officer. The employment officer in conjunction with the individual will draw up an appropriate action plan. The person will also be recorded on the Department's records as being an INTREO customer. Learning from first Phase together with training of staff and general operational issues will be taken into account in determining the extension of the service to other locations.	- The Department has progressively rolled out its full Intreo service to people with disabilities who wish to avail of the service on a voluntary basis. This service is being provided across the national network of Intreo Centres.- In addition, officers in INTREO Centres have received training, to enable them to interact effectively with people with disabilities. - Training of over 60 Employment Support Officers was completed in March 2016.- In November 2016, building on the March training event the then Case Officer learning path was replaced by the L8 Certificate in Professional Practice in Employment Services provided through the National College of Ireland. - As part of the implementation of the MWP work report, DEASP has undertaken a major consultation exercise with disability stakeholders in relation to early engagement through the Intreo service. Results of the consultation are being finalised currently.
2.7	Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the EmployAbility service; explore whether the service can be more responsive to the needs of people with continuing or with episodic support needs; and consider the merits of the 'place and train' model.	- Review of the EmployAbility Service completed and published.- DEASP has set up regular reviews with representatives of EmployAbility service to progress implementation of recommendations of review
2.8	Assess outcomes from DACT projects and develop strategy for implementing key learning	- Evaluation of the DACT projects completed.- Ability Programme Developed
3.1	Implement ready reckoners that provide people with disabilities with information of what they could earn over a period of time if they take a job.	- A Benefits of Work Estimator has been developed and is available on MyWelfare.ie and can be accessed through Welfare.ie
3.2	Continue to support people with disabilities to access further training and employment opportunities through the relevant programmes that include the EmployAbility Service, the Wage Subsidy Scheme, the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, JobBridge and the Back-to-Education Allowance.	- Review of the EmployAbility Service Completed.- WSS Guidelines Revised.- The Department has rolled out its full Intreo service to people with disabilities who wish to avail of the service on a voluntary basis. - Revision of guidance notes and training material for employment supports for people with disabilities complete.
3.3	Review range of income supports for people with disabilities to ensure consistency, enhanced links between income support and employment, appropriate access to supports and effective controls.	- Review of Partial Capacity Benefit completed and published and will be progressed in the context of the broader Make Work Pay recommendations (in particular the recommendation on early engagement)- Make Work Pay Report complete with recommendations directed at DEASP and other agencies. Some actions have already been implemented while some others are subject to further consultation process for persons with disabilities.
3.4	Continue to ensure that resumption of welfare payment is as streamlined as possible for people who may be in and out of work due to the episodic nature of their disability.	- A fast track return to Disability Allowance has been implemented following the recommendations of the MWP Report.- Information on how to avail of the fast track return is provided on DEASP website
4.1	Promote and support strategies for intervention in the early stages of absence from work due to acquired disability. These strategies will be based on evaluation of the relevant DACT project. They will also include people with mental health difficulties.	- See also 4.2 below (IEMHS and IPS). DEASP worked with the HSE, Genio and Mental Health Reform in the Integrating Employment and Mental Health Support (IEMHS) project. The project demonstrated how existing mental health and supported employment (EmployAbility) services can fulfil the best practice Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment through improved integration.

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Action	Action Details	Progress to Date
5.2	Interdepartmental protocols for cross-referrals at national and local levels and within organisations	- To be determined with relevant departments and agencies following finalisation of implementation plan in 5.1 and consultation process under MWP
6.1	Raise awareness among employers of the benefits of employing (and retaining in employment), people with disabilities. Enlist their participation in actions to promote the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in open labour market employment.	- DSP Employer Engagement promotes workplace supports for people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.- Employer Pack contains information on supports available to people with disabilities and employers.- EmployAbility enables employers to support the progression and retention of people with disabilities and facilitates recruitment.
6.2	Work with employers to develop more inclusive recruitment and workplace practices	- The DEASP and the wider public employment service (including EmployAbility) is working on building effective relationships with employers to increase placement into employment of people from the live register and other priority cohorts, including people with disabilities and to increase the utilisation of the Department's employment supports.
6.3	Encourage employers to provide work experience for people with disabilities.	- EmployAbility works with employers to support the progression and retention of people with disabilities and facilitates recruitment while facilitating innovative approaches to meet gaps in employment or progression opportunities.
6.4	Disseminate information on the supports that are available to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities or to retain employees who acquire a disability, including the EmployAbility Service, workplace supports and the wage subsidy scheme.	- DSP Employer Engagement promotes workplace supports for people with disabilities on an ongoing basis.- Employer Pack contains information on supports available to people with disabilities and employers.
6.16	Evaluate employer-related Disability Activation Projects, co-funded by the ESF.	- Evaluation DACT Completed and published

**Table 2: Update on CES actions allocated to DEASP along with other agencies**

Action	Action details	Agencies identified	DEASP actions outline
1.2(a)	Raise awareness and expectations	DES, Solas, HEA, ETB's ,NDA, DEASP,DOH,HSE, Libraries, Schools, NCGE, NCSE.	- Intreo Service Supports- EmployAbility- LES- Ability Programme
1.5(a)	Transition Planning	DES, Solas, ETB's, NCSE, DSP	See update under Action 5.1
1.8(a)	Further Education and Training Sector	Solas, DES, DEASP	See update under Action 5.1
1.8(c)	Solas to link their action plan with Intreo Activation Process	Solas, DEASP	See update under Action 5.1
1.8(d)	Memorandum of Understanding between Solas and DSP to include targets and outcomes for people with disabilities	Solas ,DEASP,DES	See update under Action 5.1
1.9(b)	Joined up working for effective pathway (Transitions)	DES, Teachers, DEASP,HSE	See update under Action 5.1
4.1	Promote Strategies for intervention in the early stages of absence from work due to acquired disability. These strategies will be based on evidence from the relevant DACT project. They will include people with mental health difficulties	HST and DEASP	See update under Action 4.2 (a)

Action	Action details	Agencies identified	DEASP actions outline
4.2(a)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties Promote and support the role of work in the Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties. Use the Individual Placement Support Model as part of rehabilitation process that includes co-ordinated support for employers and employees at local level by job coaches and community health teams.	HSE and DEASP	- IEMHS (IPS) Project Complete. DEASP worked with the HSE, Genio and Mental Health Reform in the Integrating Employment and Mental Health Support (IEMHS) project. - The project demonstrated how existing mental health and supported employment (EmployAbility) services can fulfil the best practice Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment through improved integration. - Report published Q1-2018 (“Steps into Work”)- DEASP working with HSE and EmployAbility to implement placement of model on a nationwide basis as a joint exercise between HSE and EmployAbility service
(b)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties Pilot model.	HSE and DEASP	See above
(c)	Recovery Model of rehabilitation for those with mental health difficulties To consider outcome of pilot.	HSE and DEASP	See above
5.1	To work together to develop an effective co-ordinated policy approach (and draw up an implementation plan based on that approach), to assist individuals with disabilities, including those who require a high level of support, to obtain and retain employment having due regard to the implementation of New Directions.	Health, Education and DEASP	- Approach Agreed through NDA sub-group.- Report and Implementation Plan completed.- Awaiting publication.
5.2	Interdepartmental protocols for cross referrals at national and local level and within organisations	DEASP, DES, Solas, NDA, HSE	See update under Action 5.1
6.5	Subject to Provisions of appropriate links by relevant Departments and Agencies DJEI will, through its website, highlight the supports that are available to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market, or to retain in the workforce people who require a disability. This will operate through appropriate links made available by the relevant Departments and agencies to the DJEI’s website	DJEI, DOH, DEASP	- Completed. Details are at <a href="https://dbe.gov.ie/ga/A-nDeanaimid/Ionad-Oibre-agus-Scileanna/Employment-of-people-with-disabilities/">https://dbe.gov.ie/ga/A-nDeanaimid/Ionad-Oibre-agus-Scileanna/Employment-of-people-with-disabilities/</a>
6.6	Work Placements Explore the idea of expanding internships as a recruitment route for both public and private sectors, in discussion with a range of stakeholders. The roles of the Public Appointment Service, Pobal, Local Appointment Service and job facilitators need to be discussed in this context. NDA will discuss further with the relevant Departments and Agencies	NDA, DEASP, other relevant Departments and Agencies	- Ongoing discussions linked to implementation of 5.1
6.14	Investigate the establishment of an employer helpline	NDA, DJE, DEASP	- Helpline established



**Social Welfare Code**

47. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has had discussions with representatives of organisations representing persons with sight difficulties in relation to anomalies between the disability allowance and blind pension regarding the income disregard for each. [26580/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department has not recently had specific discussions with representatives of organisations representing persons with sight difficulties on the differences in conditionality attached to blind person's pension (BPP) and disability allowance (DA). My Department consults regularly on disability related matters with people with disabilities through a number of fora including the Department's Disability Consultative Committee, the 'Community and Voluntary pillar' (regular information sharing meetings held with representatives from a wide range of community and voluntary organisations/sectors), and the Disability Stakeholders Group. Members of these groups may raise issues relevant to their sectoral issues at these fora.

Blind Pension is a means-tested payment for blind and visually impaired people between the ages of 18 and 66 who are habitually resident in Ireland. The payment is made up of a personal rate and extra amounts for a qualified adult and any child dependants. To qualify for the BPP a person must supply an eye test from an ophthalmic surgeon to verify his/her visual impairment.

I should point out that BPP is a unique scheme in that it is the only social welfare payment which caters for a specific disability. The scheme was established under the Blind Pension Persons Act of 1920 and in effect predates not only the modern social protection system but also the foundation of the State.

A review of Disability and Illness Payments by the then Department of Social and Family Affairs in 2003 examined similarities and differences between the schemes and concluded that there should be one single-tested payment for people with disabilities regardless of the nature of the disability. I understand that at the time following discussions with representative groups, the proposal was not proceeded with. However, my Department would be open to revisiting this proposal with representative groups as a way of addressing any perceived anomalies.

Any comparison between the two schemes would have to take into account factors which favour the BPP. For instance, the awarding of BPP may also qualify a person for the blind welfare allowance paid by the HSE. There is also a difference in the income disregard for non-rehabilitative employment. For BPP there is an income disregard of €400 per annum or €7.50 per week. There is no such disregard for DA for non-rehabilitative employment.

Against this, the assessment of capital and spousal income are treated differently in the two schemes. Under the means test for DA, the first €50,000 of capital is disregarded while for BPP (as is the case with the great majority of welfare schemes) the first €20,000 of capital only is disregarded. Furthermore, In the case of BPP there are no disregards for spousal, civil partner or cohabitant earnings.

However for other factors, the treatment of conditions is similar. A person in receipt of BPP or DA can earn €120 per week in rehabilitative earnings before these earnings affect payment. If a person earns more than €120 per week, 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 are not taken into account in the BPP or DA means test. Earnings over €350 are assessed in full.

I should point out that a person making an application for BPP will generally be encouraged to ascertain first of all whether they would be better off availing of DA rather than BPP and they may then opt for the more beneficial payment.

## State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

48. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which progress has been made in addressing the circumstances of women deprived of contributory pensions having retired from the workplace while raising their families or due to the marriage ban and who have made a major contribution to society in the course of their working lives; if their cases can be re-examined with a view to crediting them with sufficient contributions to enable them qualify for a State or retirement pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26568/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As a general policy, 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 currently the subject of a public consultation which stays open until the 3rd of September.

Separately, I announced on 23rd January an interim TCA for those affected by the 2012 rate-band changes. Under this approach, a person who reached pension age after 1 September 2012 (i.e. who is among those affected by the new ratebands introduced from that date) and who has a 40 year record of paid and credited social insurance contributions, subject to a maximum of 20 years of credits, will qualify for a maximum contributory pension where they satisfy the other qualifying conditions for the scheme.

Up to 20 years of HomeCaring credits, and / or 10 years of other qualifying credits, for example when unemployed or ill, may be used, subject to the total number of credits not exceeding 20 years. This approach is expected to significantly benefit many people, particularly women, whose work history includes an extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. It will make it easier for pensioners assessed under the yearly average model, to qualify for a higher rate of the State Pension (contributory). This interim TCA will ensure that the totality of a person's social insurance contributions - as opposed to the timing of them - determines a final pension outcome.

Legislation has to be drafted and enacted to enable implementation of these arrangements. Following this, IT solutions must be developed in line with this legislation. Accordingly, it is planned that the reviews will commence in the final quarter of this year, with the first payments being made in the first quarter of 2019, backdated to the 30th March 2018.

I hope this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

## Rent Supplement Scheme

49. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which the attention of her Department has been drawn to dependency on rent support for persons on lower incomes from employment or social welfare with particular reference to the need to ensure that the issues of homelessness are not exacerbated by reference to use of legislation or guidelines more applicable to a time when housing was not an issue; if she will address cases in which a reduction or cessation of rent support which may have resulted in homelessness in the course of the past year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26567/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme sup-

porting approximately 30,000 recipients for which the Government has provided €180 million for in 2018. The primary responsibility for provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with local authorities. DEASP's role with regard to people who are homeless is mainly income maintenance. In recognition of the on-going rental market difficulties, my Department continues to implement a targeted case-by-case policy approach in the administration of rent supplement in particular when dealing with applicants who are at risk of losing their tenancy due to their landlord seeking rent in excess of the prevailing rent limit. Over the last twelve months, approximately 1,000 persons have been supported under this approach with an average uplift in excess of the prevailing rent limits of approximately €200 per month.

As the Deputy will be aware the strategic policy direction of the Department is to return rent supplement to its original purpose of being a short-term income support, with the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, available nationwide from 1 March 2017. There are currently over 37,000 HAP tenancies in place of which c 9,780 (c.26%) are transfers from rent supplement. New applicants who have been assessed as having a social housing need are being supported by Local Authorities through HAP rather than rent supplement.

Department officials at local level are actively engaged with relevant local authorities, Homeless Action Teams, Regional teams and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the necessary supports are provided and cases where a threat of losing a tenancy or potential homelessness are prioritised accordingly.

### **Departmental Schemes**

50. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of vacancies on the rural social, Tús and community employment schemes, respectively; the steps she will take to ensure the places on these schemes are filled; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26315/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Work schemes such as Tús and Community Employment (CE) are positive initiatives that enable the long-term unemployed to make a contribution to their communities whilst up-skilling themselves for prospective future employment. The rural social scheme (RSS) provides farmers and fishermen with income support while they also make a contribution to their community. As the Deputy is aware Tús and RSS are delivered and managed at local level through the network of local development companies and Údarás na Gaeltachta, known as Implementing Bodies (IB's) and each of them have been awarded a specific quota of Tús and RSS participants, based on their ability to source suitable placements. CE schemes are typically sponsored by groups (known as sponsors) wishing to benefit the local community. My Department agree participant numbers annually with each CE sponsor organisation who are responsible for the recruitment of participants and to identify suitable work placements. As on 9th June 2018, there were 380 participant vacancies on the rural social scheme (RSS) out of the 3,350 available participant places.

The CE scheme has a total of 26,542 approved participant places with 4,850 participant vacancies. The current Tús participant quota is 8,260 reducing to 6,500 before year end. As on 9th June 2018, there were approximately 1,849 participant vacancies nationwide.

The Deputy will appreciate that given the welcome improvements in the labour market in recent years with reducing numbers of long term unemployed on the Live Register, which is the target cohort for CE and Tús, it is proving difficult to fill the number of places available nationwide. To broaden access to these initiatives to a wider range of people, I have introduced a number of changes to the qualifying criteria and since 1st June I am facilitating persons to take



up a placement on CE or Tús while also attending their JobPath provider.

My Department have engaged with the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) – the representative body for the Tús IBs to implement the reduction in participant numbers from 8,260 to 6,500 and a revised funding structure. Given the improved economic and labour market context, I believe that it is entirely appropriate that we examine this area of expenditure to ensure that we deliver best value for the Irish taxpayer and ensure best use is being made of funding in this area.

### Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

51. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to change the way in which capital is assessed for all means tested payments and bring it in line with the way in which it is assessed for medical and general practitioner cards; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26316/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department operates a range of means-tested social assistance payments. Social welfare legislation provides that the means test takes account of the income and assets of the person (and spouse/partner, if applicable) applying for the relevant scheme. Income and assets include income from employment, self-employment, occupational pensions, maintenance payments as well as property owned (other than the family home) and capital such as savings, shares and other investments. The capital assessment formula for social assistance schemes is outlined in the following table:

Amount of capital	Means assessment
Initial disregard	Nil
Next €10,000	€1 per €1,000
Next €10,000	€2 per €1,000
Remaining capital	€4 per €1,000

For most social assistance schemes (such as jobseeker's allowance, farm assist, carer's allowance, one-parent family payment and the state pension non-contributory), the initial disregard of capital is €20,000. In the case of disability allowance, there is an initial €50,000 disregard, and for supplementary welfare allowance, an initial disregard of €5,000 applies.

In the case of carer's allowance and the state pension non-contributory, capital is halved when assessing means for a claimant who is one of a couple. There are also general means disregards applicable in these schemes.

In this regard, the capital assessment for the medical card may be more generous than the means assessment for some social assistance schemes, but it is also more onerous than some others. Furthermore, it should be noted that eligibility for an income support is quite distinct from eligibility for a medical card.

Any proposal to change the means assessment for means-tested social assistance schemes would have to be considered in an overall policy and budgetary context.

### Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Payments

52. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to increase the back to school clothing and footwear allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26407/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The back to school clothing and footwear allowance scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the costs of clothing and footwear when children start or return to school each autumn. The Government has provided €49.5 million for the scheme in 2018. The payment rates are €125 for eligible children aged 4 to 11 years and €250 for children aged over 12 years and attending secondary school. Each year Barnardos completes a School Costs Survey and the results from 2017 indicated that on average parents paid approximately €140 to €150 for a primary school pupil’s uniform and shoes and approximately €260 for secondary school pupil’s uniform and shoes. The survey findings show that the current rates of payment meet most of the cost of clothing and footwear for school children, 89% of cost for senior infants and 96% for 1st year pupils.

The household income limits for the scheme are being increased for 2018 to ensure that the increases in social welfare payment rates introduced by Budget 2018 do not negatively impact on people’s entitlement to the allowance.

In addition, in April 2017, my colleague the Minister for Education and Skills, published a circular on the measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs, as part of a range of measures to take greater account of the needs of parents and students in the school system.

Any changes to the rates would have to be considered in a budgetary context and within the scope of the overall resources available for welfare improvements.

I trust this clarifies the position.

### **JobPath Programme**

53. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to introduce flexibility into the JobPath programme to allow persons to transfer between JobPath and community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26533/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am happy to inform the Deputy that I recently announced that jobseekers who are engaged with the JobPath service can, from 1st June, apply for CE and Tús placements while continuing to engage with JobPath. This will ensure that jobseekers can benefit from the job-seeking support of the JobPath service while also availing of a part-time work placement provided by CE or Tús. This will have a number of benefits both for the vital services provided at a local level by participants on CE and Tús programmes and directly for the Department’s customers. It will, in particular, enable those people with the JobPath service to not only continue to receive the personalised employment counselling and jobsearch support provided by their JobPath personal advisors but also to avail of CE or Tús placement which will provide valuable occupational activity and work experience.

In making this change I was particularly conscious that case managed employment counselling and support is shown internationally, and in Ireland, to be the most effective means of supporting people back into sustained employment. I did not wish for people to cease participation in this type of service in order to take up a place on a part-time State employment programme.

The decision I have now made enables people to benefit from both types of support.

I was also conscious in taking this decision that the resource constraints that informed the Department's policy up to this point have abated somewhat. In the past the Department operated what was a 'one person-one place' policy in order to ration the available places among all jobseekers. Given the welcome improvement in the labour market with unemployment now down to under 6% this policy can be relaxed.

The JobPath service will be adapted to cater for those who opt to take up a Tús or Community Scheme and all meetings and activities will be scheduled to take account of the Scheme commitments. For example if a person is committed to participate in the employment scheme for 5 mornings, all JobPath meetings including training and job search activities will be scheduled for the afternoons. The JobPath companies will continue to provide all the supports which it currently provides. CE and Tús providers will not have to make any changes to their operations.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

### **One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility**

54. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the rules regarding access to lone parent payments for long-term foster carers of children will be examined to ensure fosterers are not forced to choose between continuing the care of children or receiving a social welfare payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26584/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under the current social welfare legislation in order to qualify for payment of One-Parent Family Payment (OFP), an applicant must be a qualified parent of at least one relevant child who is ordinarily resident in the State, is not detained in a children detention school, and has not attained the relevant age (currently 7 years of age). A qualified parent is defined as:

- (a) a widow,
- (b) a widower,
- (c) a separated spouse,
- (d) an unmarried person,
- (e) a person whose spouse or civil partner has been committed in custody to a prison or place of detention for not less than 6 months,
- (f) a surviving civil partner,
- (g) a civil partner who is not living with the other civil partner of the civil partnership, or
- (h) a person who is not a party to a civil partnership who is the parent, step-parent, adoptive parent, or legal guardian of at least one relevant child, who normally resides with that person.

To be a qualified parent the applicant must therefore be legally defined as either the parent or guardian of the relevant child. A foster carer is not the legal parent or guardian of the foster child and as such is not a qualified parent in this context.

The provision of fostering services is a matter for Tusla (the Child and Family Agency). This includes any supports, including financial, that are required by either the foster carers or

the foster child. A specific weekly payment is payable to foster carers by Tusla.

Where a child has been placed in foster care by Tusla and the child has been in the continuous care of the foster carer(s) for 6 months, Child Benefit may then transfer to the foster carer(s).

### **Brexit Issues**

55. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the work under way in her Department to prepare for a hard Brexit. [26566/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being taken forward through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 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. My key area of concern is the impact of Brexit on the current reciprocal arrangements for social insurance schemes, social assistance schemes and child benefit between Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland. The importance of maintaining the Common Travel Area was acknowledged in Prime Minister May's letter of 29 March 2017 triggering Article 50 of the TEU, the Joint EU/UK Progress report agreed at the European Council on 15th December 2017 and in the protocol to the draft Withdrawal Agreement published by the Commission on 28th February 2018.

I met with the UK Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Right Honourable Esther McVey, on Monday 23rd April 2018. I emphasised my objective of ensuring that the reciprocity of civic rights and social welfare rights and entitlements, which currently exist for Irish and UK citizens moving within Ireland and between Ireland and Britain under the Common Travel Area, are safeguarded and maintained. I am happy that we have a broad agreement to preserve the status quo in that regard.

I have a dedicated team in my Department which is conducting a deep analysis of scenarios on a scheme by scheme basis and contingency planning is ongoing for all outcomes, including a no-deal or worst-case outcome.

### **Legislative Programme**

56. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when she will bring forward the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017, which was due to be considered by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection on 31 May 2018. [26530/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Second Stage of the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 concluded on 4th October 2017. Government approval to draft provisions for a number of additional items

to be included in the Bill at Committee Stage was obtained subsequently. These provisions are currently being finalised by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. They include amongst others, provisions related to Defined Benefit Pensions and measures related to GDPR. In respect of the Defined Benefit provisions, the purpose of this Bill is to respond to the ongoing difficulties in DB schemes and to increase protections for members as well as encouraging employers to ensure that schemes are well funded and managed. These provisions are quite technical and complex, however, work to finalise them is at an advanced stage.

The Bill was provisionally scheduled for Committee Stage on the 31st May. This date was postponed for a short period to allow for the finalisation of the necessary Government amendments. When these amendments have been finalised an early date will be requested from the Committee.

### **JobPath Programme**

57. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the personal information of JobPath participants that is shared between her Department and a company (details supplied); and if information is shared with a third party such as an employer or prospective employer or other third parties if a participant has signed a personal progression plan. [26511/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As the Deputy will be aware JobPath is an employment activation service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most distant from the labour market to secure and sustain full-time paid employment. Upon referral the JobPath provider receives data that allows them to commence engagement with the customer. This data includes the customer's name, address, date of birth, PPSN, education and employment history and work skills (e.g. possession of a driving licence) and employment preferences. During the period of the customer's engagement with the JobPath service the contractors will notify my Department of any change of circumstance (e.g. address) which the customer notifies to the contractor and should the customer not be successful in gaining employment the contractor will provide my Department with an exit update upon completion of the 52 week engagement.

JobPath providers are registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as data processors and are legally bound to observe and adhere to Data Protection requirements.

All contracts in place are governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Ireland and the courts of Ireland have exclusive jurisdiction over these contracts. My Department's contracts with the JobPath providers are in compliance with all relevant legislation and any information shared is contractually based and necessary to provide a service.

The JobPath Providers are required to offer in-work support to the customer for up to twelve months while they remain in employment. This includes scheduled contact with the person as well as ad-hoc contact should they need immediate support or advice, this may be particularly important for those in temporary or part-time employment to provide the specific support needed to progress to more sustainable permanent employment.

Personal Data is not shared by the Job Path providers with employers or shared with other third parties. Sub-contractors engaged by the Job Path service providers for the purpose of delivering the Job Path service are also fully governed by the same contractual obligation as the main contractor.

The JobPath providers may contact employers as part of the in work support provided to Job



Path customers who attain sustainable employment while with the Job Path service. In addition, contractors may, with the jobseekers consent, provide non personal information to prospective employers or assist jobseekers in completing job application forms.

A JobPath service customer is not under an obligation to provide employment or employer details to the JobPath provider but, if they wish to do so and avail of the in-employment support offered, all information will be treated confidentially.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Defined Benefit Pension Schemes**

58. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if legislation to prevent employers from unilaterally downgrading their employees' pension schemes from defined benefit to defined contribution is planned; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26608/18]

74. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will introduce legislation to ensure private companies cannot unilaterally downgrade their employees' pension schemes from defined benefit to defined contribution or close defined contribution schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26579/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 58 and 74 together.

Almost all Irish defined benefit schemes have a rule that allows the employer to cease contributions, usually after a notice period. Currently there is no legislative obligation on the employer to make contributions and no further liability on the employer where contributions cease. Neither is there an obligation on the employer to give notice to members or to consult in advance of ceasing contributions.

In the case of defined benefit schemes, neither I nor the Pensions Authority has the power under legislation to intervene to compel an employer to continue to make contributions to a scheme. Even where a scheme is closed to new members or to future accrual of benefits, the sponsoring employer role continues in relation to that scheme.

The Roadmap for Pensions Reform, which was published in February of this year, details specific measures that will modernise our pension system. It sets out under Strand 4, 'Measures to Support the Operation of Defined Benefit Schemes', that the Government is committed to advancing the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017. The purpose of this Bill is to respond to the ongoing difficulties in DB schemes and to increase protections for members as well as encouraging employers to ensure that schemes are well funded and managed.

The General Scheme of the Bill, which was published in May 2017, contained a number of key measures relating to DB pension schemes. These proposed provisions will ensure that an employer cannot "walk away" at short notice from the pension scheme it is supporting by providing a 12 month notification period where an employer is seeking to cease making contributions to a scheme. The amendments seek a middle road between the current position where employers can abandon DB schemes and full and immediate debt on employer provisions. The measures will act to support existing provisions in the Pensions Act and will provide for further protection for scheme members' benefits and enhance employer responsibilities for their schemes.

The amendments also provide for more frequent monitoring of the financial position of schemes and will further provide that, where a scheme is in deficit and a funding proposal has not been put in place in a timely manner, the Pensions Authority may direct steps to be taken to ensure that the scheme meets the funding standard.

It is important to note that if this new legislation is enacted, a sponsoring employer will have to give a minimum notice period of twelve months before contributions to a scheme can cease. However, it will not prevent a company from ceasing contributions once the minimum notice period is served provided the scheme meets the Minimum Funding Standard.

These provisions are quite technical and complex. Work to finalise them is at an advanced stage and I hope to be in position to bring forward the amendments at Committee Stage in the near future.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

### **Child Benefit Reform**

59. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans for reforms to child benefit; her further plans to introduce means testing; her plans to increase it in budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26562/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. It is designed as a universal payment, in recognition of the costs involved in raising children, and plays an important role in tackling child poverty. As a universal payment it does not rely on a means test or social insurance contributions. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid to almost 629,000 families in respect of nearly 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of over €2 billion in 2018. I do not intend introducing a means-test for Child Benefit. Means testing Child Benefit is not being considered by Government, and is not provided for in the Programme for Government. As Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, I support the universality of the Child Benefit payment, and the principle that all families with children should receive this income support. Given the universality of Child Benefit it is not a payment which lends itself to a targeted approach and the considerable costs associated with any upward adjustment to the payment can result in benefits being spread very thinly, rather than making a difference where there is most need. Any such proposal would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Government policy is to provide additional supports for parents and their children through increased services, rather than increased cash transfers. This includes such services as free early years education through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, and enhanced provision of affordable childcare.

### **Disability Allowance Payments**

60. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will review the requirement that the parents of some persons in receipt of disability allowance have to keep a full record of expenditure and retain all receipts for possible inspection; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26180/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under social welfare legislation where a person is medically certified as being unable to manage their own financial affairs, I as Minister may appoint an agent who is responsible for collecting the person's social welfare payment and acting on their behalf. An application form must be completed on behalf of the person concerned and documentary evidence provided of incapacity. The agent appointed may or may not be a relative of the person concerned. The appointed agent is responsible for ensuring all payments received are used to the benefit of the person and in their best interest. They are also required, under legislation, to keep a record of all transactions involving the monies received and produce these records when requested to do so by an officer of the Minister. All receipts should be retained for the duration of the agency arrangement. Amongst their duties is the responsibility to deal with financial matters on behalf of the person concerned with the balance lodged to an account for the benefit of the person. They are also required to notify my department of any changes in the person's circumstances.

The legislation governing the responsibilities of agents in such cases is contained in Article 202A of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 142 of 2007).

There is an increasing awareness and evidence of abuse of vulnerable adults and research has shown that one of the areas of significant abuse can be financial abuse. I believe, however, that the majority of persons acting as agents collecting social welfare payments for customers unable to do so themselves, do so out of a genuine caring disposition and act in good faith.

A working group has been established in my department to examine and make recommendations on the adequacy of the current procedures and processes for agents with a view to make recommendations that comply with the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 and the Codes of Practice being developed by the National Disability Authority under the Act.

### **Redundancy Rebates**

61. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to reintroduce the redundancy rebate payable to employers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26436/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The purpose of the redundancy payments scheme is to compensate employees for the loss of their jobs, where the employer is unable to pay statutory redundancy due to financial difficulties or insolvency. The scheme is funded from the social insurance fund. Up to 2011, the scheme provided a rebate of 60 per cent to employers who provided statutory redundancy payments to their employees. In Budgets 2012 and 2013, the Government first reduced and then abolished the rebate payment. This decision was made because of the high cost of the rebate and its impact on the financial sustainability of the social insurance fund at the time of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the rebate to employers was paid regardless of a company's financial situation and ability to pay, thus benefiting viable and profitable companies, including multinational companies. It was not a targeted use of the resources of the social insurance fund.

The redundancy payments scheme, as it now operates, benefits employees whose employers are unable to pay for statutory redundancy. Employers who declare they cannot sustain the cost of redundancy payments, albeit they continue to trade, are required to submit documentation from their accountants or solicitors and to accept liability for the redundancy payment to the social insurance fund. This ensures that the current scheme takes into account both an employer's ability to pay redundancy payments and that the social insurance fund can be reimbursed in the

future, through debt repayment if their financial position improves.

There are currently no plans to reinstate the rebate scheme. I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme

62. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the operation of the partial capacity benefit scheme will be reviewed to allow a person engage in part-time or casual work as a pathway back to employment but to receive a full social welfare payment for weeks they do not secure paid employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26535/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Partial capacity benefit (PCB) was introduced in February 2012 and is designed for people who are in receipt of long term social insurance invalidity / illness / disability income support payments who have some capacity for work. Applicants must be in receipt of either invalidity pension (IP) or illness benefit (IB) Illness benefit recipients must be in payment for at least six months at the date of application for PCB (the six months does not apply to IP). If awarded, PCB will allow them to continue to receive a percentage of their IB or IP payment while working. Participation on the PCB scheme is voluntary. A person who participates on the PCB scheme may return to his / her IB or IP payment if, for example, his / her employment ceases or if the person finds that he / she cannot continue to work.

A Medical Assessor will assess the restriction on the applicant's capacity for work. This may require him / her to attend a medical assessment. Applicants will qualify for PCB if the restriction on their capacity for work is assessed as moderate, severe, or profound. If it is assessed as mild they will not qualify and their continued eligibility to Invalidity Pension will be reviewed.

The rate of payment will depend on the personal rate of the qualifying scheme (Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension) from which the customer originates and the medical assessment of the customer's capacity for work.

Table 1: Rates of Partial Capacity Benefit

Medical Assessment	% of Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension personal rate	Person previously getting Illness Benefit at the maximum personal rate €198.00	Person aged under 66 and previously getting Invalidity Pension at the maximum personal rate €203.50
Moderate	50%	€99.00	€101.75
Severe	75%	€148.50	€152.63
Profound	100%	€198.00	€203.50

As I noted earlier PCB recipients may return to their original payment if the job does not work out. I should also point out that PCB recipients who have a temporary absence from work or episodic condition and need to take time off are, on notifying the Department, uplifted to the full-rate of payment appropriate to the originating scheme.

An internal DEASP review of Partial Capacity Benefit made a number of recommendations in relation to the scheme including recommendations in respect of developing PCB as an in-work support and was published as part of the broader Make Work Pay process (<http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/A%20Review%20of%20Partial%20Capacity%20Benefit.pdf>). The review identifies some of the policy, operational, external engagement and IT issues that would

need to be addressed to do this.

The recommendations in the report will be given additional consideration and analysed further following the completion of the report currently being prepared following the national consultation process on Make Work Pay recommendations relating to early engagement with people with disabilities.

### **Defined Benefit Pension Schemes**

63. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to address issues in relation to defined benefit pensions; if her plans will deal with the situation being currently experienced by workers in a company (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26404/18]

72. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she is taking to protect the defined benefit pension scheme of persons in an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21237/18]

77. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of her plans to protect defined benefit pension schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26564/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 63, 72 and 77 together.

While it is not appropriate for me to comment on an individual pension scheme, I am aware of recent announcements regarding the Irish Life pension scheme and plans to close the scheme to future accrual. I understand that the scheme is very much financially secure and its assets adequately cover all liabilities that will arise in the event the Trustees take a decision to wind-up the scheme.

Neither I nor the Pensions Authority has the power under legislation to intervene to compel an employer to continue to make contributions to a scheme. Where a scheme is closed to new members or closed to future accrual of benefits, the scheme remains subject, under EU and Irish law, to the funding standard requirements and to the Pensions Act generally and it must continue to satisfy the minimum funding standard into the future. The sponsoring employer role also continues in relation to that scheme.

Almost all Irish defined benefit (DB) schemes have a rule that allows the employer to cease contributions, usually after a notice period. Currently there is no legislative obligation on the employer to make contributions and no further liability on the employer where contributions cease. Neither is there an obligation on the employer to give notice to members or to consult in advance of ceasing contributions.

However, in the case where a restructuring of benefits is proposed, the employer and the trustees of a pension scheme are required to notify scheme members, beneficiaries and the authorised trade unions. Furthermore, changes made to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Section 50 and 50B) Regulations in 2015 require trustees to also notify groups representing the interests of pensioners and deferred scheme members in a scheme in such a situation.

The Roadmap for Pensions Reform, which was published recently, details specific measures that will modernise our pension system. It sets out under Strand 4, ‘Measures to Support the Operation of Defined Benefit Schemes’, that the Government is committed to advancing the



Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017.

The purpose of this Bill is to respond to the ongoing difficulties in DB schemes and to increase protections for members as well as encouraging employers to ensure that schemes are well funded and managed.

The general scheme of the Bill, which was published in May 2017, contained a number of key measures relating to DB pension schemes. These proposed provisions will ensure that an employer cannot “walk away” at short notice from the pension scheme it is supporting by providing a 12 month notification period where an employer is seeking to cease making contributions to a scheme. The amendments seek a middle road between the current position where employers can abandon DB schemes and full and immediate debt on employer provisions. The measures will act to support existing provisions in the Pensions Act and will provide for further protection for scheme members’ benefits and enhance employer responsibilities for their schemes.

The amendments also provide for more frequent monitoring of the financial position of schemes and will further provide that, where a scheme is in deficit and a funding proposal has not been put in place in a timely manner, the Pensions Authority may direct steps to be taken to ensure that the scheme meets the funding standard.

It is important to note that if this new legislation is enacted, a scheme will have to give a minimum notice period of twelve months before contributions can be stopped. However, it will not prevent a company from ceasing contributions once the minimum notice period is served provided the scheme meets the Minimum Funding Standard.

These provisions are quite technical and complex. Work to finalise them is at an advanced stage and I hope to be in position to bring forward the amendments at Committee Stage at the earliest possible opportunity.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

### **One-Parent Family Payment**

64. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to address the severe poverty and deprivation being experienced by lone parent households, particularly in the context of budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26406/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Research repeatedly shows that the best way to tackle poverty among lone parents is through employment and the Indecon report on lone parents, published in 2017, echoed this view. The report found that the changes made to the one-parent family payment scheme in 2012 increased employment and reduced welfare dependency. It also found that the changes increased the probability of employment and higher employment income for lone parents. The report also concluded that assisting lone parents to enhance skills also needs to be seen as a key objective, as low paid employment will not, on its own, ensure a reduction in the risk of poverty.

Continued economic recovery, together with the Budget measures to date, is likely to have impacted positively on poverty rates since 2016 (the most recent available data) and this improvement is expected to continue over the coming years. My Department’s social impact assessments of Budgets 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are an indicator of this improvement. These show a cumulative increase of €36.75 in the average weekly household income of employed

lone parents (and €33.60 for unemployed lone parents). This compares favourably with a weekly increase of €34.45 for the average household.

Budget 2018 measures that took effect from 29th March this year (specifically the increases to the income disregard, the primary rate and the increase for a qualified child) will assist a lone parent in receipt of the one-parent family payment or jobseeker's transitional payment, working 15 hours a week on the National Minimum Wage, to be better off by almost €1,000 per year.

We know that social transfers are very effective in reducing poverty and that Eurostat data shows that Ireland performs well in this regard. But we also know that reducing poverty for lone parents is not just about income support. The latest CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) for 2016 shows that being at work reduces the consistent poverty rate for lone parents by nearly two-thirds, highlighting that the best way to tackle poverty among lone parents is to assist them into employment.

Our focus, therefore, through the activation service provided by my Department, is on supporting lone parents to make the transition into employment and, at a cross-governmental level on assisting these families through the provision of quality services in areas including education, training and employment supports, and childcare.

### **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme**

65. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to resource and implement the national action plan for social inclusion to work towards eliminating poverty; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26573/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Tackling poverty remains a fundamental aspiration of Irish society and the Programme for a Partnership Government includes a firm commitment to develop a new Integrated Framework for Social Inclusion, to tackle inequality and poverty. This will be a successor to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion) and its 2015-2017 update which concluded last year. My Department is developing the new four year plan for the period 2018-2021. Like its predecessor, the plan will have a 'whole of Government' approach that aims to improve outcomes for the vulnerable and marginalised in our society, while recognising a shared responsibility across Government to implement actions to achieve the overall objectives. The theme of the new plan is one of active inclusion, which will enable every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job. The primary focus will be the reduction of consistent poverty, which in 2016 was 8.3%. This will be achieved through a three pronged approach: supporting incomes through as high as possible a level of employment, and encouraging and assisting people to enter the workforce; setting targets for the level of relevant welfare payments designed to reduce relative poverty among those who cannot (or cannot find) work; and finally improving access to quality services such as health, education, childcare, training, housing, community supports in order to minimize deprivation for all groups and, in particular those who are on relatively low incomes. Officials in my Department are working with their colleagues, both internally and in other departments, to identify specific actions for inclusion in the plan. It is my intention that the plan will be published in Autumn 2018.

### **Employment Rights**

66. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and So-

cial Protection the proposals she will bring forward to solve the problems and issues surrounding seasonal and part-time workers' rights in seasonal employment in particular the fishing industry, farming and the hospitality sector; the timeframe in which she plans to deal with these issues in view of the fact that the current anomalies are causing considerable financial strain on many workers throughout the country; if proposals to address these issues in budget 2019 are being considered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26537/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** To qualify for a jobseekers payment a person must be unemployed, be available for and genuinely seeking work, and as a result be unemployed for at least 4 days out of 7. Seasonal work can be full-time, part-time or casual. A seasonal worker who is employed on a full-time basis is not entitled to a jobseeker's payment while in that employment. Contributions paid during this time can be used to requalify for jobseeker's benefit subject to scheme conditionality. Where a person exhausts entitlement to jobseeker's benefit, they must pay 13 additional PRSI contributions after the last day of payment in order to requalify. If a seasonal or a part-time worker meets this requirement they may requalify. In combination with paid PRSI contributions, credits can assist employees in qualifying for short-term schemes such as jobseeker's benefit and enhance the level of benefit for long-term schemes.

Seasonal and part-time workers who have paid or credited contributions in either of the last two complete income tax years are awarded credits. Credits protect social insurance entitlements by bridging gaps in an employee's social insurance record, where they are not in a position to pay PRSI.

The jobseeker's schemes can provide significant support to individuals who work part-time. Where a person does not re-qualify or have used up their entitlement to jobseeker's benefit they can apply for jobseeker's allowance. For instance, an individual can earn a little over €20,190 per year and still retain a small jobseeker's allowance payment, while the equivalent threshold for an individual with a qualified adult is almost €34,700 if they are both working.

My Department operates a fast-tracking system for customers who sign-off on their jobseeker's claim to take up work or a training course for a period of up to 12 weeks. In these cases, the claim is not closed but payment is suspended temporarily for the duration of the work or training course. When the person signs on again the claim can be reactivated without delay and payment restored.

Any changes to the jobseeker's schemes would have to be considered in the context of Budget 2019 subject to the overall budgetary context. It is important in the interests of equity and fairness that any changes to the conditions for receipt of a jobseekers payment would apply to all recipients, including those who could be categorised as seasonal and part-time workers.

### **Jobseeker's Benefit**

67. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person claiming jobseeker's benefit or allowance that is 62 years of age or over is required to engage with the compulsory activation process; if not, if they are subject to penalty rates for non-engagement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26513/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Jobseekers aged 62 or over are not selected for activation and are not subject to mandatory activation measures. Penalty rates do not apply in these circumstances. They may, of course, avail of employment supports on a voluntarily basis. Jobseekers, who are already engaged in activation

and turn 62, are required to complete the process. Penalty rates may apply should they fail to continue to engage without good cause. When considering whether the application of a penalty rate is the appropriate course of action, a Deciding Officer of the Department considers the circumstances and facts in each case. Where a jobseeker is dissatisfied with the decision to apply a penalty rate, it is open to him / her to lodge an appeal with the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

### Youth Employment Initiative

68. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures she is taking to address the youth unemployment rate of 11.9%; if the rate of jobseeker's payments for persons of 26 years of age will be equalised in budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26512/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Government policy to reduce unemployment is twofold. First, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs; and second, through Pathways to Work, to ensure that as many as possible of these new jobs and other vacancies that arise in our economy are filled by people taken from the Live Register, including young people. Reflecting the impact of government policy, and the overall improvement in the labour market, youth unemployment continues to fall with a rate of 11.9% (32,300 persons) in May 2018 estimated by CSO, down from a peak rate of almost 32% in 2012. The youth unemployment rate now lies significantly below the EU-28 average rate of 16.1%. The actual number of young people unemployed is estimated to have peaked at 97,800 persons in late 2010. Youth unemployment figures can be expected to fall further this year in line with the continuing forecast fall in overall unemployment.

In early 2018, youth unemployment is already below the 12% target level set in Pathways to Work for 2020. Additionally, Eurostat figures indicate that the number of young people in full-time employment has grown from 197,000 in mid-2012 to 238,000 by Q4 2017.

These trends indicate that together with improvements in the labour market and economic recovery, our approach to youth employment, which focuses in the first instance on enhancing processes and policies for assisting young unemployed people to find and secure sustainable jobs, has been relatively successful.

Under the Government's policies to support the young unemployed, the first intervention is to provide case officer support to help newly unemployed young people find and secure sustainable jobs. There is monthly engagement with all young jobseekers by a case officer, and a Personal Progression Plan is developed to chart the steps to be taken to facilitate a return to employment, which may include further education and training or other opportunities.

For those who do not find employment, through the process just described, additional offers are provided for. Most such offers (over 70%) are in existing further education or training programmes. Others are in existing community-based employment programmes/workplace based interventions such as CE, Gateway and Tús and First Steps; or in subsidies to employers, through JobsPlus Youth. Long-term unemployed jobseekers under-25 are also referred to Job-Path, a contracted, payment-by-results employment services that provides additional resources and supports to those long-term unemployed.

The strategy document *Pathways to Work 2016 to 2020* includes some additional actions in relation to addressing youth unemployment:

- 1) increase the relative share of workplace-based interventions (Gateway, TÚS, Positive to Work) for youth unemployed;
- 2) ensure the frequency of engagement with all young unemployed people is a minimum of one case officer meeting per month;
- 3) restructure the First Steps programme for young unemployed people to improve take-up by offering a higher level of support to jobseekers and employers;
- 4) implement the Defence Forces Skills for Life employment support programme.

Each of these actions is either ongoing or has been completed.

I will shortly be introducing a new work experience programme targeted specifically at young jobseekers who are long-term unemployed or who face significant barriers to gaining employment. The new Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) will provide them with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. Operational details are currently being finalised.

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 receive a higher weekly payment of €198 which is the maximum personal rate for jobseeker's allowance. In addition, recipients of jobseeker's 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.

The appropriate rate for all social welfare rates of payment, including the weekly rates for young jobseekers, will be considered by Government in the context of budgetary deliberations.

### **Citizens Information Board**

69. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the Comptroller and Auditor General signed off on the Citizen Information Board's accounts for 2017; and if so, when (details supplied). [26531/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body responsible for providing information, advice (including money and budgeting advice service) and advocacy services on a wide range of public and social services. CIB delivers on this remit through a network of service delivery partners including the Citizens Information Services (CIS) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS) whose governance arrangements are in the process of being reorganised from 93 local companies to a regionally based 16 company model comprising 8 CIS and 8 MABS companies. Section 22 of the Comhairle Act, 2000 requires that the annual accounts, approved by the Board, are submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) and the 2017 accounts have already been submitted by CIB for audit. When the audit is complete, a copy of the annual accounts and the report of the C&AG will be presented to the Board and to the Minister and will then be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, as required by legislation.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.



## **Public Procurement Contracts**

70. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to the tender seeking the supply of facial image matching software to improve the performance of the SAFE registration process; if changes are planned to the way in which facial matching technology is employed based on the tender; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26570/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The use of facial matching technology has been successfully employed by my Department for a number of years. What is proposed, in the context of this competitive tender process, is a continuation and upgrade of this existing technology.

In accordance with Government policy, the Department is running an open procurement for the provision of the services as described in the request for tender (RFT). Public procurement is governed by well-established EU and national rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money. The closing date for the submission of the final item relating to the tender is Thursday 14th June. All tenders received in response to this procurement competition will then be evaluated on the basis of criteria outlined in the RFT.

I hope this clarifies the matters for the Deputy.

## **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

71. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to provide a pension scheme to community employment scheme supervisors; the number of supervisors affected in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26532/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive public funding and are not employees of my Department, nor are they public servants. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) have taken the lead in addressing the entitlement of CE supervisors to occupational pensions. A Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by DPER is currently examining this issue. Other Departments including my Department are represented on this group, as are the unions and Pobal and a number of meetings have been held.

A detailed scoping exercise was carried out with input from the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) on the potential costs of providing Exchequer support for the establishment of such a pension scheme for employees across the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland.

The exercise clearly illustrated that this matter presents very significant issues for the Exchequer, with a potential cost to the State of €188 million per annum in respect of funding to enable an employer pension contribution in State funded Community and Voluntary organisations, excluding any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension as sought, which could, depending on the size of the sector, entail a further Exchequer cost of up to €318 million.

I am very conscious that while the issue relates to Community Employment supervisors

and assistant supervisors, such individuals comprise of just one small group within the wider Community and Voluntary sector any provision of State funding for such a scheme in respect of those employees could potentially give rise to claims for similar schemes on the part of those in the broader sector, thus crystallising the potential level of liability. Any solution to this issue will require careful consideration, in particular the implications for scarce Exchequer resources.

As at the end of May 2018 there are 100 supervisors and 9 assistant supervisors in County Cork.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 63.*

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

73. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the projected cost of the campaign on false self-employment; the number of cases that had been ongoing in advance of the launch of the campaign; the way in which that number compared to 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26565/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The media campaign on false self-employment was aimed at ensuring that there is better public awareness of the important service the Department provides in determining employment status and to help develop a better understanding of the scale and nature of false self-employment. The main advertising campaign ran over a two week period from the 7th May, with digital and social media promotions continuing for a further two weeks. The campaign directed people to a dedicated page on my Department's website as a first step. The website provides important information on the impact of false self-employment and the criteria used to determine whether someone is an employee or self-employed, as well as contact information for Scope section, the Workplace Relations Commission and Revenue. The new web page has attracted more than 10,500 visits during the campaign with an average time of over three minutes spent on the page which is regarded as very favourable. Our Twitter ad got a favourable reaction overall with 1.2 million "impressions" and more than 100,000 seeing it. Scope section received some 50 calls and 30 emails during the campaign from individuals who had become aware of the service directly as a result of the ad campaign. Feedback suggests the detailed information available on the dedicated website appears to have been successful in addressing issues for many people. The majority of callers confirmed that they had visited the website first before contacting the Department. Ten formal applications for a Scope decision were registered. The advertising campaign has cost approximately €165,000 (including VAT). This includes all advertising, creative development and translation costs in eight languages.

From January to April 2018 Scope section made 395 determinations of employment status and PRSI class. For the same period in 2017, there were 319 cases decided.

My Department is continuously engaging with its broad customer and stakeholder base to increase public awareness of its many schemes and services.

*Question No. 74 answered with Question No. 58.*

*Question No. 75 answered with Question No. 41.*

### **Employment Data**

76. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an assessment of the increase of agency work and short-term contracts as opposed to full-time contracts across the economy has been made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26437/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to conduct research into contingent employment in Ireland. Contingent employment generally describes an employment relationship that is non-permanent – that is employees on temporary contracts and freelancers. The ESRI presented its initial findings at a WRC seminar on the World of Work last February.

The main conclusion of the ESRI research presented at that time was that the incidence of contingent employment ranged between 8 and 9 percent of total employment between 1998 and 2005 before increasing to over 10 percent following the recession, then falling back towards its pre-recession level in 2016. I understand that the final report of the ESRI is due to be published shortly. Further, I note from the Central Statistics Office Labour Force Survey for Quarter 4 2017 that the increase in total employment of 66,800 in the year to Q4 2017 was represented by an increase in full-time employment of 90,000 (an increase of 5.4%) and a decrease in part-time employment of 23,300 (a decrease of 4.8%). <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/lfs/labourforcesurveyquarter42017/>

Good progress has been made in recent years in terms of our economic recovery, in creating new job opportunities, the majority of which are full-time positions. However, we must remember those people who, not by choice, are in less secure arrangements. In this respect, the Government is delivering on its Programme for Government commitment to strengthen the regulation of precarious work. The *Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017* is in response to this commitment. The Bill completed Committee Stage in the Dáil on 17th May and Report Stage is scheduled for 26th and 27th June.

*Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 63.*

### Family Support Services

78. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures she plans to implement towards supporting stay at home parents; and the funding proposed to be allocated in budget 2019 in this regard. [26582/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The sole universal child-related payment for parents, regardless of their employment status, administered by my Department is Child Benefit. Child Benefit is a universal payment to help families with the cost of raising children and plays an important role in tackling child poverty. Receipt of the payment is not contingent on a means test or social insurance contributions. Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid to almost 629,000 families in respect of nearly 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of over €2 billion in 2018. As Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, I support the universality of the Child Benefit payment, and the principle that all families with children should receive this income support.

Given the universality of Child Benefit it is not a payment which lends itself to a targeted

approach and the considerable costs associated with any upward adjustment to the payment can result in benefits being spread very thinly, rather than making a difference where there is most need. Government policy is to provide additional supports for parents and their children through increased services, rather than increased cash transfers. This includes such services as free early-years education through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme, and enhanced provision of affordable childcare. Any enhanced budgetary spending in these areas will be a matter for my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Finally, I understand the Deputy had a specific interest in relation to Home Carer Tax Credit. This is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance.

### **Farm Assist Scheme Data**

79. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will review the level of bureaucracy involved in the annual forms that applicants for farm assist are required to fill out and return; if the level of information that is required on an annual basis will be reduced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26338/18]

83. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of farm assist recipients nationally; the reduction in numbers of farm assist recipients over the past three years; if she will review the level of bureaucracy involved in the annual application process for farm assist recipients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26339/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 79 and 83 together.

The number of persons in receipt of farm assist at year end was 7,234 in 2017, 7,828 in 2016 and 8,790 in 2015.

Farm assist is a means-tested income support scheme for farmers. To qualify for the payment, a customer must be a farmer, farming land in the State, aged between 18 and 66 and satisfy a means test. The annual farm assist review form is a necessary part of the normal review process for these customers.

The means test for farm assist takes account of all income sources with certain disregards applicable to specific income sources. Different rules apply to income from farming and other forms of self-employment. Income from certain schemes such as the Green Low Carbon Agri Environment Scheme (GLAS), income from employment and income from property and capital are taken into account. An examination of farm outgoings is also included in the assessment process.

Income and expenditure figures for the preceding year are generally used as an indicator of the expected position in the following year. Details of any exceptional circumstances are also taken into account so as to ensure that the assessment accurately reflects the current situation.

The information provided by the customer on the review form covers both the income generated and the operating costs associated with the farm, all of which are required as part of the annual review process.

The annual farm assist review form is kept under ongoing review by my officials and there are no plans to change the current review criteria.

## **Employment Rights**

80. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has considered the report into seasonal and part-time workers' rights and entitlements to social welfare payments drafted by her Department; her plans in relation to the problems experienced by those workers in obtaining social welfare payments once their part-time work ceases; if she is drafting solutions based on the report into seasonal and part-time workers' entitlements for budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26536/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** It is important in the interests of equity and fairness that the conditions for receipt of a jobseekers payment apply to all recipients, including those who could be categorised as seasonal and part-time workers. Where a person exhausts his or her entitlement to jobseekers benefit, he or she must pay 13 additional PRSI contributions after the last day of payment in order to requalify. The 13 contributions needed to re-qualify for jobseekers benefit can be paid in respect of full time employment, seasonal employment, part-time employment or casual employment. If a seasonal or a part time worker meets this requirement they may requalify for jobseeker's benefit. This requirement is in place to ensure the person has a reasonable connection with the labour market before he or she can requalify for payment. If a person does not re-qualify for jobseeker's benefit or has used up his or her entitlement to jobseeker's benefit, then he or she may qualify for jobseekers allowance, subject to the means test and other conditions.

The current days based system can also provide significant income supports to jobseekers who are part-time workers or casually employed. For instance an individual can earn a little over €20,190 per year and still retain a small jobseeker's allowance payment, while the equivalent threshold for an individual with a qualified adult is almost €34,700 if they are both working.

I intend to submit the report on jobseekers benefit duration and the treatment of seasonal and part-time workers to the Joint Oireachtas Committee shortly. This report will be published subsequently. The report may inform any changes considered in the context of Budget 2019 subject to the overall budgetary context.

## **Departmental Reviews**

81. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department's review into the current maintenance and liable relative procedures for lone parents has been finalised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26576/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department is now reviewing the current maintenance and liable relative procedures, insofar as they relate to the one-parent family payment scheme administered by my Department, and work is ongoing on this review. This will necessitate my Department liaising with the Department of Justice and Equality as the Department responsible for the Family Law Acts, which govern family maintenance arrangements.

## **Birth Certificates**

82. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department is examining the issue of the falsification of birth certificates; if so, the action



she plans to take; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26575/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The General Register Office (GRO) operates under the aegis of my Department and has responsibility for the administration of the Civil Registration Service in Ireland. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the Civil Registration Service through a network of local civil registration office across the State. Births are registered at local registrar's and Superintendent Registrar's offices.

Adoptions are registered by the Registrar General. The register of births records such data as are required by law relating to each birth occurring in the State. The information recorded is provided to the registrar by a qualified informant, normally, the parents or a member of staff of the hospital or nursing home where the birth took place. The registrar is reliant on the qualified informant to provide truthful and accurate information. From a visual inspection of a register entry it is impossible to say whether it is false or not. Questionable entries in the register can only be identified on foot of information or evidence given by third parties.

As the Deputy is aware, my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr. Katherine Zappone, T.D., recently announced that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, would be contacting people in 126 cases where births were incorrectly registered between 1946 and 1969. These cases were identified during an analysis of adoption records that were transferred to Tusla by the former adoption society St Patrick's Guild.

Minister Zappone has directed that further investigations be carried out now to see if clear evidence of incorrect registrations can be obtained from the records of other former adoption agencies held by Tusla or the Adoption Authority. I understand that the terms of reference for the review will be published shortly. The GRO will cooperate fully with any request for assistance by Tusla or by any individual affected by this issue. Illegal entries in the register of births, where they have been identified, can be dealt with under existing legislation which provides for cancellation, correction of errors and late registrations.

*Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 79.*

### **Freedom of Information Requests**

84. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of freedom of information, FOI, requests his Department has received since January 2018; the number that were appealed, refused and granted, respectively; and the costs that were applied. [26215/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Up to the end of May this year my Department received 254 freedom of information requests. Of these, 152 requests were granted or part granted, 15 requests were refused and no records were held in relation to 28 requests. 10 requests were withdrawn or handled outside FOI and one request was transferred to another Department. 48 requests were ongoing at the end May and will be decided upon in due course. There were 12 requests for internal reviews of decisions made by my Department and no appeals to the Office of the Information Commissioner have been made. None of the requests processed attracted any charges for processing other than standard application fee for internal review for non-personal requests.

### **Strategic Communications Unit**

85. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the status of the winding down of the

strategic communications unit. [26216/18]

**The Taoiseach:** The review of the Operation of the Strategic Communications Unit was accepted by Government on 27th March last and published on the same date. This is now being implemented. In accordance with the report, a managed reversion to a more traditional GIS model is underway. Actions taken so far include staff reductions and a cut to the budget by €2.5 million. Further measures outlined in the report are being taken. The transition period will end in July 2018.

### **Cabinet Committee Meetings**

86. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee D, infrastructure, last met. [26217/18]

**The Taoiseach:** As I have previously indicated to the House on 23 May 2018, Cabinet Committee D last met on 1 February 2018. The date of the next meeting of the Committee is being finalised.

Cabinet Committee D covers infrastructure investment and delivery, housing, and climate action and provides political oversight in relation to Project Ireland 2040. Significant work is underway across each of these areas and the full Cabinet has had comprehensive discussions on all of these issues in the recent past. In addition, senior officials meet on a regular basis to discuss and advance the issues covered by the Committee.

### **Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements**

87. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he met with Ms Arlene Foster when in Belfast recently; the issues that were discussed; and if there is progress on the impasse in reconvening the Northern Assembly. [26219/18]

88. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he met with Ms. Michelle O'Neill when in Belfast recently; the issues that were discussed; and if there is progress on the impasse in reconvening the Northern Assembly. [26220/18]

89. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to the Orange Order headquarters while in Belfast and his meeting with senior members of the Order; and the issues that were discussed. [26221/18]

90. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to a library (details supplied). [26222/18]

91. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to a museum (details supplied). [26223/18]

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the civic society groups he met while in Belfast recently; and the issues that were discussed. [26224/18]

93. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to a club (details supplied). [26225/18]

94. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his meeting with the chief executives of the North-South implementation bodies; the issues that were discussed; and

if actions will be taken following the meeting. [26226/18]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 to 94, inclusive, together.

I visited Northern Ireland on Thursday and Friday 7th and 8th of June.

I had a number of different engagements during my visit, which was part of my and the Government's continuing commitment to remain engaged with all parts of society in Northern Ireland, notwithstanding the absence of functioning political institutions there.

On Thursday 7th June, I met with a group called Civic Space, who are made up of representatives of civic unionism and others in Belfast. The meeting was a good opportunity for me to hear from a range of perspectives on key issues such as the political situation in Northern Ireland and Brexit.

On Friday 8th June, my first engagement was a private meeting with Baroness Eileen Paisley at the Bannside Library, which houses the personal collection of Dr Ian Paisley. Later that morning I had another private meeting with Mr Peadar Heffron and his wife Fiona. Mr Heffron was a Catholic PSNI officer who was seriously injured in an attack by dissident republicans in 2010.

I also visited the Museum of Orange Heritage, where I was welcomed by Orange Order Grand Master, Edward Stevenson, and met with Orange Order representatives from across the island - including from Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan and Leitrim.

I received a warm welcome from the Orange Order in Schomberg House and also from local residents outside the Museum after my visit. I hope that my visit will be seen as a stepping stone to building relationships and a greater understanding between the Irish Government and the Orange Order into the future.

I also had a meeting with business and community leaders at Queens University, where I heard their views on the political situation in Northern Ireland and on Brexit.

In the afternoon, I spoke at the launch event for the 30th year of Féile an Phobail in St Mary's University College. Following my speech, I met some of the local guests and had a brief conversation with the Vice President of Sinn Féin, Michelle O'Neill, on the margins of the event.

On Friday evening, I had a very enjoyable visit to Down's oldest GAA club - Mayobridge. During the visit I met with the club chairperson and committee members and with many club members both young and old including distinguished former All Ireland winning players and the Down GAA County Chairman Mr Sean Rooney. I was given a tour of the club grounds by Club Secretary Thomas O'Hare during which I met a number of the club's teams.

The final event of my program was a meeting with the CEOs of the Cross-Border bodies in the Canal Court Hotel in Newry, where we discussed current cross-border issues relevant to their work and the future development of the bodies.

I was very glad to have the opportunity during this visit to meet with a range of key groups from all sides of the community in Northern Ireland and to hear their concerns on a range of issues.

I did not meet with DUP Leader Ms Arlene Foster on this occasion. However, the Government remains in close contact with all the Northern Ireland political parties as part of ongoing efforts to assist the parties in Northern Ireland to re-establish the institutions of the Good Friday

Agreement.

### Departmental Staff

95. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if there are officials or others in his Department who deal with Independent Deputies in the context of A Programme for a Partnership Government or other issues at their request. [26227/18]

**Taoiseach (Deputy Leo Varadkar)(Leo Varadkar):** The Programme for Partnership Government sets out the agreement between the Party Groups and Deputies who are participating in/or supporting the Government.

My Department, as outlined in the Strategy Statement, provides support services for the Taoiseach and the Government, including the Independent Members of Government, through the Government Secretariat, the Parliamentary Liaison Unit, the Programme for Government Office and the Cabinet Committee structure to ensure Government business is managed to the highest standards.

The Chief Strategist for the Independent Alliance and the Political Coordinator for the Independent Ministers in Government are also based in my Department.

The Deputy Press Secretary, who is also based in my Department, is tasked with coordinating communications for all the Independents in Government.

Where any Deputy in the House contacts my office with a representation this is responded to as promptly as possible.

### Departmental Contracts

96. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if there are contracts with the strategic communications unit; and, if so, the position regarding contracts following the disbandment of the unit from July 2018. [26312/18]

**The Taoiseach:** There are no contracts with the Strategic Communications Unit. The Strategic Communications Unit is not a contracting authority. The Department has a number of contracts for communications related services. These will continue to be availed on in the future by GIS.

### Departmental Expenditure

97. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name. [26347/18]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department has employed the services of the company in question on four occasions during the period January 2016 to date, as detailed in the table:

Year	Company	Amount
2016	Citizens' Assembly - Call for submissions on the Eighth Amendment.	€4,746.81

Year	Company	Amount
	Advertisement regarding process for nomination of a person by the Government to the Office of Chief Justice.	€3,118.53
2017	Recruitment advertisement – Nominee to European Court of Auditors	€1,968.37
2018	Advertisement regarding process for nomination of a person by the Government to the Office of President of the Court of Appeal.	€3,118.54

### Departmental Websites

98. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the process within his Department for putting his speeches on his Department's website; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26438/18]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department updates the websites [www.taoiseach.ie](http://www.taoiseach.ie) and [www.merrionstreet.ie](http://www.merrionstreet.ie) with all relevant Government statements, speeches by Ministers, and other Government publications. The process for updating the websites is managed by staff in the Government Information Service and is based on Divisions within the Department providing material for publication and then agreeing the formatting and timing details with the Government Information Service. My Department ensures that all significant publications, speeches and press releases are published in a timely manner, whilst also meeting our commitments under the Irish Language Act.

*Question No. 99 answered with Question No. 9.*

### Public Consultation Process

100. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017, inclusive, and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26468/18]

**The Taoiseach:** Details of the public consultations undertaken by my Department in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018 are set out in the following table. No public consultations were undertaken in the years in question by the National Economic and Social Development Office - the only body under the aegis of my Department.

2011

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	10	Nil

2012

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	11	Nil



2013

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	12	Nil
2	Consultation on the proposed Government Statement on Economic Regulation.	25	Nil

2014

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on the preparation of a new strategy for the International Financial Services Sector	105	Nil
2	Consultation on the Reform of the Seanad (Manning Group)	69	Nil
3	Consultation on the draft National Risk Assessment	34	Nil
4	Consultation on the Department of the Taoiseach's Statement of Strategy 2015 – 2017	1	Nil
5	Consultation on the Regulation of sponsorship by alcohol companies of major sporting events	19	Nil
6	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	8	Nil

2015

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on the draft National Risk Assessment	12	Nil
2	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	12	Nil
3	Consultation on a draft Official Languages Scheme for the Department of An Taoiseach	2	€680

2016

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on Ireland's approach to the digital age of consent.	13	Nil
2	Consultation on the draft National Risk Assessment	12	Nil
3	Consultation on the Department of the Taoiseach's Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019	10	Nil
4	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	10	Nil

2017

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on the draft National Risk Assessment 2017.	17	Nil
2	Consultation on the establishment of a National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy.	52	€445.00
3	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	15	Nil

to 19 June 2018

No.	Details	No. of Replies Received	Cost
1	Consultation on the draft National Risk Assessment 2018.	49 (still ongoing)	Nil
2	Consultation on Ireland's National Reform Programme in advance of its submission to the European Commission.	17	Nil

### Emigration Data

101. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach the current rates of emigration. [26687/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Statistics on emigration are included in the CSO's annual Population and Migration Estimates release. The principal source of information for the estimation of annual migration flows, incorporating both emigration and immigration, is the Labour Force Survey (LFS), formally the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The latest release was published in August 2017 and shows that an estimated 64,800 left Ireland in the year to April 2017. In the previous year to April 2016 there were 66,200 outward migrants.

### Immigration Data

102. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach the current rates of immigration. [26688/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Statistics on immigration are included in the CSO's annual Population and Migration Estimates release. The principal source of information for the estimation of annual migration flows, incorporating both emigration and immigration, is the Labour Force Survey (LFS), formally the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The latest release was published in August 2017 and shows that an estimated 84,600 persons migrated to Ireland in the year from April 2016 to April 2017. In the previous year to April 2016 there were 82,300 inward migrants.

### Departmental Expenditure

103. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26387/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The following table outlines the amount paid to Mediavest, who are now known as Sparkfoundry, in 2016 and 2017. As of yet no invoices have been paid for 2018.

Year	Amount	Project
2016	€37,361.78	Be Winter Ready Campaign
2016	€10,482.38	Firing Exercise Advertisements
2016	€23,669.95	Rifle Range Advertisements

Year	Amount	Project
2016	€3,678.39	Advertisement in relation to General Election for Defence Forces Personnel serving Overseas
2016	€1,360.42	Legal Notice Advertisement for Fermoy Show
2016	€9,025.50	Recruitment Advertisements for Civilian Employees
2017	€3,894.74	101st Anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising
2017	€31,683.58	Rifle Range Advertisements
2017	€34,030.52	Be Winter Ready Campaign
2017	€12,959.32	Recruitment Advertisements or Civilian Employees
2017	€2,267.15	Advertisement seeking submissions in advance of the preparation of the Department of Defence Irish Language Scheme

### Public Consultation Process

104. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years from 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26458/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to public consultations held by my Department in the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018 is set out in the table.

Year	Name	Number of Submissions	Cost
2013	Consultation in relation to the Irish Language Scheme	3	€2,951.99
2015	Green Paper consultation on the White Paper on Defence	12	€11,199
2017	Consultation in relation to the Irish Language Scheme	nil	€2,267.15

### Legislative Process

105. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when the defence (amendment) Bill will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26692/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Heads of the Defence (Amendment) Bill are currently being prepared within the Department. I hope to be in a position to bring proposals in this regard to Government later this year.

### Ministerial Meetings

106. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he met the families of the victims of the Ballymurphy massacre when he was in Belfast recently. [26218/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I met with the families of some of the victims of the Ballymurphy massacre in Belfast on 22 November 2017 to hear their views and experiences and to express the Government's support.

19 June 2018

The Government has supported their campaign, including in 2015 in bringing forward the All-Party Dáil Motion, and the Government will continue to stand in solidarity with the families.

It is very welcome that a fresh inquest will go ahead in September, after the long and continuing campaign by the Ballymurphy families for their right to establish the truth of what happened to their loved ones.

The Coroner has asked for any relevant information to be brought forward and it is a basic right for the families that this should fully occur, to allow for the truth to be finally established by the new inquest without delay.

My Department is monitoring developments with the case and I have directed my officials to remain in regular contact with the families.

I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Ballymurphy families in getting to this point and I hope that the inquest will provide the families with the answers that they are still seeking after almost forty seven years.

There are many other victims' families that are also still seeking truth and justice, often decades after their loss. In February 2016, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland put forward proposals to process outstanding legacy inquests relating to the Troubles. The Government has been strongly supportive of the LCJ's proposals as a way of ensuring that those families who are still waiting for legacy inquests are not left to wait any longer.

I have consistently emphasised in discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the political parties the need to ensure that legacy inquests are properly resourced and I continue to raise this issue with the Secretary of State on an ongoing basis. I have urged all with those with responsibilities in relation to legacy inquests to move forward as quickly as possible to implement the helpful proposals of the Lord Chief Justice for Northern Ireland. The Government is continuing to seek urgent progress on this matter.

The Government will also continue to engage with the British Government and the political parties to seek an urgent way forward on the establishment of the Stormont House Agreement legacy framework in a manner that will meet the legitimate needs and expectations of all victims and survivors, and contribute to broader societal reconciliation as an integral part of the Peace Process.

### **Brexit Negotiations**

107. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the deadline for the withdrawal agreement being in October 2018, in view of his comments on 9 June 2018. [26309/18]

108. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of Brexit negotiations; the status of the backstop and the Border issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26307/18]

131. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on east-west relations due to Brexit and the agreement on the backstop. [26561/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I pro-

pose to take Questions Nos. 107, 108 and 131 together.

We have now entered a crucial phase of the negotiations.

The overall objective is that the full legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement, as well as a detailed political declaration on the framework for the future relationship, be concluded by the October meeting of the European Council.

With a view to achieving this overall goal, negotiations are ongoing between the EU and the UK to close the remaining gaps in the draft Withdrawal Agreement, including detailed discussions on the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

We have made very clear our wish to see real and substantial progress on agreeing the Protocol ahead of the June European Council. The fact of the UK's presentation on 7 June 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 in this regard.

After its publication, Michel Barnier, while also welcoming this step, raised questions and concerns about the proposal. The absence of proposals on regulatory alignment is clearly a major gap – though the UK has acknowledged that this aspect needs to be addressed – 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.

Michel Barnier and his team also provide regular updates to the EU27 Member States on the discussions on the future EU-UK relationship, which are progressing, albeit slowly. The EU is approaching these discussions in accordance with the March European Council Guidelines, which reaffirmed the EU's determination to have as close as possible a partnership with the UK in the future. These Guidelines also emphasised that any future agreement must have the correct balance of rights and obligations and that the integrity of the Single Market must be preserved. Clearly, it is in Ireland's strong interest to have the closest possible EU-UK relationship, within the parameters set by the UK's own red lines, which we hope may be modified.

My Government colleagues and I also engage frequently with our UK counterparts on a wide range of issues of mutual interest. In addition to further strengthening our bilateral ties, such engagement also provides an opportunity to build the UK's understanding of the EU's position on the Irish-specific issues and underline the importance of finalizing the Protocol as an integral and indispensable part of the Withdrawal Agreement

I have spoken with the Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, on a number of occasions in recent weeks. During these exchanges, I have stressed that, 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. I have underlined that we must have certainty in all scenarios on the commitments made on



Ireland and Northern Ireland and that this certainty requires agreement on the Protocol to the Withdrawal Agreement. The sooner this can be agreed, the sooner substantial negotiations on the future relationship, which will determine the arrangements for east/west trade and many other important issues, can begin.

### **Brexit Negotiations**

109. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken to Mr. Michel Barnier since he met with Mr. David Davis in Brussels on 11 June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26308/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I most recently met Michel Barnier on 14 May in the margins of the General Affairs Council (Article 50) in Brussels and on 30 April during his visit to the All-Island Civic Dialogue in Dundalk.

I will meet Mr Barnier again this week when he accompanies Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, on his visit to Dublin. This will be an important opportunity to take stock of progress in the Brexit negotiations ahead of the European Council (Article 50) meeting next week.

Our Permanent Representation in Brussels is in daily contact with the Article 50 Task Force and keeps me and my officials fully briefed on all developments.

### **Departmental Staff Recruitment**

110. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to increase the number of diplomatic and other staff working from his Department in Dublin to meet workloads created by doubling the global footprint by 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26310/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Work has begun on the initial phase of the expansion of Ireland’s diplomatic network following the launch of “Global Ireland” by the Taoiseach on 11 June. The locations for new missions agreed by Government were identified on the basis of maximising impact in promoting Ireland’s economic and political interests; expanding our influence in terms of values and in delivering clear benefits for the State.

In addition to the opening of new diplomatic and consular missions, the Department is taking steps to deepen the existing network, including to address the impact of the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union. The decisions already made to augment staff in missions in Europe as a more direct response to Brexit also contribute to the objectives of the “Global Ireland” initiative.

A project team in headquarters is undertaking extensive planning to ensure that the Department’s human and financial resources are used efficiently to deliver on the expansion and deepening of the network in a timely and cost-effective way.

The Government has approved Heads of Mission appointments for the first phase comprising six new missions to be opened in 2018 and early 2019. These are for Embassies and Consulates in Bogotá, Santiago, Amman, Wellington, Mumbai, and Vancouver. These missions will be further supported by posted officer(s) from Headquarters, as well as by locally recruited staff. Additional staff will also be assigned shortly to a number of existing missions overseas

including Consulates in the United States, Europe, the Middle East/Gulf region and Asia.

Preparations for augmenting the key units in headquarters needed to support the expansion are underway and five additional staff were assigned recently to Corporate Services Division. This is to reinforce specialist knowledge, including in architectural and project management areas as well as bolster human resources skills to facilitate expanded recruitment and a strong focus on staff development. A scoping of broader staffing needs across operational and policy areas is underway to identify additional new positions relating to the “Global Ireland” expansion. These positions will be at headquarters and abroad and those in missions overseas will comprise locally recruited and posted staff.

The Department is currently undertaking a workforce planning exercise which will inform plans for recruitment of new officers both in Ireland and abroad as well as plans for the training, development and up-skilling of officers currently assigned to the Department to meet the objectives of the Global Ireland initiative in 2019 and beyond.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

111. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his visit to Germany; the meetings he attended; the issues that were discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26341/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I visited Germany on 12 and 13 June.

My visit began in Munich where I had talks with Niels Annen, Minister of State at the German Foreign Ministry. Our discussions included Brexit, developments in the EU generally and our respective bilateral relationship with Africa.

In Munich I also met with the Bavarian Minister for Digital, Media and Europe Georg Eisenreich. Brexit, the opening of the Consulate in Frankfurt and Ireland’s relations with Bavaria were the main items discussed.

In Berlin I participated in a high-level Round Table discussion at the European Council on Foreign Relations. In my remarks I addressed a number of key global issues including the Middle East Peace Process and EU-Africa relations. The Q&A following my address was dominated by Brexit with participants eager to hear Ireland’s assessment of developments. The Future of Europe including the ongoing Migration crisis were among the other issues discussed.

I was honoured to be welcomed to the Bundestag by its President Wolfgang Schauble, who served as German Federal Finance Minister for many years. I briefed him on Ireland’s economy, the fastest growing in the Eurozone. As in most other meetings, Brexit was a major topic of discussion and I thanked President Schauble for Germany’s ongoing support for Ireland in the negotiations.

In the Bundestag I met with the European Affairs Committee. In my remarks I focused on Brexit and the questions from Members also focused on that issue including the likely impact on our economy. Other matters discussed were EU enlargement, the Multiannual Financial Framework and taxation.

While in the Bundestag I also met the German-Irish Parliamentary Friendship Group. The expansion of Ireland’s global footprint, Corporation Tax as well as Brexit were the items covered in what was a brief session.

I had a very positive meeting with Lucia Puttrich, Minister for European and Federal Affairs of the State of Hesse. Since Frankfurt is in Hesse, our exchanges focused on the opening of an Irish Consulate there next year. Brexit was also discussed.

My final official meeting was with the leader of the FDP (Liberal) Party, Christian Lindner who was particularly interested in the border in the context of Brexit and the possible effects on our economy.

During the visit I also conducted a number of press interviews and media briefings.

I met members of the Irish community in Berlin at a reception at the Embassy of Ireland where I launched “Ireland in Germany: A Wider and Deeper Footprint”, the report on the outcome of the comprehensive review of bilateral relations with Germany which I commissioned in December 2017.

I was honoured to give an address at the Humboldt University in Berlin on the theme of “Ireland, Germany and Europe: Shaping the post-Brexit EU”. The speech was part of the prestigious “Humboldt Speeches on Europe” series.

Germany is an indispensable partner for Ireland and that informed my decision last year to commission a review of our bilateral relationship. The review was published in April and we have begun to implement its recommendations, the first of which is to open of a career Consulate in Frankfurt. This was warmly welcomed by my German interlocutors.

During my visit to Germany, I was struck by the interest in and goodwill displayed towards Ireland by all interlocutors. The focus now is on implementing the recommendations of the review of bilateral relations, strengthening and deepening our relations with Germany.

### **Middle East Issues**

112. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his visit to Israel, Ramallah and Jordan; the meetings he attended; the issues that were discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26342/18]

121. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent visit to Israel; if he outlined the steps being taken at the UN and the International Criminal Court, by himself and the other 27 EU foreign ministers, on possible serious sanctions on Israel relating to the appalling deaths at the borders of the Gaza enclave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26649/18]

123. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the detention of a person (details supplied); if he received a briefing on this issue during his recent visit to the Middle East; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26682/18]

125. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent visit to the Middle East; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26924/18]

126. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he specifically raised the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements with Israeli authorities during his recent visit to the Middle East; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26925/18]

127. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

if he specifically raised the movement of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem during his recent visit to the Middle East and Ireland's opposition to the move; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26926/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 112, 121, 123 and 125 to 127, inclusive, together.

This was my third visit as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to Israel and Palestine, and my first to Jordan and Cyprus.

I visited Jordan on 5 June, for a visit focused on bilateral relations with Jordan, and the decision to open an Irish Embassy in Amman next year. I met Foreign Minister Safadi, and discussed bilateral relations and regional issues, including the Middle East Peace Process and the Syria crisis. I also visited a refugee camp where I met with Syrian refugees, and with representatives of the Jordanian authorities and the UN agencies which are providing them with assistance.

In Israel and Palestine on 6 and 7 June, I met on the Israeli side with Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli Opposition Leader Itzhak Herzog. In Palestine I met with Foreign Minister Malki and Chief Negotiator Erekat, and with Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, head of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction. I also met with the United States Ambassador to Israel, to discuss US efforts to develop a peace plan.

My discussions were focused on the broader prospects to restart the political process, centred on current US efforts. I also followed up on the discussions I began on my previous visits, relating to practical assistance for Gaza, and ways of changing the dynamic there, something which is especially important following the shocking recent events there, on which my views are clear. Ireland co-sponsored and spoke in favour of the recent UN Human Rights Council resolution setting up a Commission of Inquiry into Israel's handling of the protests which is now being put in place. My view that the move of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem was unhelpful, and has made the search for peace more difficult, was clear as a backdrop to my discussions. There was also some discussion of regional issues.

I did not raise the individual case referenced by Deputy Collins on this occasion, although the Government has previously expressed its strong criticisms of the extensive use of administrative detention by the Israeli authorities. Prime Minister Netanyahu is already well aware of my views on settlements from previous conversations.

In Cyprus on 8 June I met Foreign Minister Christodoulides and discussed Ireland-Cyprus relations and EU issues, including Brexit. Cyprus' unique position in the EU also allowed for a useful discussion of the issues I had explored in Jordan, Israel and Palestine. I also met with the UN Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Elizabeth Spehar.

### **Northern Ireland**

113. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken to or met with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mrs. Karen Bradley, recently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26343/18]

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

form an Executive.

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

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

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

I am in very regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Karen Bradley, as we seek a way beyond the current impasse. We met most recently on 11 June in Cork and we are also regularly in touch by phone.

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

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

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

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

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

## **Brexit Issues**

114. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the associated rights and privileges of the common travel area that will be included in the commitment in Article 2(2) of the draft protocol on Ireland-Northern Ireland of the draft UK-EU withdrawal agreement. [26366/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The maintenance of the Common Travel Area (CTA) is one of the Government's priorities in the context of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The CTA is a long-standing arrangement between the UK and Ireland which means Irish citizens can move freely to live, work, study, and access social benefits in the UK on the same basis as UK citizens and vice versa. The CTA is an arrangement that is valued on both islands and the continuation of this arrangement is a stated objective of both the Irish and UK Governments.



The Common Travel Area provides for associated rights and entitlements in both jurisdictions to enable Irish and UK citizens to move freely between them and reside in them. These rights and entitlements include access to employment, healthcare, education, and social benefits, as well as the right to vote in certain elections.

Article 2 in the Draft Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland is a translation into legal terms of the acknowledgment between the EU and UK negotiators made in their joint report of December 2017 that the UK and Ireland may “continue to make arrangements between themselves relating to the movement of persons between their territories”. This has been marked as green, indicating it has been agreed at negotiator level. This is a welcome provision in seeking to maintain the Common Travel Area, insofar as it relates to the EU-UK negotiations.

The primary focus of the work to maintain the Common Travel Area is bilateral and therefore does not relate to matters of negotiation between the EU and the UK. Work is ongoing, both with the UK and domestically, to ensure that the necessary provisions are made in both jurisdictions so that the CTA continues to function effectively after the UK leaves the EU.

### Departmental Advertising Expenditure

115. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016, by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26391/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Commercial advertising is undertaken by my Department in relation to important information with a significant public interest dimension which requires communication to national, regional or local audiences. Typical examples include notices about existing and new services to citizens, employment opportunities and certain public policy initiatives or announcements. Any such advertising occurs in accordance with relevant public procurement procedures and with value for taxpayers’ money forming a key consideration at all stages.

The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table. As indicated, the Department’s engagement with the company to which the Deputy refers arose in the context of the relocation of the Passport Office to Mount Street in Dublin, the launch and ongoing promotion of the TravelWise travel advice app and a specific job vacancy within my Department’s Legal Division.

Date	Amount	Format	Project
12/05/2016	€12,039.67	Newspaper ads	Announcement of relocation of the Passport Office to Mount Street in Dublin
20/10/2016	€27,606.10	Public advertising campaign (online/outdoor)	Launch of the new TravelWise travel advice app
20/07/2017	€8,575.76	Newspaper ads	Announcement of Open Competition for the position of Assistant Legal Adviser in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
07/09/2017	€389.30	Digital	Creative assets for online ads in support of the TravelWise app

### Public Consultation Process

116. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consul-

tation in each of the years from 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26462/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In accordance with “Reaching Out - Guidelines on Consultation for Public Sector Bodies”, and its 2016 successor, “Consultation Principles and Guidance”, my Department undertakes consultation, where appropriate, with citizens in a meaningful and timely manner. The ultimate objective is to ensure better outcomes and understanding by all of a particular policy or legislative proposal.

In the table I have provided information on public consultations engaged in by my Department from 2015 to date. It was not possible in the time available to provide the required detail from 2011.

On 24 June 2014, the Government decided to develop a National Plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The coordinating role for developing the Plan was assigned to my Department which adopted an inclusive and open approach to developing the Plan, working closely with Government Departments, State Agencies, business enterprises and civil society. My Department’s annual Civil Society Forum in that year was dedicated to the theme of “*Business and Human Rights - Implementing the UN Guiding Principles*”. This event was attended by approximately 250 civil society actors.

In February 2015, my Department initiated a public consultation which received over 30 submissions and hosted a workshop with business and civil society representatives to discuss priorities for the Plan. In January 2016, a consultation event was held in Iveagh House on the Working Outline of Ireland’s National Plan on Business and Human Rights. Following an invitation for submissions based on the Working Outline, responses were received from civil society and the business community. The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights was launched in November 2017.

In 2015 in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003 my Department drafted a language scheme. The scheme was drafted to comply with our obligations under the Act and to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. The Department invited submissions in relation to the preparation of the scheme from any interested parties.

To date in 2018 my Department has organised a series of Citizens’ Dialogues, engagement with key stakeholders and other events across the country focused on the Future of Europe. The public were invited to contribute to the wider European debate by attending one of these events or making a submission online.

Regional events were held in counties Galway, Kildare, Cork, Donegal, Meath as well as an NGO forum in Dublin. This culminated in the National Citizens’ Dialogue on the Future of Europe at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin on Europe Day, 9th May last. This event was attended by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D. and myself, along with 250 members of the public and civil society representatives.

There are no State agencies under the aegis of my Department.

The table provides the detail you have requested on each of the public consultations outlined above:

Subject matter of public consultations	Cost-€	Number of replies received per consultation
February 2015 - Chambers Ireland and DFAT Workshop on Business and Human Rights	0	31
June 2015 - Language scheme in compliance with the Official Languages Act 2003	1,628	1
January 2016 - Business and Human Rights Consultation event (Submissions invited on Working Outline of the Plan)	664	19
January –May 2018 seven Future of Europe Consultation events	99,100	1,345 attendees, respondents and those who participated through “live-streaming” of events

## Human Rights

117. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the deteriorating human rights situation in Guatemala (details supplied); and if he will raise the issue with his Guatemalan counterpart. [26506/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am aware of the difficult situation which currently pertains for human rights defenders in Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade remains committed to supporting the advancement of human rights in the region, and I condemn unreservedly any act of intimidation or violence perpetrated against those seeking to defend their rights.

Guatemala has made some strides in its political and social development over the past two decades since the gradual cessation of armed conflict from 1996 onwards. While overcoming the legacy of human rights crimes committed during the country’s civil war remains a challenge, it is essential to Guatemala’s future development and I urge the Government of Guatemala to address historical impunity at all levels.

Most recently, Ireland used the occasion of the 28th Session of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 8 November 2017 to express its concern in relation to attacks against human rights defenders in Guatemala. Ireland also noted that there have been worrying instances of harassment, intimidation and criminalisation of human rights defenders in the country.

Ireland’s statement recommended that Guatemala take all necessary steps to protect human rights defenders through the removal of legal and policy measures which inhibit the ability of human rights defenders to carry out their vital work in safety, without fear of interference, obstruction or harassment of any kind, including by finalising the Public Policy for the Protection of HRDs with strong participation by civil society and an adequate budgetary allocation.

Ireland’s statement on Guatemala at the Human Rights Council is available for review on the Department’s website: <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/int-priorities/humanrights/upr/Guatemala-8-November-2017.pdf>

Officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade also meet regularly with human rights defenders and civil society organisations active in Latin America, including in Guatemala and including those working on land rights, an increasingly important issue in the region.

While Ireland does not have a resident embassy in Guatemala City, in keeping with our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and working with partners on the

ground, we will continue to follow the situation in Guatemala closely, and to raise our concerns regarding threats against human rights defenders in discussions on Guatemala at EU and international level.

### **Human Rights**

118. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position of the Government on the recent refusal of the Italian Government to accept refugees (details supplied); the contact he has had with Italian or European authorities regarding the incident; if he will condemn the treatment of the refugees, who included many unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and injured persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26540/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Rather than unilateral actions by any Member State, the migration crisis requires solutions at European level and, though recent discussions, particularly on the reform of the Dublin Regulation, have been very difficult, efforts to reach agreement on a revised common approach to refugees and asylum seekers must continue. This will be an important subject at the European Council next week.

In such a common approach, it is essential to find additional ways to demonstrate practical solidarity with front-line states, such as Italy. I acknowledge the generous response by the new Spanish Government. It is also imperative to respect the dignity and human rights of those who arrive on our shores.

The Irish Naval Service has saved the lives of many migrants, first as part of Operation Pontus and more recently as part of EUNAVFOR MED, also known as Operation Sophia.

I strongly believe that solving the migration crisis will ultimately require deeper political, economic and development relationships between the EU and neighbouring countries, including many in Africa, that is fit for purpose and capable of dealing with a variety of challenges on the basis of shared responsibility.

### **Foreign Policy**

119. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason Ireland abstained in the vote on the proposal by Mauritius to refer the issue of its sovereignty over the Chagos Islands and the question of whether the decolonisation of Mauritius had been carried out in a lawful manner to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, in view of the Chagos Archipelago's subsequent separation. [26620/18]

120. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Ireland will support the case of Mauritius for its sovereignty over the Chagos Islands at the International Court of Justice in the Hague. [26621/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 119 and 120 together.

The UN General Assembly voted on 22 June 2017 on a Resolution put forward by Mauritius to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, prior to Mauritian independence from the UK. The vote on the resolution was 95 in favour, 15 against, with 65 absten-

tions.

Ireland gave considerable attention to the Resolution put before the UN General Assembly on this matter. We weighed the various points of view and listened carefully to the arguments put forward.

After very careful review we felt that the most appropriate step to take was abstention, given the arguments from one side that this is an improper attempt to bring a bilateral dispute before the ICJ and from the other that there are matters of general relevance to the international community relating to de-colonisation.

An abstention is consistent with the position Ireland has taken on previous ICJ referral resolutions, including in 2003 on the separation wall between Israel and the Palestinian Territory and in 2010 on Kosovo's Unilateral Declaration of Independence.

The ICJ Statute and the Court's Rules of Procedure provide that the ICJ may communicate with States which it believes are likely to be able to furnish information on the question and invite them to submit written or oral statements. The deadline for written statements has now expired and the Court has not yet indicated whether oral proceedings will take place in this case.

It is now for the ICJ to decide whether it has jurisdiction to deal with the matter; and, if so, whether it is appropriate to exercise that jurisdiction; and, if it is appropriate to do so, to deal with the merits of the arguments put before it.

*Question No. 121 answered with Question No. 112.*

### **Programme for Government**

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason the programme for Government commitment to recognise the state of Palestine has not been honoured to date. [26652/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government "will honour our commitment to recognise the State of Palestine as part of a lasting settlement of the conflict." Successive Irish Governments have looked forward to being able to recognize a fully sovereign State of Palestine, and have seen this coming about as part of a lasting settlement. In recognition of the frustration felt both in Palestine and here in Ireland over the lack of progress towards that objective, I have made clear repeatedly in the Dáil that I am prepared to recommend to the Government early recognition by Ireland of a State of Palestine, if and when I consider that it might be helpful towards advancing the peace process and achieving the objective we seek. I have not yet concluded that that moment has arrived.

I recognise of course that such a gesture by Ireland could be a welcome sign of support for Palestinians, against a backdrop of hardship and frustration. But it would be a symbolic gesture, and as such, the Government must also consider the likely impact, and the effect of such an action on Ireland's own influence and standing on this and other questions.

*Question No. 123 answered with Question No. 112.*

### **Passport Services**



124. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount of calls received by the passport office in Cork and Dublin compared to the amount of calls answered by the passport office in Cork and Dublin in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26684/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Passport Service has a dedicated Communication Unit to respond to queries from passport applicants. This Communication Unit handles all queries for Passport Offices in Dublin, Cork and London. This Unit can be contacted by telephone, email or by web chat. I recognize that there are individuals with pressing needs who face difficulties in contacting the Passport Service. This results in multiple attempts by the same callers to reach us by phone, email and webchat. I would like to reassure you that the Passport Service is making every effort to respond to as many customer queries as possible. In the week of 11 June the Passport Service's Communications Unit dealt with over 9,500 queries. This included 2,300 cases via the phone. In addition, over 1,500 cases were dealt with via webchat, over 3400 via email and approximately 2,300 in person at our counters in our Dublin and Cork offices.

In recent weeks, the Passport Service has allocated additional resources to the existing Communications Unit to respond to customer queries on phones, email and webchat. Measures taken include the temporary redeployment of existing Passport Service staff and the assignment of temporary clerical officers to the communications unit. For example in recent weeks, over 25 experienced staff from various sections of the Department have joined the existing Communications Team.

I would urge all applicants to consult the website at [www.dfa.ie/passport](http://www.dfa.ie/passport) for guidance in relation to their query before attempting to contact the Customer Service team. Information for all categories of applicants is available on the website, as well as our application tracking service which will show the latest updates on the application process.

*Question Nos. 125 to 127, inclusive, answered with Question No. 112.*

### **Colombian Peace Process**

128. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the implementation of the peace process in Colombia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26927/18]

129. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the upcoming presidential election in Colombia; the potential implications of the election for the peace process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26928/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 128 and 129 together.

In October 2012, the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) began formal peace negotiations, which continued over a period of almost four years and concluded in August 2016. Following a plebiscite in October 2016, elements of the accord were renegotiated and a revised agreement was approved by the Colombian Congress in November 2016, ending a conflict which had afflicted Colombian society for over half a century.

Since then, historic strides have been made in the implementation of the peace accords, including the full decommissioning under UN supervision of FARC weapons by July 2017,

seven months after the agreement was finalised, and the transformation of the FARC into a political party. Formal peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the guerilla National Liberation Army (ELN) resumed in May of this year and a ceasefire was agreed in the run-up and aftermath of both the first and second rounds of the presidential election which took place this month. It is my hope that these negotiations, which are taking place in Havana, can yield meaningful results.

However, as we know from our own experience, achieving peace can be complex and challenging and is far from straightforward. Significant challenges remain in implementation, including in the areas of demining, attention to victims, transitional justice, and rural development, as highlighted earlier this year by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini.

Indeed, the implementation of many aspects of the agreement was put on hold as preparations for this month's presidential elections were taking place. The first round of the presidential election took place on 27 May 2018. Iván Duque, of Centro Democrático (CD), and Gustavo Petro, of the Colombia Humana movement, came in first and second place respectively.

The second round of the election took place between Duque and Petro on Sunday last, 17 June 2018. With most of the ballot counted, Iván Duque had secured the highest number of votes with more than 10 million votes, representing 54% of the total. He will assume office as President of Colombia in mid-August for a four year term.

This is a period of transition in Colombia, and it will be some time before the various actors settle in to their respective roles following the election. While Mr Duque has pledged to revisit elements of the 2016 peace deal, the official position of the new administration in Colombia in relation to the peace process is not yet known, and I expect that full details will become clearer in the coming months.

I firmly believe that Colombia's peace accord provides the framework in which the endemic violence and impunity which has afflicted Colombian society for decades can successfully be addressed. Ireland remains committed to supporting the full implementation of the agreement, which will ensure a more peaceful future for all Colombians, including by establishing good relations with the new administration once in place.

## **Human Rights**

130. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of efforts to address the plight of the Rohingya; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26929/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Since the most recent escalation of violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, in August 2017, approximately 700,000 members of the Rohingya community have fled across the border to Bangladesh where they now reside in precarious conditions in refugee camps. Conditions are likely to deteriorate over the coming months as the monsoon season progresses. The exodus of refugees has been accompanied by credible claims of serious human rights violations by the Myanmar Security Forces. These include reports of widespread killing of civilians, sexual and gender based violence, arbitrary arrests, and the burning of Rohingya villages. Efforts by the international community to address this crisis have focused on responding to the humanitarian crisis, promoting a political solution and pressing for accountability for crimes and other violations of human rights abuses that have occurred. Most recently, on 6 June, a Memorandum of Un-

derstanding has been agreed between Myanmar and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and UNDP, the UN Development Programme, to establish a framework for cooperation between the parties aimed at creating conducive conditions for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of these refugees from Bangladesh to their places of origin. The MoU also aims to help create improved and resilient livelihoods for all communities living in Rakhine State.

Ireland continues to actively engage with our international partners in these efforts through bilateral contacts in Myanmar and via participation in the EU and UN responses. Ireland will be active on this issue at the upcoming 38th Session of the Human Rights Council.

Ireland has consistently called for an independent and impartial investigation into the serious and credible allegations of human rights violations by the Myanmar security forces. In that regard, we have strongly supported the extension of the mandates of the UN Fact Finding Mission and UN Special Rapporteur to Myanmar Yanghee Lee, and have asked the Government of Myanmar to cooperate with them and allow them access to the country. Their work in investigating and recording victim testimony and gathering other evidence, so that it can be preserved for further criminal proceedings, is crucial to ensuring full accountability.

Ireland has also actively engaged in the formation of the EU's position including in the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council's Council Conclusions on Myanmar, which were adopted on 26 February last. These conclusions condemn the human rights violations in Myanmar, support the mandates of the Fact Finding Mission and Special Rapporteur and provide for targeted restrictive measures against senior military officers of the Myanmar armed forces responsible for these acts. These sanctions are now being put in place.

While these efforts are aimed at achieving a political solution to the crisis, there is also a critical need for a coherent humanitarian response to the extremely difficult conditions faced by the huge numbers of displaced members of the Rohingya community now mainly in Bangladesh. To this end, Ireland has actively supported the international humanitarian response to the refugee crisis and we provided direct funding of €1 million in 2017 with an additional €1 million allocated for 2018. Our support has focused on food, shelter, water and sanitation. Through the Irish Aid Rapid Response facility, we have provided 37 tonnes of hygiene, sanitation and shelter kits and deployed experts in water and sanitation and humanitarian coordination on the ground. In addition, as the 6th largest donor to the UN-administered Central Emergency Response Fund, Ireland's estimated contribution through UN pooled funding amounted to a further €1 million to deliver life-saving support.

My Department will continue to liaise closely with EU and other international partners to press for progress in resolving this crisis including through our Embassy in Thailand who are closely monitoring the situation.

*Question No. 131 answered with Question No. 107.*

### **Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base Proposals**

132. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he has discussed the CCCTB with his other EU counterparts recently either directly or at EU Council meetings. [26553/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The European Commission's current proposals for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) were published in October 2016 and first discussed at the November 2016 ECOFIN meeting. The proposal was prepared by the Commission without any input from Member States. The re-launched CCCTB is split into two separate Directives – a Directive for a Common Corporate Tax Base (CCTB) and

a second Directive for a Consolidated CCTB. Although the Commission presented these as a unified package, the CCTB is being discussed first and consolidation will only be discussed once the CCTB is agreed.

At the December 2016 ECOFIN, Council Conclusions were approved in respect of the Commission's wider package which included the CCCTB proposal but there was no specific discussion of the proposals at that meeting. The work on the CCCTB proposal is now taking place in technical working groups at Council and Ireland is actively involved in this work.

By its nature, the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) is a complex and detailed proposal and Member States need to fully analyse and consider its potential impact on national tax systems. Member States are discussing and debating the various aspects of the proposal in the relevant tax working parties. These discussions are progressing but much more technical consideration is needed.

Ireland is an active participant at both EU and OECD level in discussions on reform the international corporate tax system. Currently, the focus is on examining how international tax rules may need to be adapted to address the challenges arising from the ongoing digitisation of the economy.

The reform of the international tax system is regularly discussed at ECOFIN meetings where it is commonly agreed that in order to be effective, any changes to the rules should be globally agreed, evidence based, sustainable in the long run and focussed on aligning taxing rights with the location of real substantive value creating activity.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

133. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the basis on which he was present at a meeting of an organisation (details supplied) in Turin, Italy in June 2018; if he was an official representative of the Government; the person or body that paid for the trip; and the issues that were discussed. [26239/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Founded in 1954, the Bilderberg Meeting is an annual conference designed to foster dialogue between Europe and North America. Every year, between 120-140 political leaders and experts from industry, finance, academia and the media are invited to take part in the conference. The conference is a forum for informal discussions about major issues facing the world.

As Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, I accepted an invitation to attend the 2018 Bilderberg meeting, which took place from 7 to 10 June 2018 in Turin, Italy. The topics for discussion included populism in Europe; the inequality challenge; the future of work; free trade; and current events all of which are pertinent to the Government and Ireland's future development.

The expenses for this trip were treated in the same way as any other international official visit undertaken by me in my capacity as Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Tracker Mortgages**

134. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the status of tracker mortgage redress for persons that are awaiting refunds; when he last met the banks regarding the

matter; when he plans to meet them again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26246/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware, the Central Bank is independent in the performance of its duties in the supervision of regulated financial service providers and it is working to ensure that the tracker mortgage examination is completed as soon as possible. The Bank provided a comprehensive update on the Tracker Mortgage Examination in April 2018, which is available at: <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/consumer-hub-library/tracker-issues/update-on-tracker-mortgage-examination---april-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=4>.

The April update report indicated that:

- the total number of customers identified through the Examination to end-March 2018 is c. 30,000 (of which 1,500 remain to be verified by lenders);

- 88% of identified and verified customer accounts have received offers of redress and compensation. Offers of redress and compensation are expected to be made in respect of the remaining 12% of identified and verified customer accounts by end-June 2018;

- payments may extend beyond that date for any newly identified and verified customers from the time of the April update. However, as redress and compensation schemes are underway across all lenders, the Central Bank expects that any such additional accounts will be swiftly remediated;

- total redress and compensation of €459 million has been paid to end-March 2018, an increase of €162 million since the December 2017 update which the Central Bank also published. The €459 million figure comprises €412 million paid to end-March through the Examination and €47 million paid outside of the Examination.

As part of the Tracker Mortgage Examination, intensive review and challenge of lenders by the Central Bank remains ongoing. It should be noted that verification work by lenders, and review and challenge by the Central Bank, may lead to some further increase in the number of affected customers before conclusion of the Examination.

The Central Bank has challenged, and will continue to challenge, lenders in relation to various strands of the Examination until it is satisfied that all affected customers are identified and lenders have carried out the Examination in accordance with the Framework set down by the Central Bank.

In relation to my meetings with banks, I have regular meetings with the CEOs of the banks in which the State has a shareholding as well as with the non-Irish owned retail banks operating in the Irish market. I met formally with KBC in February, with Bank of Ireland, AIB and PTSB in March, and with Ulster Bank in May during which a broad range of banking matters including progress on the tracker mortgage examination were discussed. While no dates have been scheduled for my next meetings, I remain committed to meeting the main banks on a regular basis.

## Tax Data

135. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of income earned by foreign resident music artists here in each of the past five years; and the amount of tax paid on this income for each of those years. [26279/18]



**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am informed by Revenue that although foreign resident music artists have a liability to Irish tax on income arising from the exercise of their profession in the State, it is not possible to quantify the amount of income earned by foreign resident music artists here. The reason lies in the incidental number of days the individuals are present in the Republic of Ireland, which creates numerous practical difficulties associated with gathering data. For example, the vast majority of non-resident entertainers do not file an Irish tax return as they are not obliged to do so on an annual basis, unlike Irish tax residents.

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

Where a premises provider allows a promoter who is not established in the State to hold a concert on their premises, the provider must report details of the event to Revenue. Failure to do so can make the premises provider jointly liable for any VAT arising. This is a safeguard provision to ensure the correct VAT is collected and paid in relation to any merchandise sold at the concert venue.

### **Tax Reliefs Application**

136. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if section 23A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 will be amended to include professional snooker players (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26321/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy may know, retirement relief for certain sportspersons was introduced in Finance Act 2002 and the categories of sportspersons that can avail of tax relief are set out in schedule 23A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA). These categories include athletes, badminton players, boxers, cricketers, cyclists, footballers, golfers, jockeys, motor racing drivers, rugby players, squash players, swimmers and tennis players. (Cricketers and swimmers were added by to the TCA by s.5 of Finance Act 2012.) I currently have no plans to propose any further additions to schedule 23A.

### **Local Authority Housing Mortgages**

137. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of the €750 million allocated to Home Building Finance Ireland for 2018 that will be drawn down in 2018; if there is an expectation that it will be underspent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26345/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) is to be established to provide funding on market terms to viable residential development projects whose owners are experiencing difficulty in obtaining debt funding. The legislation establishing HBFI, the Home Building Finance Ireland Bill 2018, was published on 18 June 2018 and will now commence its passage through the Oireachtas. It is envisaged that the HBFI legislation will be enacted before the summer recess, and HBFI will begin lending before the end of 2018.

Up to €750m of funds from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) will be allocated to HBFI to provide funding on market terms and the fund is estimated to have capacity to finance about 6,000 homes in the coming years. This €750m will be composed of a combination of equity and loans.

Upon incorporation the Minister will provide equity of €20m which will be used to fund HBFI's initial start-up costs. ISIF will then be directed to lend the remaining funding, of up to €730m, to HBFI at a market rate of interest in order to fund delivery of residential property. It is envisaged that this funding will be delivered in installments on receipt of funding requests from HBFI, the exact scale and timing of these requests will be dependent on market demand.

The portion of HBFI's debt funding to be drawn down in 2018 has not yet been finalised but will be determined after careful market analysis to determine that it will be commensurate to market demand.

### **Insurance Costs**

138. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the cost of business insurance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26354/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Both I and the Government are very conscious of the difficulties that increased insurance costs are having on the business sector and we continue to prioritise action in this area.

Following the publication of its *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* in January 2017, the Cost of Insurance Working Group undertook an examination of the Employer Liability and Public Liability insurance sectors in its second phase of work. While a number of the recommendations in the Motor Report are relevant to the area of business insurance – in particular, the recommendations regarding the Book of Quantum, the Personal Injuries Assessment Board and the establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission – it became clear in preparing the *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* that there was also a pressing need to examine the drivers for the rising cost of business insurance.

The second phase work culminated in the publication on January 25th 2018 of the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance*, following its approval by Government. This new Report makes 15 recommendations with 29 associated actions to be carried out, detailed in an Action Plan contained in the Report with agreed timelines for implementation.

The recommendations, covering three main themes, include actions to:

- **Increase Transparency:** enhance levels of transparency and improve data sharing and collection processes,

- **Review the level of damages in personal injury cases:** request that the Law Reform Commission undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries, and

- **Improve the personal injuries litigation framework:** through a number of measures, including:

a. ensuring potential defendants are notified in sufficient time that an incident has occurred in relation to which a claim is going to be made against their policy;

b. tackling fraudulent or exaggerated claims; and

c. ensuring suitable training and information supports are available to the Judiciary to assist in the fair and consistent assessment and awarding of damages in personal injury cases.

All 29 actions are scheduled to be implemented before the end of 2019, with 26 due for completion this year. The fifth Quarterly Progress Update on implementation was published on 11 May and shows that in respect of the actions from the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance* due for completion in Q1 2018, all eight deadlines have been met. Both of the primary Reports and all of the quarterly updates are available on the Department's website, within "The Cost of Insurance Working Group" sub-section of the main "Insurance" section.

As the issue of insurance costs is an important policy area, the Working Group will continue to focus on implementing the recommendations of the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance* in parallel with implementing those from the 2017 Motor Report. I am hopeful that the cumulative effects of the completion of the two Reports' recommendations will include increased stability in the pricing of insurance for businesses.

### Civil Partnership Legislation

139. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to an anomaly (details supplied) under the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010; the options available to a person in such a position; if this anomaly will be investigated as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26368/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that section 88A of the Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act 2003 exempts transfers made between qualified cohabitants within the meaning of Part 15 of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants (CPCROC) Act 2010.

Part 15 provides for a redress scheme where court orders can be obtained in certain circumstances in relation to the transfer of property. This applies to qualified cohabitants, i.e. persons who have been in a committed and loving relationship with another person for a minimum period of 5 years (2 years where they are parents of one or more dependent children), whose relationship has ended due to death or separation and neither of whom was married to and living with another person in 4 of the 5 years immediately before the end of the relationship.

In a case of intestacy, or where a deceased qualified cohabitant has failed to provide in a will for the other qualified cohabitant, the surviving qualified cohabitant can apply for a court order under Part 15 of the CPCROC Act 2010. The court, in considering the application, will take into account a number of factors including the financial circumstances of the applicant and the claim of any other relevant parties to benefits from the deceased's estate. If the applicant obtains a court order for the transfer of property, then the property transferring will be exempt from inheritance tax.

Where a cohabitant has specifically provided for a surviving cohabitant in his or her will, the usual inheritance tax provisions apply. While transfers between spouses and civil partners are exempt from inheritance tax, a tax-free threshold (Group Threshold), below which inheritance tax does not arise, applies in the case of other types of relationship between the person who provides the inheritance (i.e. the disponent) and the person who receives the inheritance (i.e. the beneficiary).

There are three separate Group Thresholds. The Group A threshold (currently €310,000) applies, inter alia, where the beneficiary is a child (including adopted child, step-child and certain foster children) or minor child of a deceased child of the disponent. The Group B threshold (currently €32,500) applies where the beneficiary is a brother, sister, a nephew, a niece or lineal ancestor or lineal descendant of the disponent. The Group C threshold (currently €16,250) applies in all other cases, including cohabiting couples.

The redress scheme introduced for formerly cohabiting couples under the CPCROC Act 2010 provided protection in law for long-term cohabiting couples and provided safeguards for an economically dependent cohabitant where a relationship ended or on death. The introduction of an exemption from inheritance tax was part of a suite of changes to the Tax Acts consequent on the redress provisions. Thus, a transfer of property under a redress court order is not liable to stamp duty, the transferor of property does not have a capital gains tax liability on the transfer and the recipient of property is not liable to gift tax or inheritance tax. Without these changes, the cohabiting couple would be treated as unconnected individuals and full charges to each of these taxes could arise.

The introduction of the exemption from gift tax and inheritance tax in these cases was not intended to give cohabiting couples the same tax treatment as married couples or civil partners but simply legislated for the tax consequences of the redress arrangements for cohabitants under the CPCROC Act 2010.

### **Tax Yield**

140. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised by introducing a wealth tax at a rate of 1% set at a personal threshold of €1 million of net wealth with no asset exemptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26372/18]

141. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised by introducing a wealth tax at a rate of 1% set at a personal threshold of €1 million of net wealth with no asset exemptions and with a rising rate of 1% at each additional €500,000 wealth threshold (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26373/18]

142. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised by introducing a wealth tax at a rate of 1% set at a personal threshold of €1 million of net wealth with asset exemptions for voluntary pensions and farms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26374/18]

143. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised by introducing a wealth tax at a rate of 1% set at a personal threshold of €1 million of net wealth with asset exemptions for voluntary pensions and farms and with a rising rate of 1% at each additional €500,000 wealth threshold (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26375/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 to 143, inclusive, together.

In order to estimate the potential revenue from a wealth tax, it is necessary to identify the wealth held by individuals. As there is currently no such wealth tax in operation in Ireland, the Department understands that the Revenue Commissioners have no basis or requirement to compile the data needed to produce estimates in relation to a potential wealth tax. Although an indi-

vidual's assets and liabilities are declared to the Revenue in a number of specific circumstances (for example, after a death), this information is not a complete measure of assets and liabilities in the State, nor is it recorded in a manner that would allow analysis of the implications of an overarching wealth based tax.

However, in 2013 the Central Statistics Office conducted the first comprehensive survey of household wealth in Ireland (the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS)). The survey provides information on the ownership and values of different types of assets and liabilities along with more general information on income, employment and household composition.

During 2016, my Department, jointly with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), conducted a research project into the distribution of wealth in Ireland and the potential implications of a wealth tax using the HFCS. The research formed part of an on-going joint-research programme with the ESRI on the Macro-Economy and Taxation. The research paper, available on the ESRI website, presented results on the composition of wealth across both the wealth and income distributions in Ireland. A number of wealth tax scenarios were then applied to the Irish data (wealth tax regimes from other jurisdictions and hypothetical scenarios). In each case, the associated tax bases and revenue yields, the number of liable households across the income distribution, and the characteristics of the households affected are outlined.

The wealth tax scenarios in the research paper that are closest to the wealth taxes outlined by the Deputy in his questions are the high threshold-large exemptions scenario (which best matches the scenario set out in PQ 26374), and the high threshold-no exemptions scenarios (which best matches the scenario outlined in PQ 26372) in Table 5 of the Department of Finance/ESRI study.

The first of these scenarios (high threshold-large exemption) has a personal threshold of €1.0 million (doubled if married and a €500,000 increase per child), applies a 1% tax rate and excludes farms, the household main residence, business and pension assets. This scenario, given the distribution of household wealth in Ireland in 2013, is estimated to raise €53 million as outlined in Table 8 of the Department of Finance/ESRI study. The research notes that its tax revenue estimates are static; in other words, no behavioural response to the tax is modelled. The estimate of €53 million, therefore, is likely to be an upper estimate of the revenue that could be raised.

The second scenario (high threshold-no exemption), applies a 1% tax rate but allows for no exclusions. This scenario, given the distribution of household wealth in Ireland in 2013, is estimated to raise €248 million as outlined in Table 8 of the Department of Finance/ESRI study. Again, the research notes that its tax revenue estimates are static; in other words, no behavioural response to the tax is modelled. The estimate of €248 million, therefore, is also likely to be an upper estimate of the revenue that could be raised.

Given that the above scenarios are not identical to those outlined in the Deputy's questions, care should be taken in interpreting the revenue estimates.

In order to estimate the yield from a tax with the precise parameters as outlined in the Deputy's questions, it would be necessary to seek the agreement of the CSO to revisit its original survey data for this specified purpose. This would be a significant undertaking that would take considerable time and resources to complete. It is also noted that the HFCS does not include specific data on the global assets for those domiciled or ordinarily resident and the domestic assets for those resident for tax purposes. As such, any estimate on the yield obtained from HFCS data would not fully capture the parameters outlined in the Deputy's question.

However, there are a number of additional scenarios set out in the paper which the Deputy



may find informative.

### **Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Remit**

144. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position in relation to people submitting complaints to their financial institution or to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman in relation to alleged mis-selling of payment protection insurance policies; the position in relation to the statute of limitations; if people can now make a complaint if they fell outside the scope of the Central Bank investigation into this issue due to the fact they bought the product prior to July 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26377/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As I informed the Deputy on Tuesday 12th June in response to PQ 24855, the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 provides for the following time limits in relation to long-term financial services.

“(2) A complaint in relation to -

(a) conduct referred to in section 44(1)(a) that, subject to the requirements specified in subsection (3), relates to a long-term financial service, or shall be made to the Ombudsman within whichever of the following periods is the last to expire:

(i) 6 years from the date of the conduct giving rise to the complaint;

(ii) 3 years from the earlier of the date on which the person making the complaint became aware, or ought reasonably to have become aware, of the conduct giving rise to the complaint;

(iii) such longer period as the Ombudsman may allow where it appears to him or her that there are reasonable grounds for requiring a longer period and that it would be just and equitable, in all the circumstances, to so extend the period.

(3) The requirements referred to in subsection (2)(a) are that -

(a) the long-term financial service concerned has not expired or otherwise been terminated more than 6 years before the date of the complaint, and the conduct complained of occurred during or after 2002, or

(b) the Ombudsman has allowed a longer period under subsection (2)(iii).”

In relation to Payment Protection Insurance (PPI), I understand from the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman’s Office that this may, in certain circumstances, be considered a long term financial product when there is a life cover or death benefit attaching. In addition if the loan to which the payment protection is attached is over five years and one month in duration, it would be considered a long term financial product. In these circumstances the Ombudsman may investigate a complaint where the conduct complained of occurred during or after 2002 or at his discretion before this date.

This would apply even if the conduct being complained of was outside the scope to the Central Bank review. The Deputy will be aware that the Consumer Protection Code 2006 came fully into effect on 1 July 2007 and that the objective of the Review was to identify if there were instances where the Code was not complied with and where appropriate to remediate customers.

I should stress that it must appear to the Ombudsman that there are reasonable grounds for requiring the longer period and it would be just and equitable in all the circumstances to extend the period.

The statute of limitations is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

### Departmental Expenditure

145. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26390/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The total amount paid per project to the company Mediavest since 1 January 2016 to date is detailed in the following table.

Year	Project	Amount
2017	We engaged Mediavest to place an advertorial with the Sunday Business Post to publicise the Department winning a National Training Award from the Irish Institute of Training and Development.	€2,870.54

### Tax Yield

146. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding rental income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26420/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that incomes from various sources, such as rental income, are combined in the tax assessment calculation and it is therefore not possible to identify the resulting tax yield from any one particular income source.

Revenue have also advised me that the tax returns up to and including the 2015 tax year did not require rental income to be returned in a manner that separately identified income from residential and non-residential property. It is therefore not possible to provide the proportion of residential rental income separately.

Tax returns for 2016 now include separate declarations of residential and non-residential rental incomes and data from these returns is currently being processed and will be made available in the coming months.

The total gross rental income from both residential and commercial property combined, for each of the years 2010 to 2015, is set out in the following table.

Year	Rental Income (€m)
2015	€4,003
2014	€3,982
2013	€3,938
2012	€4,034
2011	€4,139
2010	€4,258

In relation to the forecast of tax on rental income, my Department together with Revenue forecasts tax receipts on a tax head basis. Separate forecasts are not estimated for particular sectors or types of economic activity.

## Tax Reliefs Availability

147. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to reintroduce tax relief for trade union membership subscriptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26443/18]

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

([http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax\\_Expenditures\\_Report%202016\\_final.pdf](http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Report%202016_final.pdf))

The review concluded that:

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

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

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

## Data Protection

148. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance when he plans to publish legislation in relation to the national claims information database in view of the introduction of the general data protection regulation, GDPR; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26452/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I plan to publish the legislation in relation to the national claims information database in the coming weeks, subject to approval by the Government. In drafting the Bill, my Department has kept in mind the need to ensure that data protection requirements are met.

In broad terms, the Bill as drafted will require the Central Bank to collect data from insurance undertakings for the purpose of producing an annual report. Insurance undertakings shall be required to use their best endeavours to ensure that the information is provided to the Bank in such a form that no individual is identifiable from it, and where an individual is identifiable, the Bank is required to ensure that the identity of that individual is not disclosed by it (in addition to any other Data Protection requirements). The data included in the Annual Report is also required to be combined in such a way that no individual or insurance undertaking is identifiable from it. Thirdly, while the Central Bank may provide any data collected to a person upon request, this power is subject to safeguards.

Finally, I am confident that the Central Bank of Ireland will meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act, 2018, in the performance of its functions in this regard.

**Public Consultation Process**

149. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26461/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department has carried out 56 public consultations since 2011, and a table providing the details is set out below. The majority of the consultations did not incur an explicit cost as part of the work carried out by staff in my Department in relation to public consultations. Such work forms part of the Department's regular staff costs and is not itemised separately.

Three consultations are ongoing on a Review of Local Property Tax, The Possible Introduction of a Vacant Property Tax and on The Feasibility of an Insurance Claim-by-Claim Register, therefore I am not in a position to provide all of the information requested on these consultations at present.

The Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) and Start Up for Entrepreneurs (SURE) schemes are currently the subject of a comprehensive independent review which is being carried out by Indecon International Economic Consultants. The work involves detailed economic modelling, as well as an enhanced public consultation process involving reviewing submissions from a wide range of stakeholders and contact with key organisations, as well as a detailed survey-based consultation programme with firms who have been assisted as part of the review. The total review is budgeted to cost around €75k. It is difficult to assess the proportion of the overall review cost that will be attributable to the public consultation process at this time, though Indecon have indicated they expect it to be around 15% of the total.

Regarding the 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department, 5 have conducted a total of 78 public consultations, details of which are set out in a separate table. As in my Department, an explicit cost was not incurred for a number of consultations as work carried out in these bodies in relation to public consultations forms part of the normal course of business for the bodies and is therefore accounted for within their overall operational budgets.

Department of Finance – Bodies under the Aegis

Public Consultations 2011 – 2018 (completed)

Body	Number of public consultations in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Number of replies received per consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018
Comptroller & Auditor General	2017	Irish Language Scheme - 2	€687.93
Central Bank	2011 - 2018 = 70	The Central Bank has indicated that it is not in a position to provide the number of submissions on each of the 70 consultations. Each of these consultations are public and all submissions are published on the Central Bank website	Nil.
Investor Compensation Company Limited	2012 2015	Funding Arrangements of the ICCL - 19 Funding Arrangements of the ICCL - 3	Circa €7,500 (to print and post the Consultation Paper to the investment firms in the Investor Compensation Scheme). Circa €2,100 (postage alerting the investment firms in the Investor Compensation Scheme to the electronic publication of the Consultation Paper on the ICCL's website);

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Body	Number of public consultations in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Number of replies received per consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	2014 2016	Statement of Strategy - 10Third Irish Language Scheme - 27PAYE Modernisation - 77Statement of Strategy - 15	Nil€15,478€30,370Nil
Tax Appeals Commission	2017	Rules & Procedures of the Tax Appeals Commission - 12	€4,447.05 (Advertisement placed in 3 national newspapers).

Department of Finance - Public Consultations 2011 – 2018 (completed)

Number of public consultations in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Number of replies received per consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018
2011	Commission on Credit Unions - 144Public Consultation To inform the Report of the Commission Credit Unions - 120Legacy Property Based Reliefs - 743	Nil
2012	VRT and Motor Tax - 34Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Bill 2011 - 7National Discretions SEPA - 11General Scheme of Credit Union Bill - 20Donations to Approved Bodies - 61Film Relief – 20Tax Implications of Appointing a Receiver – 11Tax Residence Rules - 8	Nil
2013	Proposed changes to Pay & File date - 86Remuneration discretions in the Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive (CRD IV) - 2Member State discretions in the Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive (CRD IV) – 1 Receiverships: Follow up -5Review of Research and Development Tax Credits - 23	Nil
2014	IBFD Spillover Analysis - Possible Effects of the Irish Tax System on Developing Economies – 94 *OECD Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Project in an Irish Context - 25Second Irish Language Scheme - 6Transposition of the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive - 1Member State discretions available in the transposition of the 2014 Mortgage Credit Directive - 9European Markets Infrastructure Regulation (EMIR) - 11Investor Compensation Act Regulations – 1Certain Discretionary Measures in the Solvency II Directive - 3Stabilisation Levy Consultation - 33Agri-taxation - 46Employment and Investment Incentive & Seed Capital Scheme - 19Special Assignee Relief Programme - 13Foreign Earnings Deduction - 9	* The consultation on IBFD Spillover was carried out by my Department and submissions were provided to external consultants commissioned to undertake the Spillover Analysis costing €94,678.00.Nil for all others in 2014.
2015	Review of the Local Property Tax 2015 - 51Tax treatment of expenses of travel and subsistence for employees and office holders - 52Knowledge Development Box Consultation - 34Amalgamation of the Offices of the Financial Services Ombudsman and the Pension Ombudsman - 25Transposition of the Deposit Guarantee Scheme Directive - 21Joint Public Consultation Department of Finance/Central Bank of Ireland on Funding the Cost of Financial Regulation - 25Consultation on national discretions - Multilateral Interchange Fee Regulation - 20Consultation on national discretions – EU Payment Accounts Directive - 8Capital Markets Union - Commission Green Paper – 9	€7,181.56Nil for all others in 2015.
2016 - 7	The use of intermediary-type structures and self-employment arrangements: implications for social insurance and tax revenues - 24Double Taxation Treaty with the United States of America - 19The Financial Institutions - 7National Discretions – EU Revised Payment Services Directive - 14Market in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) II - 144th Anti-Money Laundering Directive - 21Taxation of Share Based Remuneration - 33	Nil
2017	Sugar Tax - 30Betting Tax - 13Review of Ireland’s Corporation Tax Code - 16 Review of Stamp Duty on Shares - 12Third Irish Language Scheme - 0Potential Regulation of Crowdfunding - 9Transposition of EU Directive 2016/97 on Insurance Distribution (IDD) - 3Tax and Fiscal Treatment of Landlords – 69	Nil



*Questions - Written Answers*

Number of public consultations in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Number of replies received per consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018	Cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018
2018	Review of Corporation Tax Code - 22 General Scheme of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Bill - 6 Agri-Taxation - 17	Nil

### **Motor Insurance Costs**

150. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the discussions his Department has had with relevant agencies and industry representative bodies to enable newly qualified taxi drivers to obtain vehicle insurance at a reasonable price. [26487/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms and conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of drivers or vehicles.

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

In line with the EU framework, the Cost of Insurance Working Group's starting position on insurance for taxi drivers was that it was not possible for it to make a recommendation on pricing as this is primarily a commercial matter for insurers. It did however recognise that this sector serves a social as well as an economic purpose, particularly in rural areas where public transport is less readily available. This position was acknowledged by the inclusion of Recommendation 10 in the Report of the Cost of Insurance Working Group on the Cost of Motor Insurance. This recommended that the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles should enter regular discussions with Insurance Ireland to explore solutions for drivers in the sector.

That Fifth Update Report, published on 11 May 2018 at <http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/5th-Progress-Update-Q1-2018-Focus.pdf>, outlines the implementation of this recommendation. In summary, Insurance Ireland met with the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles, commonly known as the Taxi Advisory Committee (TAC), on 22 May 2017. The TAC submitted the required report in relation to this meeting on 21 June 2017 to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. To date, no further meetings have taken place between the TAC and Insurance Ireland. However, the TAC has advised my officials that it is keeping itself informed of developments in the area, particularly through the industry representatives on the Committee, and future meetings with Insurance Ireland are a part of the TAC strategy. Recommendation 10 has been completed in the sense that the TAC has reported to the Minister for Transport. Notwithstanding this, my view would be that work needs to continue on this general issue. Therefore, I look forward to further engagements between the TAC and the insurance industry.

I would add that, notwithstanding the role of the TAC, the issues raised by the taxi sector were in the main similar to those affecting consumers generally, notwithstanding that there are risks that are specific to the sector. While there is no silver bullet to reduce the cost of insurance, I believe that the implementation of both the Cost of Insurance Working Group Motor Report and Employer/Public Liability Report should deliver fairer premiums for consumers, including taxi drivers. In addition, I am of the view that this ongoing work should better facilitate potential new entrants to the market. In this regard, I have been informed by my officials that Insurance Ireland has stated that there has been some increase in market capacity in relation to the provision of motor insurance for taxi drivers recently.

### **NAMA Accounts**

151. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated surplus from National Asset Management Agency, NAMA; when the surplus will accrue to the State; his plans for the surplus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26494/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to advise the Deputy that, as outlined in its recent 2017 Annual Report, NAMA expects to return a surplus to the State in the region of €3.5bn, subject to prevailing market conditions, when it completes its work. This is an increase of €500m from the previous estimate in its 2016 Annual Report, and a testament to the progress that NAMA has made in achieving its primary objective of enhancing the value of its assets in the interest of the State.

It is important to recognise that this is a projected surplus - it will only materialise after NAMA's debt is fully repaid and NAMA's ongoing work is completed. It is expected that NAMA will substantially complete its work by 2020. The Agency announced in October 2017 that it had redeemed all of its €30.2bn in Senior Debt which was guaranteed by the State and in April 2018 it redeemed €243m of its subordinated debt. However, notwithstanding the successful achievement of repaying the State's contingent liability, three years ahead of schedule, there is still a significant body of work yet to be completed by NAMA.

This work includes completion of NAMA's residential and Docklands SDZ funding programmes, the repayment of its outstanding subordinated debt of €1.4bn, and deleveraging of the remainder of its loan portfolio. The carrying value of the portfolio as year-end 2017, net of cumulative impairment, was €3.2 billion. I am advised that this residual loan portfolio will require intensive case management and asset management if the projected terminal surplus is to be realised. As such, the projected surplus will not accrue to the State before 2020.

Any NAMA surplus paid, while Exchequer positive, will not impact the general government balance, in line with Eurostat rules. It will be a decision for the Government as to how any surplus returned by NAMA will be utilised within the framework of the fiscal rules. However, the intention has always been to use such receipts from the resolution of the financial sector crisis to pay down our national debt and reduce our debt servicing costs.

### **Tax Code**

152. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to revise or remove the deemed disposal rule which was introduced in the Finance Act 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26538/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Finance Act 2000 introduced the gross

roll-up taxation regime for investments in certain investment undertakings and life assurance policies. Generally the regime provides that there is no annual tax on income or gains arising within the investment. Instead, tax applies at an investor level.

Finance Act 2006 introduced the concept of deemed disposals every 8 years in relation to these investments. A deemed disposal occurs 8 years following inception of a policy of life assurance or acquisition of a fund and then every 8 years thereafter. The deemed disposal rules also apply to equivalent offshore funds. Any gain on the investment which arises from the date of inception or the date of acquisition to the date of the deemed disposal is subject to tax. This ensures that income isn't being rolled up in life assurance policies or funds without being taxed. On the ultimate disposal of the investment any tax paid which arose as a result of a deemed disposal is allowed as a credit against any final tax liability on disposal.

The 8 year deemed disposal rule is not currently under review at this time.

### **Stability and Growth Pact**

153. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the restrictions on expenditure under the European fiscal rules once a member state is in the preventive arm of the fiscal rules, has met its medium term objective and has reached its target for debt to GDP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26619/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact endeavours to ensure that fiscal policy leads to sustainable public finances over the short and longer term.

A key component is that Member States attain a country-specific Medium Term budgetary Objective (MTO) which is set in structural terms. For Ireland this is currently a structural deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP.

Assessment of compliance with the requirements of the preventive arm takes a two-pillar approach. Assessment of the structural balance, the first pillar, is complemented by an analysis of the growth rate of an expenditure aggregate net of discretionary revenue measures, i.e. the expenditure benchmark, which constitutes the second pillar. Compliance with the preventive arm is assessed through an overall assessment taking both elements into account.

Member States at their MTO must ensure that government expenditure grows at most in line with a medium-term rate of potential GDP growth, unless any excess growth is matched by discretionary revenue raising measures. The medium-term rate of potential growth ensures adherence to the MTO over time.

If a Member State has overachieved its MTO then any deviation on the expenditure benchmark shall not be considered significant, taking into account the possibility that significant revenue windfalls and the budgetary plans laid out in the Stability Programme do not jeopardise the MTO over the programme period.

### **Government Bonds**

154. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of the €57.6 billion of Government bonds to be refinanced over the next five years held by the Central Bank as part of the ECB's asset purchase programme; the amount of these bonds held by other eurozone central banks as part of the programme; the amount of these bonds held directly by the

European Central Bank as part of the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26624/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I have been advised by colleagues in the Central Bank of Ireland that the Eurosystem does not publish details of the holdings of individual bonds under the Public Sector Purchase Programme (PSPP).

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>

### **Motor Insurance Costs**

155. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the task force on the motor insurance industry; the status of each of the recommendations; the length of time it will take for individual recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26641/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy will be aware that the Cost of Insurance Working Group's *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan in the Report.

Work has been ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group prepare quarterly updates on its progress.

The *Fifth Progress Update* was published on the Department of Finance website on 11 May 2018. It shows that of the 50 separate deadlines set up to the end of Q1 2018 within the Action Plan, 40 have been met, while substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing".

In relation to both the outstanding actions from previous quarters and to the remaining 12 actions scheduled for completion in Q2, Q3 and Q4 of 2018, all efforts are being undertaken in order to complete them as soon as possible. At this juncture, as highlighted in the last update report, it is anticipated that the action points likely to be delayed beyond 2018 are those related to the large-scale initiatives under the remit of the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Sport. These include the completion of the Master Licence Record project and the database to identify uninsured drivers. However, it is expected that the vast majority of the Action Plan will be completed by the end of this year.

For more information on the status of each individual recommendation, including the envisaged timeframes for completion, I refer the Deputy to the quarterly update reports. Both the Report and all of the quarterly updates are available on the Department's website, within "The Cost of Insurance Working Group" sub-section of the main "Insurance" section.

Finally, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 2018) indicates that pri-

vate motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While it is accepted that motor insurance premiums are still at a very high level for many people, such statistics indicate at least a greater degree of stability in the market on an overall basis. I am hopeful that this trend in pricing will be maintained and that premiums shall continue to fall from the very high levels of mid-2016.

### **Tax Yield**

156. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue that would be raised if the sugar sweetened drinks tax was extended to include milk based products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26689/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The 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 rationale behind imposing a tax on sugar-sweetened drinks is to help tackle obesity by reducing the consumption of liable water and juice based drinks. Milk products are outside the scope of the tax on the basis that they provide satiation, which prevents excessive consumption, as well as nutritional benefits such as calcium and protein. This is the established policy position based on scientific evidence and this position was endorsed by the European Commission in its positive State aid decision in relation to the tax.

It is not possible to easily estimate the additional revenue which would be generated by extending the sugar sweetened drinks tax to milk based products.

### **VAT Rate Application**

157. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to reduce the current 23% VAT rate that applies to menstrual cups to 0% to bring it into line with the rate that applies here for other sanitary items. [26699/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** VAT is guided by the EU VAT Directive, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In Ireland, certain sanitary products, such as sanitary towels and tampons, are charged to VAT at the zero rate.

Article 110 of the VAT Directive allows Member States to apply a zero rate of VAT to goods or services that are social in nature, that benefit the final consumer and which applied at a zero rate on and from 1 January 1991. Sanitary items like sanitary towels were applied at the zero rate since 1975, while sanitary tampons have applied at the zero rate since 1984.

As both applied at the zero rate since before 1991, it is possible to retain the zero rated VAT treatment on these products. However, it is not possible to apply the zero rate to other newer sanitary products that were not zero-rated on 1 January 1991.

158. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance when it is envisaged to terminate the pension levy in view of the fact that four years was its original timeframe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26701/18]

159. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the areas to which revenue raised



from the pension levy is allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26702/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 158 and 159 together.

The Pension Scheme Levy was introduced in 2011. For the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 the rate was 0.60% of the scheme assets. For the year 2014 the rate was 0.75% of the assets and for the year 2015, the final year of the levy, the rate was 0.15%. Under the legislation, the payment of the levy was treated as a necessary expense of a pension scheme and the trustees or insurer, as appropriate, were entitled where needed to adjust current or prospective benefits payable under a scheme to take account of the levy. It was up to the trustees or insurer to decide whether, when and how the levy was passed on and to what extent, given the particular circumstances of the pension schemes for which they are responsible.

The legislation also included safeguards aimed at ensuring that should the option of reducing scheme benefits be taken, it was applied in an equitable fashion across the different classes of scheme members that could include active, deferred and retired members. In no case could the reduction in an individual member's or class of member's benefits exceed the member's or class of member's share of the levy.

Where pension scheme trustees or an insurer took the decision to treat the levy as an expense of the pension scheme, they would have adjusted current or prospective benefits payable to members under that scheme. The consequence of this treatment by the trustees or insurer could be a permanent reduction in members' benefits.

The Pension Scheme Levy has ceased since 2015.

Revenues raised from the Pension Levy were not hypothecated and formed part of the Exchequer. When introduced by the previous Government, it was announced that the equivalent of the funds raised from the levy would be used to fund the tax reductions and expenditure measures introduced in the *Jobs Initiative*.

### **Insurance Costs**

160. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to address the issue of increasing insurance costs for community and voluntary sector organisations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26738/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am aware of the concerns raised by the Deputy in relation to the financial strain which the cost of insurance is placing on some community and voluntary organisations. However, the Deputy should note that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation and that neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of policyholders.

However, what was recognised with the establishment of the Cost of Insurance Working Group was that the environment within which insurers conduct their business can be better

shaped, in order to make the Irish insurance market a more competitive one and also make it more attractive for new entrants. In this regard, the initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The second phase of the Cost of Insurance Working Group under the Chairmanship of the Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Michael D'Arcy TD, published its report in relation to employer liability and public liability insurance in January 2018. This Report acknowledges that many of the difficulties being faced by business are also impacting community groups.

The Working Group's second Report makes 15 recommendations with 29 associated actions to be carried out. The recommendations and actions are detailed in an action plan contained in the report with agreed timelines for implementation. All 29 actions are scheduled to be implemented before the end of 2019, with 26 due for completion this year. The recommendations, covering three main themes, include actions to:

- Increase Transparency: enhance levels of transparency and improve data sharing and collection processes

- Review the level of damages in personal injury cases: request that the Law Reform Commission undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries and

- Improve the personal injuries litigation framework: through a number of measures, namely:

- ensuring potential defendants are notified in sufficient time that an incident has occurred in relation to which a claim is going to be made against their policy;

- tackling fraudulent or exaggerated claims; and

- ensuring suitable training and information supports are available to the judiciary to assist in the fair and consistent assessment and awarding of damages in personal injury cases.

The fifth Quarterly Progress Update on implementation was published on 11 May and is available on the website of the Department of Finance. In respect of the actions from the Report due for completion in Q1 2018, all eight deadlines have been met.

I would like to assure the Deputy that the Government remains committed to ensuring that all of the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group are implemented fully in order to drive the reforms listed above. It is envisaged that the cumulative effect of the implementation of these recommendations, with the appropriate levels of commitment and cooperation from all relevant stakeholders, will achieve the objective of delivering fairer premiums for consumers and businesses, and will also beneficially impact community, voluntary and charitable organisations across the country.

### **Banking Sector Regulation**

161. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the costs incurred to date with regard to the Central Bank inquiry pursuant to Part IIIC of the Central Bank Act 1942 in relation to a former building society (details supplied) and certain persons in its management; the cost of Central Bank staff involved in the inquiry; the estimated final cost of the inquiry; if these costs can be recouped; the date the Central Bank commenced this inquiry; when it is expected

to be concluded; the possible sanctions against persons if adverse conclusions are reached; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26773/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Under Part IIIC of the Central Bank Act 1942 (as amended) (“the Act”), the Central Bank may hold an inquiry to determine whether or not a financial service provider is committing or has committed a suspected prescribed contravention. The Central Bank may also hold an inquiry to determine whether or not a person concerned in the management of a regulated financial service provider is participating or has participated in the commission of a suspected prescribed contravention by the financial service provider.

Part IIIC of the Act sets out the framework for how Administrative Sanctions Procedures (“ASP”) inquiries are to be carried out.

The sanctions are outlined in section 33AQ(5) of the Act:

*If the Inquiry Members find that a person concerned has participated in the commission of a contravention, the Inquiry Members may impose one or more of the following sanctions:*

- (a) a caution or reprimand;*
- (b) a direction to pay to the Bank a monetary penalty not exceeding the prescribed amount;*
- (c) a direction disqualifying the person from being concerned in the management of a regulated financial service provider for such period as is specified in the order;*
- (d) if the person is found to be still participating in the commission of the contravention, a direction ordering the person to cease participating in the commission of the contravention;*
- (e) a direction to pay to the Bank all or a specified part of the costs incurred by the Bank in holding the inquiry and in investigating the matter to which the inquiry relates.*

Section 33AQ(5)(e) of the Act provides that If the Inquiry Members find that a person concerned has participated in the commission of a contravention, they may direct the person concerned to pay to the Bank all or a specified part of the costs incurred by the Bank in holding the inquiry and in investigating the matter to which the inquiry relates.

On 19 December 2014, the Enforcement Directorate of the Central Bank referred its investigation to the Regulatory Decisions Unit (RDU) of the Central Bank to hold an Inquiry. On 9 July 2015, the RDU issued a Notice of Inquiry to the successors of INBS and to five persons concerned in the management of INBS.

The Central Bank is not currently in a position to estimate when the Inquiry is likely to conclude.

As the Inquiry is ongoing, the Central Bank is not commenting on matters related to the cost of the Inquiry at this time.

Similarly, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter until the Inquiry has concluded.

## **Tax Avoidance**

162. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on Ireland being branded the world’s biggest corporate tax haven by academics in the United States of America

and Denmark. [26554/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand that the Deputy is alluding to report “*The Missing Profits of Nations*” by G. Zucman, T. Tørsløv and L. Wier, that examines attribution of profits by multinationals around the world.

In the first instance, I reject any assertion that Ireland is a tax haven. The report does not provide any definition of a tax haven and appears to assert that Ireland, and many other countries, are tax havens without providing a rationale for that assertion.

In the report, the authors appear to use the terms “low-tax countries” and “tax havens” interchangeably. The inference that Ireland is a tax haven simply because of our longstanding 12.5% corporate tax rate is totally out of line with the long established position that a low corporate tax rate applied to a wide tax base is good economic policy for attracting investment and supporting economic growth.

The central analysis of the paper looks at links between level of profit booked in a country and the level of wages paid in a country. This creates a totally misleading impression that corporate profits are or should be directly linked to wage levels rather than to the outputs of investment in all income generating activities such as investment in R&D, intangible assets, capital intensive machinery and investment in staff etc.

It is important to be very clear – corporation tax is paid where value is created not simply where companies have their highest wage bills. It is therefore misleading to assert that profits are being artificially shifted by focusing on the ratio of profits to wages in each country.

Ireland’s tax regime is designed to encourage the location of real, substantive and high-value adding investment in the country. We do not apologise for having a competitive tax regime because we ensure that our overall regime is fully in line with international standards for fair tax competition as agreed at the EU and the OECD.

It is clear that the only way to ensure that the right tax is paid in the right place is to ensure that all tax authorities have access to all relevant information for assessing whether they are owed any tax. This is why tax transparency and exchange of information among tax authorities is so vital.

Ireland has continuously made changes to our tax legislation to ensure we meet all international best practices for exchange of tax information. Last August, the Global Forum on Tax Transparency and Exchange of Information (an OECD led peer-review) awarded Ireland the highest international rating on tax transparency and exchange of information, one of only twenty two jurisdictions globally to be so rated following a new and enhanced peer review process.

Ireland actively contributes towards preventing aggressive tax planning through the implementation of the OECD BEPS reports and the numerous EU Directives we have agreed on tax avoidance. We continue to play our part in this ongoing work. It is widely acknowledged that difficulties in the international tax system mainly arise from asymmetries between the taxation systems of different countries. Only by acting together can we ensure that companies are taxed appropriately.

### Departmental Properties

163. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans for a derelict building (details supplied); and if there is a timeline for such plans.

[26483/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** A contract has been awarded for the fit-out of the former Department of Social Protection premises in Newbridge for the Probation and Welfare Services.

### **Departmental Contracts**

164. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the public forms of construction contract criteria will be reviewed to facilitate variations that may arise from legislative enactment, that is, wage increases under sectoral employment order or significant price increases in materials such as insulation and steel (details supplied). [26264/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** All public works projects that are delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the Government’s capital plan must be procured in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF). The CWMF is mandated by circular and was developed to assist contracting authorities in meeting their ongoing procurement requirements. It provides an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material, technical templates and procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review.

The conditions of the public works contracts which are used for the delivery of the majority of building and civil engineering projects are fixed price, lump sum contracts. This requirement is key to ensuring greater cost certainty in the delivery of the public capital programme. When tendering public works contracts, contractors are expected to take account of cost increases due to inflation up to the project’s completion. On projects with long delivery programmes, an adjustment to the contract sum for inflation is possible but only after the pre-determined fixed price period has elapsed.

In order to take cost increases due to inflation into account when pricing a project it is accepted that a degree of foresight is required on the likely increases in the input costs such as labour, materials and plant over the duration of the project.

With regards to the matter of Sectoral Employment Orders (SEO) introduced by Statutory Instrument, whilst it is the case that there were no transitional arrangements introduced when the SEOs were signed into law, nonetheless there was an 11 month process leading up to the establishment of the first SEO in October 2017.

In November 2016 an application was made to the Labour Court by the Construction Industry Federation to commence the process. As a body who represents significant numbers of employers in the construction sector it must be presumed that this application was made with the knowledge of its members. An invitation for submissions by interested parties was published by the Labour Court in February 2017. This was followed by an invitation from the Labour Court to an oral hearing on 26 June 2017 to those who made submissions. Having concluded its deliberations, the Labour Court issued a recommendation to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on the 13 July 2017 which was published shortly thereafter. The Minister, having accepted the recommendation, submitted a draft order to both Houses of the Oireachtas and it was signed into law on 19 October 2017 after a resolution approving it had been passed by each House.

Wages in this sector have experienced increases in recent years as evidenced by average increases of 6% year on year in the biannual tender price index published by the Society of Char-



tered Surveyors in Ireland since 2014. The foregoing would suggest that contractors should have been taking wage inflation into account when tendering for construction contracts; public or private. Indeed the SCSi tender price index would suggest that contractors have been taking wage inflation into account in pricing work.

Circular 08/2018 was issued on 24 May 2018 through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) which sets out the amendments that have been undertaken to the CWMF to reflect the introduction of the SEOs in the construction sector. These amendments will apply to tenders and contracts that are commenced after the periods set out in the circular and do not change the fixed price nature of the contracts.

The Office of Government Procurement is commencing its engagement on the development of a Medium Term Strategy for the procurement of public works. The Strategy will incorporate a broader review of the procurement of public works projects with a view to better manage risk generally and to ensure quality outcomes. The engagement on the Strategy will involve all industry stakeholders and public bodies involved in the delivery of the public capital programme.

### **Public Sector Pensions**

165. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the single public service pension scheme and proposed regulations to provide for a facility for the purchase and transfer of additional pension benefits by single scheme members; the timeframe for the changes to come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26285/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to PQ No. 214 (ref. 23422/18) on the 29 May 2018.

### **Public Sector Pensions**

166. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a preserved pension will be paid to a person (details supplied). [26288/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand from HR Shared Services, who received the application for a preserved pension from the individual concerned, that the application is being processed and that the pension lump sum will be paid shortly and the pension commenced with appropriate arrears paid.

### **Public Sector Pay**

167. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the outstanding policies of financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, legislation pertaining to pay restoration. [26317/18]

168. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of unwinding financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, and restoring pay disaggregated by salary brackets. [26318/18]

169. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of unwinding financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, and

restoring pay disaggregated by department and public role, for example, nurses or teachers and so on. [26319/18]

170. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of unwinding financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, according to the current approach. [26320/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 to 170, inclusive, together.

The unwinding of the emergency FEMPI legislation commenced with the Lansdowne Road Agreement 2016-2018 and will be completed under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 -2020 (PSSA). In relation to the PSSA, the measures agreed were given legal effect through the enactment of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The PSSA also makes provision for pay increases to be made to those public servants for whom FEMPI pay measures have already been unwound.

The cost of the PSSA Agreement in the years 2018-2020 is €887m. Carry over costs of €227m associated with the final 2% pay increase in October 2020 fall in 2021. In addition a further €78m is required to complete FEMPI restoration for those public servants whose salary will not be fully restored (those on annualised remuneration greater than €70,000) through the PSSA increases. Under section 19 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act for those covered by the Agreement, these remaining amounts will be paid no later than July 2022. In total the costs associated with the agreed unwinding of remaining FEMPI measures is €1.2bn.

A breakdown of the estimated remaining costs of FEMPI unwinding post 2020 by salary band (disaggregation by profession, grade or post is not available) is detailed in the table. These do not sum to the total indicated above because of costs associated with the conversion of the existing Pension Related Deduction (PRD) into an Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) with effect from 1 January 2019 as provided for in the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The costs arising from the implementation of the ASC are included in the total cost of the PSSA of €887m for the years 2018-2020.

Annual costs are disaggregated by Vote group as part of the Budget process. Work on this has not yet commenced for Budget 2019.

-	Total 2018-2021	Completion of Pay Restoration 2020/21
0-25,000	30,158,438	
25000-30000	35,791,621	
30000-35000	117,126,361	
35000-40000	107,309,297	
40000-45000	134,062,442	
45000-50000	104,439,509	
50000-55000	80,874,158	
55000-60000	101,319,483	
60000-65000	76,272,935	
65000-70000	47,264,376	
70000-75000	34,100,376	7,485,778
75000-80000	29,807,683	7,935,392
80000-85000	16,098,744	4,887,532
85000-90000	12,268,994	4,132,726
90000-95000	6,732,760	2,495,108
95000-100000	6,291,419	2,464,283

*Questions - Written Answers*

-	Total 2018-2021	Completion of Pay Restoration 2020/21
100000-125000	11,464,723	5,018,794
125000-150000	14,247,227	5,725,034
150000-175000	14,999,765	19,138,330
175000+	5,857,360	11,515,444
Total	986,487,671	70,798,421
PRSI	106,047,425	7,610,830
Total Including PRSI	1,092,535,096	78,409,251

### Departmental Expenditure

171. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26395/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The following table outlines the amounts paid by my Department for the services of the company named in the question from 1st January 2016 up to and including 13th June 2018.

YEAR	Payment Date	Project Name	Amount Paid
2018	22.03.18	Regulation of Lobbying Act, Appeal Officers Competition	€1,536
	12.06.18	Public Notice of Flood Defence Schemes / Plans	€5,842
2017	15.08.17	Our Public Service 2020 Consultation Advertising Campaign	€3,762
	14.09.17	Advertising for Appointment of Disclosures Recipient under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014	€2,438
	14.09.17	Advertising for Public Consultation for review of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014	€3,641
	28.09.17	Public Notice of Flood Defence Schemes / Plans	€634
2016	29.09.16	Open Government Partnership – National Action Plan 2	€5,512
	20.10.16	First Review of Regulation of Lobbying Act, Appeal Officers Competition	€3,548
TOTAL			€26,913

### Public Consultation Process

172. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26466/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Details of all public consultations held by my Department, and the bodies under the aegis of my Department, are outlined in the following table.

### Department Of Public Expenditure and Reform

Year	Title of Public Consultation:	Responses	Cost
2011	Regulation of Lobbying Bill	61	€3,719.83
	Comprehensive Review of Expenditure	1,000+	Nil
2012	None	N/A	N/A
2013	Review of Public Works Contracts	12	Nil
2014	Comprehensive Review of Expenditure	62	Nil
	Transposition of the EU Public Procurement Directives	43	€3,598.42
	Open Government Partnership: Consultation with Civil Society Representatives and Citizens on Ireland's Participation in the Open Government Partnership	62	€25,735.25
	Consultation process on the development of a foundation document for an Open Data Strategy in 2014	9	Nil
	Statute Law Revision Bill	42	Nil
	Data Sharing and Governance policy paper	26	Nil
	Civil Service Accountability Consultation Process	39	€6,714.75
2015	Government Contracts Committee on Construction Information Sessions on the forthcoming amendments to the Public Works Contracts (held in 5 locations nationwide).	N/A – open forum for Q&As	€10,200
	Draft Consultation Principles / Guidance for Public Consultation	50 submissions	Nil
	Commissioning for Better Outcomes	64 submissions	€6,855.15
	Freedom of Information Publication Scheme	7	Nil
	Guidance for Public Bodies on the Protected Disclosures Act 2014	4	Nil
	Draft Corporate Governance Standards for central Government Departments	31	€5,036.96
	Statute Law Revision Bill	0	Nil
	Consultation on Open Data Licencing	9	Nil
2016	Open Government Partnership Ireland's Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2014-2016: End-term Self-Assessment Report Open Government Partnership Ireland: Have Your Say - 2016-2018 Ireland's Draft National Action Plan 2016-2018 Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2016-2018: Implementation Review	3 submissions 119 submissions 17 submissions 4 submissions	€42,922
	First Review of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015	31	€3,548.14
2017	Mid-Term Review of the Capital Plan - Consultative Forum	166 submissions	€583.74
	Employer-Exchequer Investment Mechanism to fund Higher & Further Education (Joint DPER/DES Consultation and Meeting)	28 submissions	€220 (DPER cost)
	Adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM) on public works projects	16	Nil
	Our Public Service 2020	22	€6,179
	Draft national Open Data Strategy 2017-2022	6	Nil
2018	Dialogue on Effective Prevention and Early Intervention Approaches in Human Services*	7 March 2018 49 participants 30 May 2018 830 participants	€577.13 €218.49
	Public Consultation on the European Directive 2014/55/EU on electronic invoicing in public procurement	0	€2,430.81

### Public Appointments Service

Questions - Written Answers

YEAR	Title of Public Consultation:	Responses:	Cost:
2011	None	N/A	N/A
2012	None	N/A	N/A
2013	Irish Language Scheme	7	€902.24
2014	None	N/A	N/A
2015	Brand Awareness Survey	1007	€23,247
2016	Irish Language Scheme	1	€430.50
2017	None	N/A	N/A
2018	None	N/A	N/A

### Office of Public Works

Please note that the Office of Public Works will respond directly to the Deputy.

### Flood Relief Schemes Status

173. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a specific area relating to the flood relief scheme recent announcement (details supplied) will be prioritised. [26525/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme was the largest ever flood risk study carried out in the State and covered 300 areas believed to be at significant flood risk. The CFRAM programme culminated with the launch on 3rd May, 2018 of 29 flood risk management plans which propose 118 new outline flood relief projects on top of the 42 major projects already completed and the 33 major schemes within the existing capital works programme of the Office of Public Works (OPW). All of these projects are to be funded under the Government’s 10 year flood risk investment programme of almost €1 billion under the *National Development Plan 2018 – 2027*.

As it is not possible to progress all 118 proposed new schemes at once, funding of €257 million for an initial phase of 50 flood relief projects throughout the country was also announced which would be progressed to detailed design and construction, including the five largest schemes identified in the Plans and 31 small or minor projects under €1 million which will be progressed directly by local authorities. Aside from the 5 largest schemes and the 31 small or minor projects, the remaining projects in the initial phase of implementation were selected on the basis of those projects which would provide the greatest benefit in terms of the greatest number of properties protected on a regionally balanced basis.

A proposed flood relief scheme at Castlemartyr has been identified by the CFRAM programme to be progressed at a projected cost of €1.4 million. This proposed scheme comprises the diversion of the Kiltha away from the village of Castlemartyr and construction of flood defence walls to protect properties to the south of the village which will protect 22 properties when completed.

The proposed scheme is not in the first tranche of projects to be progressed but the OPW and the local authority will work closely to ensure that it will be commenced as soon as possible within the 10 year timeframe for the programme of investment.

Once consultants are appointed to progress the scheme, consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies as well as the general public takes place at the appropriate stages to ensure that



all parties have the opportunity to input into the development of the scheme.

### **Departmental Correspondence**

174. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the documentation he has been given relating to the Cork event centre in the past three months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26614/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department has not received any documentation in relation to Cork Event Centre in the last three months. However, my Department has been made aware by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that it is in ongoing correspondence with Cork City Council in relation to the project.

### **Public Sector Pensions**

175. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when it is envisaged that public sector pensioners that retired from the public sector will receive pension increases. [26625/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department issued circulars in December 2017 and January 2018 authorising the application to qualifying public service pensions of certain public service pay increases, and giving guidance on the implementation of those pension increases.

DPER Circular 20/2017, which issued in December 2017, authorised public service pension increases with effect from 1 September 2017, by reference to certain public service pay increases in 2016 and 2017. These pension increases are mostly confined to the pensions of persons who retired on basic salaries of up to €65,000 in the period between 1 March 2012 and either 1 April 2017 or 1 September 2017.

DPER Circular 02/2018, which issued in January 2018, authorised public service pension increases by reference to specified public service pay increases over the 2018 to 2020 period provided for in the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The first and only such pay increase to date is the 1% salary increase of 1 January 2018. The pension increases arising by reference to that salary increase are also due with effect from 1 January 2018, and are mostly confined to the pensions of persons who retired in the period from 1 March 2012 to 31 December 2017.

Separate from the pension increases based on salary increases which are covered in the aforementioned circulars, public service pensions which at end-2017 stood reduced by the FEMPI-legislated “Public Service Pension Reduction” (PSPR), were entitled to an effective increase by way of lower PSPR with effect from 1 January 2018.

It is a matter for the large number of public service pension payroll managers in the diverse sectors of the public service to apply these pension increases. I understand that many pensioner groups have already been paid all such increases while in cases where this is not so, work is underway to ensure that the relevant increases are implemented as soon as possible, with calculation and payment of any arrears also being prioritised.

## **Coastal Erosion**

176. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW will investigate the continuing coastal erosion at Rosses Point, County Sligo, and facilitate works to stop the damage being caused to this beach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26626/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** It is a matter in the first instance, for each local authority to identify, investigate and address priority areas of their coastlines considered to be under significant threat from erosion. It is open to Sligo County Council to undertake coastal erosion remedial works using its own resources. If necessary, it may also put forward proposals to the relevant central Government Departments for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat. The Office of Public Works (OPW) operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications from local authorities are considered for measures costing not more than €750,000 in each instance. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial. Full details are available on the OPW's website at: <http://www.opw.ie/en/floodriskmanagement/operations/minorfloodworkscoastalprotectionscheme/>.

Sligo County Council applied for and was approved funding of €40,500 and €57,055 under this scheme in 2009 and 2015 respectively to carry out Coastal Erosion Risk Management Studies of Rosses Point, Co. Sligo. All funding was drawn down following completion of the studies.

Sligo County Council has written to the OPW recently in relation to possible protection works or studies at a number of coastal locations including Rosses Point. The OPW will be responding to the Council indicating that it will need to prioritise the proposed works and, if appropriate, to submit specific applications for funding under the Minor Works scheme in relation to each one demonstrating that they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme. OPW staff are available to discuss the proposed works with the Council. There are currently no applications on hand under the Minor Works scheme for works at Rosses Point.

## **Proposed Legislation**

177. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the public service superannuation (miscellaneous provisions) (amendment) Bill will be published; if a date for pre-legislative scrutiny has been decided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26694/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to PQ 24451/18 on the 12 June 2018.

When I wrote to the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform about pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill earlier this year, the Committee responded indicating that, while it did not intend to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill, it would engage fully on the draft legislation in the context of the formal legislative process.

This approach is likely to facilitate the passage of the Bill through the Oireachtas and I welcome the support of the Committee in this regard.

### Office of Director of Public Prosecutions

178. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated full year running cost of the Office of the DPP. [26774/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As voted by the Houses of the Oireachtas and published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018, the estimate of the amount required for the operation of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for 2018 is €43,502,000 (net).

### Office of Public Works Properties

179. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a matter (details supplied) can be expedited. [26801/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works (OPW) has engaged the services of a third party service provider in relation to the operation and management of the existing mast sites within the OPW's portfolio. This includes the potential development of other suitable sites within the portfolio for use in the telecommunications sector by mobile network and other operators.

My officials will be in direct contact with the Deputy shortly in relation to the relevant contact details.

### University Status Applications

180. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on recent reports regarding the possible merger of the NCAD and IADT to form a creative arts university; if there have been meetings with the HEA on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26311/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department received a copy of a report commissioned by the Higher Education Authority on higher education in the creative arts in Dublin on 18 June 2018, together with a request for my Department's views on the report. My Department will now consider the report prior to making any comment.

There have been no meetings to date between the Department and the HEA in relation to this matter.

### Special Educational Needs Service Provision

181. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an investigation will be undertaken into a situation in which a child (details supplied) who has very complicated health needs has been denied the 16 hours SNA support the child had previously in primary school when the child moved to secondary school in September 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26599/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children

qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to a particular school, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

182. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of plans for the new school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26208/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A project for the school to which the Deputy refers is included in my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme and a new site is required to facilitate this project.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding for the acquisition of school sites, my officials are working closely with officials in the relevant local authority towards acquiring a permanent

site to meet the needs of the school in question. A preferred site option for the school has been identified and this is currently being progressed.

Given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally I am not in a position to comment further at this time. I can, however, assure you that all parties are working to advance the proposed acquisition and the patron body will be informed of the location for the school as soon as it is possible to do so.

### **Summer Works Scheme Applications**

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Leitrim will receive the funding it needs to carry out essential works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26213/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy may be aware, the school referred to by the Deputy was granted funding under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2009 for a general toilet upgrade as per their application in that regard.

The school submitted a further application under SWS 2016-2017 for additional toilets plus a staff room and office. The SWS is designed to address small scale improvement works and not to provide additional accommodation.

In that regard, it is open to the school in question to apply to my Department for additional accommodation. The application form ASA (Additional School Accommodation) is available on the Departments website at *www.education.ie*.

### **Schools Building Projects**

184. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the schools PPP bundle 5. [26232/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Output Specifications, Public Sector Benchmark (PSB) and Tender Evaluation, including Value for Money comparison, were prepared for the Schools Bundle 5 PPP Project in accordance with the PPP Guidelines.

It has been the practice for some time of the Department of Education and Skills to publish PSB information on education PPP projects once five years have elapsed after contract close.

Five years is considered to be an appropriate period of time after which concerns around commercial sensitivity will generally have receded. In relation to contracts closed within the previous five years, there is a risk that sharing information relating to the PSB and wider procurement process could have negative repercussions for the State, both in terms of managing the construction phase of the contract and in potentially influencing the price that future bidders for education projects might seek. The contract for Schools Bundle 5 was signed in July 2016 and it is therefore considered premature to disclose the documentation requested by the Deputy.

In relation to costs, I can confirm that the only payment which has been made by the Department to the PPP company InspiredSpaces was for €4.4 million. This was for off-site works and related costs, which have already been completed.

Unitary Charge (UC) payments will not commence until service commencement is reached



on the school buildings. Projected commitments for all PPP projects are available on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform at: <http://ppp.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Contract-value-and-financial-commitment-to-end-2017.xlsx>. This includes the most recent projections submitted for Schools Bundle 5. This information will be updated once the arrangements for completion of the schools are confirmed and there is clarity on when UC payments will fall due.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

185. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a new special needs unit at a school (details supplied) will be opened. [26253/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department's policy is to provide for the inclusive education of children with special educational needs, including Autism, in mainstream school settings, unless such a placement would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, or the children with whom they will be educated.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers, for the development and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special classes.

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

A Special Needs Unit (SNU) was provided as part of the new school build for the school referred to by the Deputy and the school have taken occupancy of their new premises.

Further to this, the NCSE have advised my officials that the school is preparing to open an ASD special class in the coming school year.

### **School Accommodation**

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when funds to facilitate an extension to a school (details supplied) will be released; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26281/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school to which the Deputy refers was approved a devolved grant under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide 4 mainstream classrooms.

When the school authority has completed the tender process for the project and construction has commenced on site, the school will draw down 70% of the grant approved. The school will draw down the remaining 30% when the project is completed.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

187. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction of a new school building for a school (details supplied) is due to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26370/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

In this regard, my Department is currently engaging with the Education Training Board in the context of progressing a building project for the school and will keep the school patron informed of progress.

### Departmental Expenditure

188. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26388/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department engages Mediavest for public advertisements in connection with a wide range of educational programmes and schemes including, staff appointments in the education sector; invitations to forward submissions on education related-schemes/projects and invitations to tender for school building projects. Mediavest are part of an Office of Government Procurement (OGP) framework which commenced on 2 December, 2016 until 1 December, 2020.

The amount paid to Mediavest by my Department for public advertisements from 1st January 2016 to date is as follows:

YEAR	AMOUNT PAID TO MEDIAVEST
2018	€35,948
2017	€67,224
2016	€67,792

### Schools Building Projects Status

189. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when permission to tender for construction works will issue to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26445/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The School to which the Deputy refers was allocated funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide a two-classroom Special Needs Unit, 6 mainstream classrooms and ancillary accommodation.

The letter of approval to proceed to tender for the project was issued to the school authority on 15th June 2018.

### Departmental Consultations

190. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26459/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The details sought by the

Deputy are not readily available. Officials in my Department are collating the information and I will arrange to have it forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

### **Schools Building Projects Administration**

191. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a planning application has been made for a primary school in the Mooretown area of Swords in view of the fact that the shortage of school places is in the River Valley, Swords-west area of County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26477/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Mooretown is located in the Swords school planning area.

As the Deputy will be aware, I recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including an 8-classroom primary school to be established in Swords North in 2019 and an 8-classroom primary school to be established in Swords South in 2019. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

The school building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is progressing through architectural planning. The Planning Application was submitted to Fingal County Council on 29 March 2018. A decision to Grant Planning was made on 21 May 2018 with the Final Grant of Planning currently awaited from Fingal County Council.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

192. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the proposed refurbishment of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and the timeline for its refurbishment. [26479/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy includes an extension to the Junior and Senior schools, a new build General Purpose Hall and a Special Needs Unit. Refurbishment works will form part of the overall project.

The Junior School will be provided with a new two storey building providing nine classrooms and support spaces with floor area of 531sqm, new double height general purpose hall and support spaces with a floor area of 272 sqm and reconfiguration and refurbishment of seven classrooms and associated spaces in the existing school building.

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

The Stage 2B report has been received and the Department's comments have been provided to the Design Team for follow up. Providing no other issues arise, the Department expects to be in a position to authorise the project to proceed to pre-qualification of contractors shortly.

The Department has written to the school outlining the timeframe for progression of the

project to tender and construction stage and the steps involved.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

193. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the proposed refurbishment of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and the timeline for its refurbishment [26480/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy includes an extension to the Junior and Senior Schools, a new build General Purpose Hall and a Special Needs Unit. Refurbishment works will form part of the overall project.

The Senior school will be provided with a new two storey building providing nine classrooms and support spaces with floor area of 686sqm and a reconfiguration and refurbishment of five existing classrooms and associated support spaces in the existing school building.

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

The Stage 2B report has been received and the Department's comments have been provided to the Design Team for action. Providing no other issues arise, the Department expects to be in a position to authorise the project to proceed to pre-qualification of contractors shortly.

The Department has written to the school outlining the projected timeframe for progression of this project to tender and construction stage and the steps involved.

### **Schools Building Projects Applications**

194. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request for funding by a school (details supplied) to upgrade its building will be considered. [26481/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm that my Department has received an application for capital funding from the school referred to by the Deputy.

The application is currently under consideration and a decision will be conveyed to the school as soon as this process has been completed.

### **School Funding**

195. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in releasing funds to a school (details supplied) following a recent ruling; if the funds will be released as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26539/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Paragraph 13 of The Deed of Trust for Community Schools provide for State Indemnity. This indemnifies the Board of Management of Community schools and states the following -

- The State shall indemnify the Board and the teaching and non-teaching staff in respect of actions claims or demands taken or made against them arising out of the discharge of their du-

ties whether in respect of pupils or otherwise.

In the case referred to by the Deputy, my Department has agreed to the granting of State Indemnity. Invoices have been received from the school identifying legal costs claimed by the legal team retained by the school. These invoices are currently being examined and a response will issue to the school as soon as possible.

### **Schools Facilities**

196. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for an ASD unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26593/18]

198. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for major capital works at the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26595/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 198 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has issued approval in principle for temporary accommodation at the school in question to meet the most immediate accommodation requirements.

In addition my Department has approved the provision of additional permanent accommodation at the school referred to. Details of the current status of the building projects are available on my Department's website, *www.education.ie* - Building Works - Additional Accommodation.

The relevant ETB has been advised of the position in each respect.

### **Schools Facilities**

197. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for additional classroom accommodation for an ASD unit and the refurbishment of the existing metalwork room with added accommodation for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26594/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise that the school referred to by the Deputy has two applications with my Department for improved and additional accommodation, to cater for improved metalwork facilities and new ASD accommodation.

In light of the applications on hand, having regard to the constraints of the school site, my Department carried out a technical site visit. Once the conclusions from that visit are fully considered my Department will be in further contact with the school in respect of their applications.

*Question No. 198 answered with Question No. 196.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**



199. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding two projects at a primary school (details supplied) in County Cork following the recent submission of further proposals. [26606/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy was previously advised, it is planned to carry out one project at the school to which he refers. The project will entail additional accommodation and car parking facilities.

Following a site visit by an official from my Department’s Professional and Technical team, the school was issued with possible design solutions for the project. A recent proposal from the school was acceptable and, accordingly, approval has been given for the project to proceed to planning permission stage.

### **Scoileanna Gaeltachta**

200. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the process for secondary schools within Gaeltacht areas which are considering changing their primary teaching language from English to Irish through the concept of tumoideachas or full immersion of teaching through the medium of Irish; the process of consultation for parents and school stakeholders before such a decision would be taken outlining the process by which each parent’s opinion would be sought and recorded by ballot or otherwise; his views on whether it is essential that no parents should feel excluded from a clearly defined process or that students should not be excluded from receiving secondary education through the medium of English if that is their preferred choice and which in many of these schools would be the standard teaching practice for the past 50 years or more; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26622/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Circulars 0034/2017 and 0022/2018 set out the process involved for post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to meet the aims of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education to ensure high quality Irish-medium educational provision in schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas. Schools in the Gaeltacht were invited to express an interest in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2017/ 2018 and were required to involve the school community and local language-planning committee in the decision-making process involved. The management of the consultation process with parents and the wider school community is a matter for the school management of each individual post-primary school.

The criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht School includes a requirement for schools to develop a whole-school action plan for improvement linked to language-based criteria to set out how the school will, on a phased basis, take the steps necessary to enhance Irish-medium educational provision in classrooms and to extend the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school. The specific content of these action plans is a matter for each individual school to consider as it applies to its own unique sociolinguistic context in consultation with its board of management and school community.

The Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 sets out a comprehensive strategy for education in the Gaeltacht. This Policy, following widespread public consultation, sets out a wide range of actions for improved Irish-medium educational provision in schools in the Gaeltacht .

Parallel provision of Irish-medium and English-medium educational provision is available in some Gaeltacht areas, particularly those that are immediately adjacent to areas not designated as within the boundaries of the Gaeltacht. As highlighted in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, it is not intended during the lifetime of this Policy to extend parallel provision to

Gaeltacht areas where such is not currently available.

### **Scoileanna Gaeltachta**

201. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the secondary schools within the Gaeltacht which have opted for tumoideachas Gaeilge or full immersion through the medium of Irish especially focusing on schools which previously provided teaching through the medium of English; the schools that are proposing to provide no teaching of the various subjects through the medium of English for their future student intake despite such a choice being available for many decades previously; his views on whether it is proper or just in removing an entitlement to secondary school education through the medium of English when parents both desire and request same and disagree with the concept of tumoideachas Gaeilge or full immersion of Irish in teaching in their local secondary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26623/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Circulars 0034/2017 and 0022/2018 set out the process involved for post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and action-planning for improvement process to meet the aims of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education to ensure high quality Irish-medium educational provision in schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas.

Schools in the Gaeltacht were invited to express an interest in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2017/ 2018 and were required to involve the school community and local language-planning committee in the decision-making process involved. The management of the consultation process with parents and the wider school community is a matter for the school management of each individual post-primary school.

An extensive national and local public consultation process informed the development of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, with over 550 written and online submissions received and considered by the Department of Education and Skills. The Policy was also informed by national and international research reports that highlight the cognitive and academic benefits of immersion education including the learning of other languages.

Parallel provision of Irish-medium and English-medium educational provision is available in some Gaeltacht areas, particularly those that are immediately adjacent to areas not designated as within the boundaries of the Gaeltacht. As highlighted in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, it is not intended during the lifetime of this Policy to extend parallel provision to Gaeltacht areas where such is not currently available.

### **Third Level Staff Data**

202. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of university teaching staff employed on a casual basis. [26636/18]

203. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of university teaching staff paid on an hourly basis. [26637/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 203 together.

The data requested by the Deputy is not collected or collated by my Department and is a matter for the Universities as the employers.

However, in 2016 an Expert Group reported on the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in third-level lecturing, this Expert Group was provided for under the Haddington Road Agreement. To inform the Report of the Expert Group on Fixed-Term and Part-Time Employment in Lecturing (also known as the Cush Report) my Department collated data on the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in lecturing in each Institute of Technology and University.

The information collated is in the following table.

University	Headcount	Part-time Permanent	Part-time fixed-term	Full-time fixed-term	Full-time permanent	NOT full-time and permanent
UCD	1036	66	52	80	838	198
UCC	748	60	15	70	603	145
TCD	729	31	36	149	513	216
NUIM	278	4	8	14	252	26
NUIG	2422	160	1659*	13	590	1832
UL	612	34	68	134	376	236
DCU	580	0	155	89	336	244
Total	6405	355	1993	549	3508	2897

Notes:

All numbers in Table 1 are headcounts. The reference date is the end of Q3 2015.

Part-time is defined as working less than full hours on a voluntary basis. Employees who were full time and who have opted for less than full hours voluntarily (e.g. work-sharing, parental leave or shorter working year scheme).

Four employment patterns are identified. Permanent full-time, and three types of “atypical” employment: Permanent part-time, fixed-term part-time and fixed-term full-time.

\*The figure of 1659 for part-time and fixed-term provided for NUIG includes a figure of 1646 employees who are described by NUIG as hourly paid (equating to 85.6 FTEs).

### Third Level Staff Remuneration

204. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the salary level and scale for professors and heads of department at NUI Maynooth in September 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26651/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I set out in the table the Professorial Salary Scale from 2006. It should be noted that not every Head of Department would have been on that scale due to the concept & practice of rotating headships, established in NUI Maynooth in 2001.

The information from NUI Maynooth is in the following table.

Date	Amount
01/06/2006	01/01/2006
€105,926	€103,342
€111,999	€109,267
€118,071	€115,191
€124,147	€121,119

Date	Amount
€130,221	€127,045
€136,298	€132,974

### School Services Staff

205. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the situation with regard to the difficulties faced by school secretaries (details supplied) who are not employed by his Department will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26658/18]

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

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

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

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

Circular 0078/2017: [https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078\\_2017.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf)

Circular 0079/2017: [http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079\\_2017.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079_2017.pdf)

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

### Capitation Grants

206. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which capitation grants are calculated; and the rates for primary and post-primary schools. [26739/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The two main grants paid

by my Department to recognised schools are the Capitation grant to cater for day to day running costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep etc and the Ancillary Services grant to cater for the cost of employing ancillary services staff.

The enrolment in the individual schools is the main driver of grants paid.

The following links are the most recent circulars published on my Department's website which outline the rates in relation to capitation related grants.

#### Primary Circulars

[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0028\\_2016.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0028_2016.pdf)

[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078\\_2017.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf)

#### Post Primary Circulars

[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0029\\_2016.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0029_2016.pdf)

[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079\\_2017.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079_2017.pdf)

### School Accommodation Provision

207. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for additional accommodation made by a school (details supplied); if funding will be made available for this project in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26745/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to confirm to the Deputy that my Department received an application for additional accommodation from the school in question earlier this month.

My Department is considering the application and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process has been completed.

### Irish Language

208. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has engaged with an institute (details supplied) regarding its obligation to adhere to section 5 (1)(c) of the Institute For Advanced Studies Act 1940, in regard to its obligation to provide funding for field-work in order to carry out the requirement of a school to record spoken Irish; the actions he will take to ensure those who have participated in such projects receive the payments they are owed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26766/18]

209. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he has taken to support efforts to record spoken Irish to benefit the educational environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26767/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 208 and 209 together.

My Department allocates recurrent funding directly to a small number of institutions that are currently not under the designation of the HEA, including the institution referred to by the



Deputy. However, the internal disbursement of that funding is then a matter for the individual institution. Such institutions are autonomous bodies and are responsible for their own day to day affairs, including the allocation of all of its income (both public and private).

The institution referred to by the Deputy was established under legislation which underpins its statutory functions, including the ‘phonetic investigation of existing Irish dialects and the recording of the living Irish speech’. In that context, the institution provides facilities for the furtherance of such advanced study and research and for the publication of the results of such study and research, which is facilitated, in part, by the funding allocated to it by the Department.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff**

210. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date on the implementation of the front-loading of inclusion support assistant posts; if the recommendation of the National Council for Special Education, NCSE, will be implemented by September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26770/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy will be aware, in September 2016, I requested the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to lead a comprehensive review of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme, in consultation with other relevant Departments and State Agencies. The Review set out to ensure that the Scheme is achieving the best outcomes possible for children with special educational needs.

The Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme was published by the NCSE on 30 May 2018 and contains 13 recommendations. One of these recommendations is the development of a frontloaded model for allocating supports to schools for children with special educational needs who have additional care needs.

My Department is developing proposals to implement the recommendations of the Review. This will involve substantial engagement with key Departments and agencies as well as consultation with Education and Health Partners, Parent representatives and other stakeholders and developing proposals for early action on developing, on a pilot basis, a new allocation model and a national training programme.

The SNA allocations for September 2018 have already been made as part of the normal applications process. In order to meet the level of assessed demand, I announced on 18 May 2018 the provision of 800 additional Special Needs Assistant posts for allocation to schools for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated over the period September to December 2018. Accordingly there is no prospect of a new model being implemented from September 2018.

Ensuring children with special educational needs are given the opportunity to fulfil their potential is a key priority for this Government. There will be 15,000 SNAs working in our schools by the end of the year, a 42% increase on 2011. My Department’s policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

### **State Examinations Fees**

211. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount accrued by the administrative fee required to be paid by pupils sitting the junior or leaving certificate examinations. [26789/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

### School Curriculum

212. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of implementing the new politics and society subject for the leaving certificate. [26790/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Exact expenditure figures regarding the teaching of Politics & Society in schools are not available, as funding is not allocated by my Department on a subject-by-subject basis. However, work in this area is taking place at post-primary level on full implementation of the subject.

The first Leaving Certificate examination in Politics & Society will take place on the 20 June. This will mark the completion of Phase 1 of Politics & Society for the 41 schools that took part. These schools were chosen following an open invitation to introduce this as an optional Leaving Certificate subject.

The process of national rollout of the subject has commenced with all schools having been asked to express their interest in providing Leaving Certificate Politics and Society as an option for their students from September 2018. Almost 60 schools, are availing of Continuous Professional Development from the Professional Development Service for Teachers to assist in the implementation of Politics and Society in their schools from this September. This brings the total number of schools providing Politics and Society for Leaving Certificate to nearly 100.

Leaving Certificate Politics and Society aims to develop the student's ability to be a reflective and active citizen, in a way that is informed by the insights and skills of social and political science. The introduction of the specification was part of the Department of Education and Skills commemoration of 1916 and its commitment to education for sustainable development.

The new subject has four main strands of study:

- Power and decision-making
- Active citizenship
- Human rights and responsibilities
- Globalisation and localisation

There are two assessment components at for Leaving Certificate Politics and Society:

1. Report on a citizenship project (20% of the total marks).
2. Written examination (80% of the total marks).

### Third Level Scholarships

213. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of

students in State-funded third level education facilities that undertook doctoral research in 2017 and to date in 2018; and the number of these that were State funded. [26791/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There were a total of 8,357 students enrolled on PhD programmes in the 2016/17 academic year. Of this figure, year one enrollments were 1,537 full-time PhD students and 269 part-time PhD students. Final figures for the 2017/18 academic year are not yet available.

PhD funded scholarships are available from a number of bodies, including the Irish Research Council, Science Foundation Ireland, Health Research Board etc. The Irish Research Council, which is funded by my Department currently funds some 838 PhD students.

### **Capitation Grants**

214. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address the increased cost of running schools; if the mainstream capitation grant will be increased in budget 2019 to the level of €200 in view of the fact there has been a reduction in the grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26843/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation. A similar type approach in relation to improvements in grant funding was applied, as appropriate, at post-primary level.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff Contracts**

215. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the decision to reduce the SNA hours at a school (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26857/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department's website at [www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie)

tion.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource.

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to a particular school, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff**

216. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school teachers that have availed of further training supports for special education needs and special education support services. [26898/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** From 21st March, 2017 the Special Education Support Service (SESS), National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and the Visiting Teacher Service for Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Children who are Blind/Visually Impaired (VTHVI) transferred from my Department to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and joined with the services already being provided by NCSE's SENOs and administrative staff to form the NCSE Support Service. This new service aims to develop schools' capacity to include students with special educational needs and to promote a continuum of educational provision which is inclusive and responsive.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory

agency, is responsible for organising and planning education provision for children with special educational needs, including:

- providing Continual Professional Development (CPD) and support for teachers in the area of special educational needs (SEN) to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in relation to SEN provision (formerly provided through the SESS)

- providing support and expertise to partner schools on issues related to behaviour (formerly provided through the NBSS)

- supporting the introduction of the new model of resource teaching allocation to schools and to develop capacity to meet the needs of students with special educational needs

As the matter referred to by the Deputy relates to the NCSE Support Service, the matter has been referred to the NCSE for direct reply.

### **School Enrolments Data**

217. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school students enrolled in full-time education. [26899/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There were 558,314 pupils enrolled in primary schools during the school year 2016-17 (this figure includes both Mainstream and Special Class pupils).

### **Teacher Data**

218. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary school teachers in full-time employment. [26900/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The number of contracted whole-time equivalent primary school teachers on my Departments payroll at 14/6/2018 is 35,959. This figure excludes job-sharing teachers, substitute teachers, teachers on career break or on secondment.

### **Departmental Properties**

219. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26934/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The property referred to by the Deputy is not in my ownership.

In common with other buildings of its kind, where significant grant aid is provided by my Department for the development of school premises, investment is secured by way of a long-term legal agreement known as a charging lease. There is a charging lease in place on the property referred to by the Deputy dated 1981 for 99 years, which means I have a vested interest in the property.

In circumstances where a property has ceased to be used as a school, and a request is received to release the State's interest secured under a charging lease, such requests are con-



sidered in the context of the specific circumstances which pertain to the individual property. I can confirm that my Department has received a request from the property owners to release my interest in the property. Officials from my Department will be in contact with the property owner in due course.

### **School Enrolments**

220. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the enrolment crisis at a school (detail supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26935/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is responsible for the day to day running of a school. The Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places.

In relation to school admissions, parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. It is the responsibility of the Board of Management to create and operate the enrolment policy for its school. However, it may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in their school of first choice.

The Educational Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency (EWS) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718500.

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of the Department, or in the case of an Educational Training Board (ETB) school to the ETB in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school.

I wish to advise the Deputy that an application for additional accommodation has been received from the patron of the school referred to in the details supplied. My Department is currently liaising with the patron in relation to the application and is awaiting receipt of additional information which the patron has undertaken to provide. The matter will be considered further following receipt of this information.

### **Apprenticeship Data**

221. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which efforts continue to be made to create apprenticeship opportunities under various trades; the degree to which specific shortages have been identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26939/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** Apprenticeship is a demand driven educational and training programme, which aims to develop the skills of an apprentice in order to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. Consequently, the number of apprentices being registered is determined by employers within each sector. My Department is committed to supporting the increased registration of apprentices

across all sectors. New apprenticeship registrations have risen from 2,698 in 2014 to 4,843 in 2017, which represents an increase of almost 80%.

As the Deputy is aware, the Government is currently expanding the range of apprenticeships on offer to meet the identified skill needs of industry. Arising from our first call for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 eleven new apprenticeships have been developed in a wide range of sectors, including financial services, engineering, ICT and accounting. Further new apprenticeships will get underway later in 2018.

In addition, arising from last year's second call for proposals, I recently announced 26 new programmes for further development into national apprenticeships across a wide variety of sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture. These new programmes, once developed, will add to and complement the range of apprenticeships currently on offer in developing the skill needs of our economy.

### **Road Traffic Accidents Data**

222. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the body recognised as expert to investigate the vehicles involved in fatal road accidents; and the qualifications of experts and engineers required in this regard. [26304/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the information sought by the Deputy and I will be in contact with the Deputy directly on receipt of this report.

### **Adoption Legislation**

223. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 415, 416 and 417 of 12 June 2018, the timeline or plan for the amendment of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26635/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, Section 6 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 provides for an entitlement to 24 weeks adoptive leave for an employed adopting mother or a sole male adopter.

Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits.

To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared draft legislative proposals that will amend the Adoptive Leave Act and will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, co-habiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.

While it is not possible, at present, to provide a precise timeframe for the amending of the Act, work is underway in my Department in reviewing how best to advance these legislative proposals. One possibility is that the proposals could be included with those planned on paid parental leave as part of a general consolidation project in a Family Leave Bill.

### **Commencement of Legislation**

224. **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; the reason for the delay in commencing this legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26638/18]

234. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be fully enacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26263/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 224 and 234 together.

The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 was enacted on 6 April 2015 but has not yet been fully commenced. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions Order) 2016 (S.I. No. 12 of 2016) commenced the bulk of the Act with effect from 18 January 2016. That Commencement Order brought provisions of Parts 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of the Act into operation. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 355 of 2017) commenced part of section 47(c) of the Act with effect from 31 July 2017 and the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 474 of 2017) commenced provisions of the Act relating to adoption by civil partners and cohabiting couples with effect from 2 November 2017.

Part 10 of the Act, which amended the Passports Act 2008, was commenced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on 1 July 2015.

Part 11 of the Act, which related to adoption, was not commenced and was repealed by section 2(2) of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, which came into operation on 19 October 2017, as provided for by the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 (Commencement) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 443 of 2017). The provisions in Part 11 have been incorporated into the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, for which the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is responsible.

Section 177 of the Act which amends section 2 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 has not yet been commenced. Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits. To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared draft legislative proposals that will amend section 177 to will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, 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.

### **EU Budgets**

225. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has spoken to his other EU counterparts regarding the plans the EU Commission has published on increasing expenditure on border controls and migration. [26551/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Minister is aware of the EU Commission's proposals and the proposed expenditure increase for migration and border management to €34.9 billion for 2021-2027, compared to €13 billion in the previous period.

As Ireland is not a member of the Schengen Area, it does not have access to this EU funding for border controls and visa matters.

However, Ireland acknowledges that significant progress has been made in border management and supports the Member States in addressing this common challenge.

### **State Properties**

226. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the Thornton Hall site; the reason for the delay in the finalisation of the report from the working group that was established in January 2015 to examine the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26198/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** A Working Group has considered options, including (in conjunction with the OPW) future uses for the Thornton site which is fully serviced and adjacent to the airport. There are no definite plans as yet for this strategic State asset but this is kept under review.

The Thornton Hall site comprising of 156 acres was purchased in 2005 for a proposed large scale prison campus to replace Mountjoy Prison which was to be sold to fund the development. Due to the downturn in the economy, the scale of the project could not be accommodated within the capital allocation available and the project did not proceed. Over the decade since the original plan, international research has tended towards smaller prisons within reach of support communities as the best option for rehabilitation. In addition, in light of the decision not to proceed with Thornton, significant capital investment has been made at the Mountjoy campus over recent years to upgrade accommodation and eliminate the practice of slopping out.

The Irish Prison Service now proposes to further develop the Mountjoy site through a Masterplan over the period 2021-2031 as referred to in the National Development Plan. The aim is to bring the remainder of the prison up to an acceptable modern standard capable of serving needs into the future, including requirements for contemporary vehicular and emergency access, prisoner reception and discharge facilities, appropriate modern visitor facilities for families, much enhanced facilities for prisoner care and rehabilitation, indoor and outdoor recreation, healthcare, education and work/training, appropriate staff facilities, and improved wider service areas such as laundry and kitchen facilities.

Therefore, while future plans for the Thornton site will be considered in the context of broader State requirements for land assets, plans in relation to the Prison estate continue to evolve and respond to changing requirements and practices in relation to detention of prisoners.

### **Family Reunification**

227. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which family reunification can be arranged in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26204/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Nationalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that Congolese nationals are required to hold an Irish visa to travel to Ireland. As with all other visa required nationals, visa applications are considered on their own merits and in accordance with the requirements for the particular visa type applied for.

Comprehensive guidelines and information on the documentation needed for each type of application can be found on the INIS website <http://www.inis.gov.ie> .

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.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will set aside a deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26205/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 30 May 2018, that a Deportation Order in respect of her was proposed. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her.

The 15 working day period referred to in my Department's letter of 30 May 2018 expires on 20 June 2018. It is open to the person concerned to make representations in the State within that period as the person concerned has not yet submitted written representations. In any event, the case of the person concerned will not be further processed until the 15 working day period referred to has elapsed.

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.



**Visa Data**

229. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average wait times for visa applications with the INIS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26209/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that decisions regarding the grant or refusal of visas are made in a number of INIS Visa Offices overseas, the INIS Visa Office in Dublin, and at Embassies of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which process certain visa applications under delegated sanction from my Department.

The processing times for visa decisions are published on the Visa pages of each Visa Office and Embassy website. The following table sets out the current processing dates (as of 13 June, 2018) up to which applications received in the Dublin Visa Office have been processed.

Purpose of Visa Applications	Current Processing Date in the Dublin Visa Office
Visit	02 May
Business	16 May
Conference/Event	16 May
Join Family (under national legislation)	02 February
Join Family (EU Free Movement)	See note below
Study	18 April
Employment	16 May
Other*	16 May

\*Includes training; exam; conference/event; performance/tournament; and sundry applications.

It should be noted that target times for visa processing are established as a business target reflecting the detailed and often complex assessment required to be carried out in relation to applications, and do not constitute a legal obligation.

The processing time in each location is determined by a number of factors such as the volumes and complexity of applications, individual circumstances, peak application periods, seasonal factors, and the resources available. While every effort is made to process applications as quickly as possible, processing times inevitably vary as a result.

In relation to applications under the Free Movement Directive(2004/38/EC), there had been an exponential increase from the second quarter of 2015 in the number of such applications. That gave rise to a caseload of around 10,500 applications which had to be assessed very carefully to ensure that any fraudulent applications or potential abuses of the Directive are detected and dealt with appropriately. Considerable progress is being made in processing these applications. However, as legal proceedings in relation to a number of similar such applications are currently before the courts, the Deputy will appreciate that I am limited in what I can say on the matter.

The central concern, as with all visa services worldwide, in deciding on visa applications is to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the country's vital national interests by maintaining an effective immigration regime while at the same time facilitating travel for those who meet the criteria. Each visa application is therefore decided on its own merits taking all factors into account.

## Residency Permits

230. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the case for residency status submitted for consideration in the case of a person (details supplied) has been examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26211/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 11th March 2005 and therefore has no entitlement to residency in the State.

Representations were received on behalf of the person concerned pursuant to Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to revoke the Deportation Order. The Deputy might wish to note that any such decision will be to ‘affirm’ or to ‘revoke’ the existing Deportation Order. In the meantime, the Deportation Order remains valid and in place.

The person concerned was required to present at the Offices of the Garda National Immigration Bureau on 19 May 2005, to make arrangements for his deportation from the State. The person concerned failed to present on that occasion and is therefore recorded as a person who is evading deportation.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS of my Department by email 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 email service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## EU Legislation

231. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are plans to opt into the EU e-evidence legislation proposed in Directive COM/2018/226 and regulation COM/2018/225; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26240/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The recently published proposals for a “Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Production and Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters (COM (2018) 225)” and an associated “Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council, laying down harmonised rules on the appointment of legal representatives for the purposes of gathering evidence in criminal proceedings ((Com 2018) 226)” represents the culmination of almost two years work by the EU Commission.

The Regulation and Directive seek to provide a firm legal basis by which law enforcement agencies within the EU Member States may seek the preservation of, and access to, data held by certain service providers in the communications sector. It is a response to calls by Member States, law enforcement agencies and industry for the regulation of this sector. The publication of the Regulation and the Directive follows an extensive period of consultation by the Commission with Member States, industry and civil society.

The proposed Regulation introduces binding European Production and Preservation Orders. Both orders are required to be issued by a judicial authority (a prosecutor or a judge). An order can be issued to seek preservation or production of data that is stored by a service provider lo-

cated in another jurisdiction. Such orders may only be issued if a similar measure is available for the same criminal offence in a comparable domestic situation in an issuing State.

The proposed Directive makes it mandatory for relevant service providers to designate a legal representative to receive and comply with orders issued under the proposed Regulation.

The legal basis of the proposed Regulation is Article 82 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. Article 82(1) provides that measures may be adopted in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure to lay down rules and procedures for ensuring recognition throughout the Union of all forms of judgments and judicial decisions.

The legal basis of the proposed Directive is Articles 53 and 62 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. As such, it is binding on all States, including Ireland, and there is no opt out facility afforded to Ireland where the Directive is concerned.

This proposed Regulation falls under “Protocol No 21 on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the area of freedom, security and justice, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”. The Regulation requires the approval of the Oireachtas under Article 29.4.7 of the Constitution for Ireland to opt into it.

It is my intention to seek the approval of Government to take the necessary measures to seek Oireachtas approval for Ireland to opt into the Regulation at a suitable juncture.

### **Garda Recruitment**

232. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if new recruits in relation to Garda recruitment are still being drawn from those that applied in 2016; when persons that applied in 2017 and that have completed all stages in the process will be contacted with a formal offer of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26250/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the recruitment process for An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013. The Public Appointments Service (PAS), on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial stages of the process with the final stages, involving a physical competency test, a medical examination and vetting of candidates, being managed by the Garda Commissioner. As Minister, I have no direct involvement in the matter.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the time frame for completing the final stages can vary due to a number factors. These include the length of the vetting process which may, for example, be more time consuming if the applicant has resided abroad; whether the applicant has to repeat the physical; or is deferred for medical reasons. Positions in the Garda College are only offered when all stages of the application process are completed and in accordance with an applicant’s place on the Order of Merit.

As the Deputy will be aware 800 new recruits will enter the Garda College this year. So far some 400 have done so in two in-takes. Two further in-takes are planned for July and October.

I am informed by the Commissioner that some successful candidates are still being called from the 2016 competitions. I am further informed that 75 successful candidates from the 2017 competition have already entered the College this year. It is anticipated that further candidates from the 2017 competition will enter the College in the remaining in-takes for this year subject

to candidates successfully completing the final stages of the process as outlined above.

The Deputy may wish to note that all applicants remain on the panel until such time as they are offered a place in the Garda College with the exception of those who are deemed unsuitable, fail the Medical or Physical Competence Test (PCT) or withdraw from the competition.

I would advise any candidate for a position as a Garda trainee to contact the PAS or the Garda Appointments Office if they have any queries in relation to their application.

### **Censorship of Publications**

233. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the censorship of publications legislation will be revised in view of the low volume of publications referred in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26254/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that censorship of publications in the State occurs pursuant to the Censorship of Publications Acts, 1929 to 1967 and is administered by two statutory boards as follows:

- The Censorship of Publications Board which was established under the Censorship of Publications Act 1929, and
- The Censorship of Publications Appeals Board which was established under the Censorship of Publications Act 1946.

Secretariat support for each of these Boards is provided by the Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) which is an independent statutory body operating under the aegis of the Department of Justice and Equality.

It is my intention to keep the censorship of publications legislation under review, and in particular to consider this matter in the context of a planned Periodic Critical Review of IFCO, along the lines envisaged in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

*Question No. 234 answered with Question No. 224.*

### **Direct Provision Data**

235. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which single adults residing in direct provision are sharing rooms; the number that have been sharing rooms for over 12 and 24 months, respectively; the range of beds per room in shared rooms, that is, the highest number of beds to the lowest number of beds; and the average number of beds per room in shared rooms across the direct provision portfolio. [26271/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Accommodation centres under contract to the Department have a limited number of rooms for single adults and most single adults share rooms. The capacity of each room is entirely dependent on the size of the room as per building regulations. The number of persons actually allocated to the room will depend on that capacity. Currently, the numbers allocated to individual rooms vary and in a very small number of cases it could be up to six persons.

Statistics are not collated on the basis of room sharing and there are no available statistics to

illustrate how long such persons have been sharing rooms.

### Fines Data

236. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average financial penalty imposed through the court system on persons found guilty of driving without a motor insurance policy in place and that being the first offence committed; his plans to further strengthen legislation in this area for the future to deter persons from driving uninsured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26294/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has provided a Report on the average fine imposed by the courts for driving without motor insurance. This is not confined to those who committed their first offence. Court statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide information on fines issued to first offenders only.

Year	Average Fine
Jan - Dec 2015	€395.23
Jan - Dec 2016	€388.03
Jan - Dec 2017	€377.06

As road traffic legislation is the responsibility of my colleague, Shane Ross, T.D., Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, the question of any amendments of the legislation is a matter for consideration by him.

### Firearms Licences

237. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the number of unlicensed guns in circulation; the actions being taken to address the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26296/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise the Deputy that An Garda Síochána tackles the issue of illegal firearms on an ongoing basis through a range of targeted and intelligence based operations, often disrupting and preventing incidents, as well as detecting and prosecuting those involved. Heavy penalties are already provided in our criminal legislation for weapons offences, including mandatory minimum penalties for certain firearms offences. A report from the Garda Commissioner has been sought on this matter and I will write further to the Deputy when this is to hand.

In relation to firearms which have been licensed and for which a license is not renewed, I am advised that An Garda Síochána conduct a central monthly audit which is disseminated to Garda Divisions and any unusual trends will cause an alert and notification to be issued as and where appropriate. In addition, there is engagement by Garda Headquarters with officers engaged in the firearms licensing process throughout the jurisdiction with a particular focus on ensuring a proactive approach in managing renewals of any firearms certificates outstanding for



their respective areas of responsibility.

### **Garda Reform**

238. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of implementation programme on the modernisation of the An Garda Síochána launched in 2015, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26297/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Government approved a major Five Year Reform and High Level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána in July 2016 based on the implementation of the Garda Inspectorate’s recommendations contained in its report “Changing Policing in Ireland” in tandem with the delivery of the Government’s commitments in relation to increasing the overall Garda workforce to 21,000 by 2021. The Government further agreed that the plan would be implemented as part of the Garda Commissioner’s Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021.

The Policing Authority, at the request of my predecessor, is performing an important task in overseeing this process and in supporting the Gardaí in implementing the reform agenda. It is required to report to me, as Minister, every four months. To date it has submitted five reports, the most recent of which I received on 15 June last. For a comprehensive assessment of progress on the implementation of the reform programme I would refer the Deputy to the four progress reports which have been published and are available on my Department’s website at [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).

The role of the Policing Authority in delivering the full implementation of the reform agenda is of critical importance. It brings a capacity to engage intensively with An Garda Síochána and maintain a sustained focus on what is actually being done and what is being achieved on the ground. Its reports reflect this rigorous approach and provide a very solid basis for engagement between my Department and An Garda Síochána in relation to the programme.

To support An Garda Síochána in addressing any concerns highlighted by the Authority in its assessment, a structured process of engagement is in place between my Department and An Garda Síochána to identify and agree corrective actions. This engagement, which includes formal meetings at senior official level with the responsible Deputy Commissioner, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation of An Garda Síochána will now consider any issues raised in the Authority’s fifth report. My Department will make arrangements for its publication as soon as practicable.

### **Garda Transport Data**

239. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda cars based in Cabra Garda station; the area which they cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26298/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. Indeed in the period 2013 to the end of 2017 almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period to ensure that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

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

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that Cabra Garda Station covers sections of the Navan Road to Ashtown Gate which includes Cabra and sections of the Phoenix Park. Cabra Garda Station is in the Blanchardstown – K District of DMR West Division. I am further informed that there are 42 Garda vehicles attached to the K District of DMR West Division, 2 of which are attached to Cabra Garda Station.

I understand that the allocation of Garda vehicles is monitored and reviewed by the Garda authorities on a continual basis and that vehicles are allocated between districts as required by operational circumstances.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

240. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is reviewing the anti-social behaviour orders in view of the increased numbers of violent behaviour in communities across Dublin and other cities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26299/18]

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

I am, of course, aware of the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 in the U.K., which replaces ‘traditional’ ASBOs with an injunction (a civil order) and a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO). I can assure the Deputy that officials in my Department keep all legislation under constant review and will also continue to monitor the implementation of the new measures adopted in the U.K. Of course, if the Deputy has any specific proposals that he wishes to make in relation to ASBOs, or indeed the legislation governing them, I would be happy to examine them.

In setting up the ASBO regime in Ireland back in 2007, these interventions - warnings, good behaviour contracts and referrals to the Juvenile Diversion Programme - were intended to address the problem behaviour. The rationale was that if they succeeded, there would be no need to apply to the courts for an order. It was only if they failed to lead to a behaviour adjustment by the person in question that a court order would then be applied for.

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

- the Criminal Damage Act 1991;

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

While An Garda Síochána will continue to tackle this problem head-on, they cannot eradicate the problem of anti-social behaviour alone. In relation to our young, it is up to us all, particularly the parents and guardians, to ensure that children are brought up to be respectful and law-abiding. These lessons begin in the home, are further reinforced in our schools and then by society in general. We must all work together to ensure that such behaviour is never normalised and is tackled immediately.

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

Clearly, Garda visibility is very important and this Government remains committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To this end, the House will be aware that 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during 2018, some 200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting recently. The new recruits are visible proof of the Government's commitment to an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 including 15,000 Garda members.

### **Departmental Reform**

241. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the recent committee set up to oversee reform of his Department; the number of times it has met; the progress being made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26300/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, an independent change implementation group - the "Effectiveness and Renewal Group for the Department of Justice and Equality" was established in January to review and support the process of reform in my Department.

The Group has been engaging directly with my Department, its external stakeholders and others in conducting its work. The Group has been asked to provide an initial report to the Government and the Oireachtas by the end of June, and to report on a quarterly basis thereafter. I, as Minister for Justice and Equality, will then review arrangements and provide a progress report and recommendations for any further action in the first quarter of 2019. The Group has been working steadily since its appointment and I am grateful to its members for their commitment to this important work. I understand they are on track to provide their interim report within the specified timescale.

### **Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission**

242. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps taken on foot of receipt of the submission from GSOC in January 2018 calling for legislative overhaul

of the body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26326/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, in April 2017 the Government approved the drafting of the heads of a Bill to address a number of matters related to the operation of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) and the procedures related to the receipt and processing of complaints under the Act.

Meanwhile, in May 2017, the Government established the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. Its remit requires it to review the police oversight architecture including how complaints against members of An Garda Síochána are handled. The Commission is due to report in September and I look forward to receiving its proposals.

In parallel with the Commission's review, GSOC sent me, in December 2017, its proposals for reform of the 2005 Act. Given its remit, I referred these proposals to the Commission as an input to its work. I am aware that GSOC has engaged with the Commission in its own right. In view of the timeframe for the Commission on the Future of Policing to present its report, I expect to address GSOC's proposals as part of the consideration of wider legislative proposals which I expect to follow from the Commission's report.

### **Immigration Status**

243. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the decision in relation to the employment permit for a person (details supplied); if an exception can be made to allow them to continue working in their job with a change of status to a stamp 4; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26328/18]

**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's application for permission to remain in the State has been considered and that the person concerned has been notified of the decision.

The original application was received from the person concerned on 2 November 2017 and a decision letter issued on 17 January 2018.

On 22 March 2018 a review of the original application was requested as an exceptional measure. A decision letter in response to this exceptional request for a review of the original application was issued on 28 May 2018.

The policy in relation to the eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permits is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

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

### **Property Services Regulatory Authority**

244. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of licences the Property Services Regulatory Authority has removed from management agents since it was

formed in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26329/18]

245. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of actions the Property Services Regulatory Authority has taken against management agents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26330/18]

247. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases the Property Services Regulatory Authority has supported or provided advice for against management agents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26332/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 244, 245 and 247 together.

The Property Services Regulatory Authority was established on 12 April, 2012. As part of its statutory remit, the Property Services Regulatory Authority is responsible for investigating complaints of improper conduct against licensed property services providers in the State. In cases of complaints where improper conduct is confirmed as having taken place, the Authority may impose a minor or major sanction. All major sanctions, which would include revocation of a licence, must be confirmed by the High Court, either on application by the Authority, or following an appeal by the licensee who is the subject of the sanction. The Authority is also the prosecuting authority for all offences described in the Act. All prosecutions to date have been for providing property services without a licence in breach of section 28 of the Act.

Property Management Agent is just one of four types of property service for which a licence is required, the others being auctioneer, estate agent and letting agent. To date no property management agent has been the subject of a major sanction, including revocation of licence, or a prosecution under the Act. However, the Authority has removed one holder of all four licence types, including property management agent, from the Register of Licensed Property Services Providers as it is obliged to do under section 40(2) of Act when it becomes apparent that a licensee has ceased to provide property services. This removal took place at short notice arising from the sudden closure of the licensee who was the subject of an investigation into a number of complaints.

As a State agency, the Authority must carry out all of its assigned duties in a fair and impartial basis. The Authority has no role or remit in supporting, or providing advice against, any party to a dispute, including a licensee.

### **Property Services Regulatory Authority Administration**

246. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the supports the Property Services Regulatory Authority has provided for owners' management companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26331/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA) has no function in relation to owners' management companies. While the PSRA licenses and regulates property management agent services (the PSRA also regulates other property service providers such as auctioneers and estate agents), owners' management companies are not within the statutory remit of the PSRA which operates pursuant to the provisions of the Property Services (Regulation) Act 2011.

*Question No. 247 answered with Question No. 244.*



## **Garda Recruitment**

248. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons that applied for the current competition for An Garda Síochána; the number of positions available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26333/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In accordance with the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013 the Public Appointments Service, on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial recruitment stages for the selection of Garda trainees. The final stages of the recruitment process in which candidates are vetted, and complete a physical competency test and a medical examination, are managed by the Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 2,400 new Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis for the years 2018 to 2021. Already in 2018, 400 new recruits have entered the Garda college and a further 400 will begin their training before the end of the year. This recruitment is in addition to the just under 2,000 new recruits who have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and who have been assigned to mainstream duties around the country since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

This is an ambitious programme of recruitment and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. The most recent recruitment campaign which closed for applications on the 7 June 2018 again received a strong response with over 6,000 applications received. This compares favourably to the 2017 competition which received approximately 5,400 applications and indicates that a career in An Garda Síochána continues to be regarded as an attractive and rewarding profession.

Any candidate for a position as a Garda trainee should contact the Public Appointments Service or the Garda Appointments Office if they have any queries in relation to their application.

## **Garda Strength**

249. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each year since 2007 to date in the Limerick Garda division by district; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26337/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of personnel under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Limerick Division was 565. There are also 27 Garda Reserves and 53 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí

is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just over 1,960 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 63 members have been assigned to the Limerick Division, 10 of whom were allocated from the latest attestation on the 15 June 2018. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 400 of whom have attested to date. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner recently launched a new recruitment drive with a closing date of 7 June.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

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

For the Deputy's information I have set out in tabular form the number of Gardaí allocated to each Garda District in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and as of 30 April 2018 the latest date for which figures are currently available, as supplied by the Commissioner.

#### Strength of the Limerick Division by District 2007 - 2018

Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Bruff	41	45	44	44	44	46	44	44	44	43	41	45
Henry Street	330	358	363	376	363	341	329	314	311	317	313	309
Newcastle West	47	49	47	44	45	43	81	78	75	74	75	75
Roxboro Road	134	139	141	140	148	137	134	129	124	125	129	136

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Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Askeaton	41	44	40	39	37	38	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total	593	635	635	643	637	605	589	565	554	559	558	565

\*Up to 30 April 2018.

### Immigration Status

250. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for stamp 4; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26353/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of the Department that correspondence will issue to this person shortly.

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.

### Closed-Circuit Television Systems

251. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Policing Authority has not issued guidelines to the Garda Commissioner regarding the supervision and control by the Commissioner of the monitoring of CCTV by authorised persons under section 38(11) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26357/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access, such as town centres, fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems. Neither type of CCTV system may be established without authorisation by the Garda Commissioner under section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, among other requirements.

Garda CCTV systems are planned and implemented on the basis of An Garda Síochána's identified operational needs and priorities. Accordingly, decisions in relation to the introduction or extension of such systems are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no role in that regard.

Under the grant-aid scheme launched by my Department last year to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local areas, eligible groups can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum grant of €40,000.

I am anxious to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, take advantage of the availability of this grant aid scheme. Full details of the grant aid package including guidelines, application forms, code of practice and other relevant documentation are all available to download from my Department's website - [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie). Support and guidance is

available to help interested groups to apply for this funding through a dedicated email address available for this purpose - [communitycctv@justice.ie](mailto:communitycctv@justice.ie). In addition, the criteria for the installation and operation by authorised persons of the CCTV system in specified areas has been established.

As the Deputy is aware, the Policing Authority, under section 38(11) of the An Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, is required to issue guidelines to the Garda Commissioner concerning the supervision and control by the Commissioner of the monitoring of CCTV by authorised persons. I can confirm to the Deputy that I am aware that the Authority has not issued guidelines under section 38(11) as yet, however my Department is engaging with the Authority on the issue.

As mentioned above my Department has issued a Code of Practice For Community Based CCTV systems which is available from our website at [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie). This provides guidance to local authority groups and informs them of their legal and data protection obligations.

### **Closed-Circuit Television Systems**

252. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he remains satisfied that the introduction of the GDPR does not diminish or impede the way or extent to which An Garda Síochána can investigate crime, with particular reference to reliance on CCTV or triangulation in County Kildare or elsewhere throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26359/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access, such as town centres, fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems. Neither type of CCTV system may be established without authorisation by the Garda Commissioner under section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, among other requirements.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that they do not consider the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to impede the way or extent to which An Garda Síochána can investigate crime, including in respect of reliance on CCTV or triangulation in County Kildare or elsewhere throughout the country.

First, as the Deputy will be aware, EU Directive 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 – commonly referred to as the Law Enforcement Directive (LED) - was transposed into national law in Part 5 of the Data Protection Act 2018. This applies to personal data processed by competent authorities for the purposes of prevention, investigation, detection, and prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties. The GDPR applies to all other processing of personal data.

Second, in relation to GDPR, section 41(b) of the Data Protection Act 2018 provides that without prejudice to the processing of personal data for a purpose other than the purpose for which the data has been collected which is lawful under the GDPR, the processing of personal data and special categories of personal data for a purpose other than the purpose for which the data has been collected shall be lawful to the extent that such processing is necessary and proportionate for certain other purposes, including preventing a threat to national security, defence or public security and preventing, detecting, investigating or prosecuting criminal offences.

### Departmental Expenditure

253. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26394/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise the Deputy that expenditure by my Department with the specified company, and the reasons for this expenditure, during the requested years was as follows:

Description	2016	2017
Victims of Crime Public Information Notice	€2,692	€2,692
Public Firework Safety Information Notice	€34,681	€36,676
Recruitment Advertising	€20,757	€15,037
Gender Equality Public Information Notice	€6,081	€3,029
Private Security Authority Awareness	€132,594	€225,136
Property Service Providers Information Campaign	€59,806	€30,285
Public Information Notice for EU Funding Invitation Applications	-	€12,118
Advertising for Accommodation, Support Services and General Information for Migrants	-	€43,363
Firearms Public Consultation Process Notice	-	€3,246
Miscellaneous Public Information Notices	€2,707	€5,026
Total	€259,318	€376,608

### Public Consultation Process

254. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26465/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The information sought by the Deputy in respect of my Department is currently being collated and I will contact him again in due course. I have asked the agencies under the aegis of my Department to write to the Deputy directly in respect of any relevant information pertaining to them.

### Garda Resources

255. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when appropriate funding and resources will be made available to An Garda Síochána for Caherciveen, County Kerry. [26618/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreci-



ate that it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including responsibility for the distribution of Garda funding and resources, including personnel, among the various Garda divisions. I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. I understand that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division, which ensures local Garda management has the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational needs and address critical issues as they arise taking account of, amongst other factors, the incidence of crime and crime trends in each District in the Division.

As the Deputy will be aware Caherciveen forms part of the Killarney Garda District.

I am advised that Caherciveen Garda Station operates on a 24-hour basis, during which it is open to the public from 9am to 5pm Monday to Sunday.

I am informed that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available the strength of the District was 107, including one Superintendent District officer based in District Headquarters, in Killarney Garda Station, and 18 Gardaí assigned to Caherciveen Garda Station

When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

The Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. Indeed in the period 2013 to the end of 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period to assist Gardaí in being mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

I am informed that there are currently 2 Garda vehicles attached to Caherciveen Garda Station. I understand from the Garda authorities that the Southern Region is to be allocated 30 Garda vehicles in 2018, with 5 of these vehicles intended to be allocated to the Kerry Division.

I can assure the Deputy that this Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda District, including the Killarney District as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

## **Garda Resources**

256. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will investigate with An Garda Síochána whether the level of resources available to the drug squad in the Sligo-Leitrim division are sufficient in order to enable the unit to conduct its objectives properly; the number of staff in the unit; the vehicles assigned to the unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26629/18]

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

I am further informed by the Commissioner that the strength of the Sligo/Leitrim Division on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is currently available, was 302 of whom 4 were allocated to the Divisional Drug Unit. There are also 17 Garda Reserves and 31 Garda civilian staff attached to the Sligo/Leitrim Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

As the Deputy will be aware all Gardaí have a responsibility in the prevention and detection of criminal activity whether it be in the area of drug offences, crime or otherwise. I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continues to pro-actively and resolutely tackle all forms of drug crime in this jurisdiction.

In 2015 the Commissioner, established a new national Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GDOCB), which brought together the Organised Crime Unit and the Garda National Drug Unit so as to create a robust entity to effectively tackle drugs and organised crime, as it currently exists in this country.

The GDOCB leads out the policing strategy for tackling drugs by demand reduction and supply reduction strategies. In this regard the Bureau continues its policy of working with Garda Divisional Drug Units nationwide in tackling supply reduction at local level. This work is further supported by other national units, including the Criminal Assets Bureau, in targeting persons involved in the illicit sale and supply of drugs. I am informed that this approach allows for the co-ordinated use of Garda resources in tackling all forms of organised crime, including illicit drug activity nationwide.

We have also seen unprecedented international cooperation between An Garda Síochána and policing services in other jurisdictions leading to important arrests and drug seizures.

Underpinning all these measures is this Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just over 1,960 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. I am pleased to say that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are

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now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources he needs to allow him to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation including the Divisional Drugs Units.

I have requested from the Garda Commissioner the specific information sought by the Deputy regarding the number of vehicles and I will write to him on receipt of same.

### **Residency Permits**

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an upgrade to stamp 4 will be accommodated in the case of a person (details supplied); if he will use his discretion to grant the appropriate stamp to permit them continue their employment here in view of the shortage of skills in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26630/18]

**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's application for permission to remain in the State has been considered and that the person concerned has been notified of the decision.

The original application was received from the person concerned on 2 November 2017 and a decision letter issued on 17 January 2018.

On 22 March 2018 a review of the original application was requested as an exceptional measure. A decision letter in response to this exceptional request for a review of the original application was issued on 28 May 2018.

The policy in relation to the eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permits is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

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

### **Residency Permits**

258. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [26632/18]

**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's application for permission to remain in the State has been considered and that the person concerned has been notified of the decision.

The original application was received from the person concerned on 2 November 2017 and a decision letter issued on 17 January 2018.

On 22 March 2018 a review of the original application was requested as an exceptional measure. A decision letter in response to this exceptional request for a review of the original application was issued on 28 May 2018.

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### **Garda Stations**

259. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeline for the reopening of Stepside Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26639/18]

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

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

The Garda Commissioner's final report on the matter, which is available on my Department's website, recommends that Stepside Garda Station be reopened, along with stations in Bawnboy, Co. Cavan, Ballinspittle, Co. Cork, Donard, Co. Wicklow, Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow and Rush, Co. Dublin.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a brief of requirements was provided to the OPW in relation to the reopening of each of these 6 stations, including Stepside Garda Station, and that the Garda authorities requested the OPW to undertake technical surveys to determine the works which would be required to enable the stations to reopen.

I understand that the OPW has concluded the necessary technical surveys and advised the Commissioner accordingly. The Commissioner is currently considering the matter and has assured me that he will be reverting to the OPW shortly.

It is not possible to say at this stage when the six stations will reopen as this depends on a number of factors, but my officials are engaging on an on-going basis with An Garda Síochána and the OPW as they progress these very important projects.

### **Garda Data**

260. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times An Garda Síochána has been called to or attended the psychiatric unit in Roscommon Hospital in each of the years 2012 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26645/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will contact the Deputy again when the report is to hand.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

261. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if An Garda Síochána plans to deploy undercover gardaí on trains that travel close to popular beaches over the summer months during good weather periods to address anti-social behaviour in the Dublin metropolitan region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26648/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the allocation of all Garda resources, including personnel, is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I have no direct role in this regard. However, I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continue to monitor all new and emerging crime trends in our communities, particularly in the Summer months.

I am advised by An Garda Síochána that Garda management engages extensively with transport operators and a range of regional and local operations have been put in place to address incidents of anti-social behaviour. An Garda Síochána maintains close contact with local and senior management in Irish Rail and other transport providers. Gardaí also have a good working relationship with the public transport services providers and patrols of uniformed and plain-clothes Gardaí, including personnel on foot patrols and other community engagement duties, are routinely employed when deemed appropriate by Garda management.

Working with communities to tackle public disorder and reduce anti-social behaviour remains a key priority for An Garda Síochána. This approach includes a strong focus on quality of life issues and collaboration with local authorities to help address the causes of anti-social behaviour. I might add that there is a range of strong legislative provisions available to An Garda Síochána to combat anti-social behaviour, including provisions under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Acts, the Criminal Damage Act and the Intoxicating Liquor Acts. There are also the incremental provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 2006 which provide for warnings and civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by adults and Part 13 of the Act which provide for warnings, good behaviour contracts and civil proceedings in relation to anti-social behaviour by children.

While An Garda Síochána will continue to tackle this problem head-on, they cannot eradicate the problem of anti-social behaviour alone. In relation to young offenders, it is also up to us as adults, particularly the parents and guardians of our young, to ensure that children are raised to be respectful and law-abiding. These lessons begin in the home, are further reinforced in our schools and then by society in general. We must all work together to ensure that such behaviour is never normalised and is tackled immediately.

### **Drug and Alcohol Testing**

262. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is the practice of An Garda Síochána to test drivers involved in accidents for the presence of alcohol or illegal drugs at all accidents at which gardaí are present; the number of those tested to date; the number that tested positive for the presence of illegal drugs or alcohol; the number not tested for the presence of illegal drugs or alcohol; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26653/18]



**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the information sought by the Deputy and I will be in contact with the Deputy directly on receipt of this report.

### **Crime Data**

263. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of homicides which occurred in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26662/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of the official recorded crime statistics, and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose.

I have asked the CSO to forward the available statistics directly to the Deputy.

### **Garda Transport Data**

264. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of four-wheel drive vehicles available for use by Tallaght Garda station in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26665/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. Indeed in the period 2013 to the end of 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period to assist Gardaí in being mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

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

I am informed by the Garda authorities that Tallaght Garda Station is in Tallaght District of DMR South Division. I am further informed that in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and in 2018 to date, one 4-wheel drive vehicle has been available for use in Tallaght District, with a total of two 4-wheel drive vehicles being available for use in DMR South Division throughout the period in question.

### **Visa Applications**

265. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 354 of 27 February 2018, if he will intervene on compassionate and medical grounds to have a visa application for a person (details supplied) allowed to come here to visit their seriously ill brother; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26741/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa application referred to was refused, on a number of grounds, by the Visa Office in Abu Dhabi on 31 May 2018. The decision was communicated to the applicant who was advised that an appeal could be submitted within two months. No appeal has yet been received in relation to this application.

If the applicant wishes to appeal the refusal decision, they should ensure that they fully address the reasons for refusal in the appeal and include all relevant information they wish taken into account.

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

### **Garda Resources**

266. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the new Garda allocation of resources tool COHORT; the timeline for its roll-out and use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26763/18]

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

I am informed that the Cohort model of resource allocation has been in use by Garda management since 2015 and is currently the model utilised for the allocation of personnel within An Garda Síochána, including newly attested probationer gardaí from the Garda College. The model is a dynamic distribution model and aims to impose a numerical/mathematical measure on the policing needs of each Division nationwide. The allocation and transfer of Garda Personnel, is determined by a number of factors, including crime and non-crime workload, population, area, policing arrangements, operational strategies and transfers applications, including welfare issues. When allocation of resources is under review, comprehensive consultation is carried out with local Garda management during which all relevant factors are taken into consideration. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly.

In relation to the allocation of newly attested gardaí, it has to be factored in that they have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

## **Cross-Border Co-operation**

267. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the work of the cross-Border crime task force; the budget of the taskforce in 2018; the number of permanent staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26803/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In November 2015, the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a series of measures in the agreement A Fresh Start, The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan, as part of a concerted and enhanced effort to tackle organised and cross jurisdictional crime. These measures included the creation of the Joint Agency Task Force.

This Task Force is led by senior officers from An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Revenue Commissioners and HM Revenue and Customs. A number of other relevant bodies, including the National Crime Agency and the Criminal Assets Bureau are also involved in operational activity. The objective of the Task Force is to build on existing law enforcement frameworks and to increase the collective effectiveness of operational law enforcement actions.

The Strategic Oversight Group of the Task Force is chaired jointly at senior management level by the two police services in order to provide strong strategic direction and oversight to front-line operational activities. This group also includes senior personnel from relevant agencies.

Senior officers from An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland jointly chair the Operations Co-ordination Group, which is bringing forward the operational actions in six priority areas that have been the focus of the work of the task force: Rural Crime; Immigration-related Crime; Excise Fraud; Drugs; Financial Crime and Human Trafficking. These priorities are, of course, kept under review. There has been very considerable operational activity, with a variety of different operations undertaken across all of the priority areas since the establishment of the Task Force. I commend the efforts of all of the agencies involved in this important work.

As the Joint Agency Task Force is a multi-agency co-ordination structure it does not have a defined staffing complement or budget. Personnel from the participating agencies in both jurisdictions are assigned for specific operations and other capacities from the relevant agencies are deployed as required by operational demands.

The Joint Agency Task Force is just one positive example of the extensive North-South co-operation that is undertaken between the police and other law enforcement agencies aimed at tackling crime and enhancing the safety of all communities on this island.

## **Assisted Suicide**

268. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has reviewed or plans to review the prohibition of euthanasia, assisted dying and physician assisted suicide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26849/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The practice or act of euthanasia, insofar as it involves assisted suicide, is illegal in Ireland. It is an offence, under section 2(2) of the Criminal Law (Suicide) Act 1993, to assist another person in taking his or her life. The offence was created in order to safeguard the lives of persons who are nearing the

end of their lives and might be vulnerable or at risk of abuse. Prosecutions under section 2(2) of the 1993 Act are at the sole discretion of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The 1993 Act provides for a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment on conviction on indictment for assisted suicide. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of section 2(2) in its judgment in *Fleming v Ireland and Others* on 29 April 2013, and I currently have no plans to review this provision.

Aside from the legal position in criminal law on assisted suicide, euthanasia by its nature also involves health, medical and ethical considerations, matters on which the Department of Health would have a substantive policy role.

### **Personal Injury Claims**

269. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions achieved under section 25 of the Civil Liability Act 2004 in each year since its enactment in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26930/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had inquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that section 25 of the Act provides that it is an offence for a person to give or adduce evidence in a personal injuries action that is false or misleading and that the person knows to be false or misleading, or to cause false or misleading evidence to be given or adduced with the intention of misleading the court. It is also an offence for a person to give false or misleading instructions or information to a solicitor or expert in relation to a personal injuries action or to cause false or misleading instructions or information to be given with the intention of misleading the court.

The Courts Service has advised that statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide information with regard to the number of convictions arising under section 25 of the Act. I have requested the Courts Service to examine the requirements, including system development and resource issues, needed to enable the compiling of such statistics going forward.

The Deputy will wish to be aware that the issue of fraud in the personal injuries litigation area is being examined as part of the ongoing work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, which is chaired by my colleague the Minister of State, Deputy Michael D'Arcy, and an initial roundtable was convened by the Department of Finance in late 2017 to listen to the views of all of the key stakeholders in relation to insurance fraud. In January 2018, the Working Group produced its 'Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance' which includes a number of specific recommendations in relation to the production of statistics by An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service on complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions relating to fraud within the personal injuries area.

Recommendation 13 of the Working Group's employer and public liability insurance report recommends that Insurance Ireland, An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions agree a set of guidelines in respect of the reporting of suspected fraudulent insurance claims. While guidelines were published in 2004, the Working Group noted that these have only been used to a very limited extent over the years and proposed that a new set of guidelines should be developed, using the 2004 protocol as a starting point. Consultations

with various interested parties on the proposed guidelines have taken place and it is anticipated that a new set of guidelines will be completed during Quarter 3 2018.

It should be noted also that the Courts Service and An Garda Síochána are engaging with my Department on an ongoing basis in relation to the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that the Department of Finance issues regular quarterly updates on its website of the progress of the respective reports of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, the latest and Fifth Quarterly Progress Update having been published on 11 May 2018.

### **Insurance Fraud**

270. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the establishment of a Garda fraud insurance unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26931/18]

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

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

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

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

### **Legislative Measures**

271. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to make changes to section 8 of the Civil Liability Act 2004 in view of the new restrictions data protections laws place on businesses directly affected by this section; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26932/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The amendment of Section 8 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 has been recommended by the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance. The Working Group, chaired by Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Michael



D’Arcy TD, is undertaking a review of the factors which are influencing the increased cost of insurance, and brings together the relevant Departments and Offices involved. The Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance was published in January 2018 and is available on the website of the Department of Finance.

My Department is the lead in relation to Recommendation 6 of the Report which aims at amending the wording of section 8 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to ensure that defendants are notified of a claim having been lodged against them. The intention is not to interfere with the discretion of the courts to deal with cases appropriately but to assist in enhancing the effectiveness of the statutory requirement for a plaintiff to serve a notice in writing on the defendant stating the nature of the wrong alleged to have been committed by him or her.

Among the amendments recommended to be made to section 8 is a reduction from two months to one month in the statutory time period for a plaintiff in a personal injuries action to serve a notice in writing on the alleged wrongdoer stating the nature of the wrong alleged to have been committed by him or her. In the view of the Working Group, this may be justified by way of being in alignment with data protection legislation which provides that data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is obtained. This is relevant for personal injuries cases where CCTV may have captured relevant footage. Generally, the retention period for data protection purposes is one month, beyond which retention is only permitted in certain circumstances, including for example, in the context of an investigation.

In keeping with the relevant recommendations and timelines of the Working Group the relevant amendments to section 8 are under preparation at my Department so that a suitable legislative vehicle can be availed of for their timely introduction and enactment.

### **Insurance Industry Regulation**

272. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to bring forward legislation to regulate claims management companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26933/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am replying to this matter as raised by the Deputy in the understanding that the intended reference is to companies, whether legal firms or not, which specialise in assisting claimants to bring forward and process claims, whether in relation to insurance, personal injury, medical negligence or other areas of litigation. This is, of course, an issue which has been the subject of particular debate in relation to the insurance sector where so-called “claims harvesting” companies have been in operation and may be considered to have an undesirable impact on the levels of litigation and costs in that sector.

If the Deputy’s specific concerns are about those companies or firms which specialise in managing or harvesting insurance claims, their regulation will be a matter for appropriate consideration in the context of insurance regulation under the policy aegis of the Minister for Finance and the Central Bank. For my part, therefore, I would have no specific plans to bring forward legislation to regulate claims management companies in that context at this time.

As the Deputy may be aware, this is an issue which has been considered in the context of the ongoing work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance Michael D’Arcy TD, which is undertaking a review of the factors which are influencing the increased cost of insurance, and brings together all the relevant Departments and Offices involved including my own Department.

As part of that work, the Working Group sought the views of the Law Society on the matter of claims harvesting and those preventative measures contained in the Solicitors Acts which are of relevance. In the first instance, section 62 of the Solicitors Act 1954 prohibits solicitors from rewarding or agreeing to reward unqualified persons for the introduction of legal business and provides that any such agreement is void. The Law Society informed the Working Group of its continued proactive approach to breaches of section 62 and has published an updated practice note on claims referrals and section 62 in June 2017 by way of ensuring that the solicitors' profession is fully informed. The Law Society has also directly notified claims referral companies found to be targeting solicitors about the statutory prohibition on solicitors paying referral fees.

Section 5 of the Solicitors (Amendment) Act 2002 also generally prohibits unqualified persons from advertising a service of a legal nature that could otherwise be provided by a solicitor for a fee or reward. This includes advertising in relation to personal injuries claims in the context of claims harvesting websites. The Law Society has informed the Working Group that 14 claims harvesting websites have been taken down as a result of the Law Society's investigations since 2014. The Law Society has also instituted High Court proceedings against non-solicitors relating to two leading claims harvesting websites one of which resulted in a High Court order directing its permanent closure. The Working Group's Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance, which was published in January 2018 and is available on the website of the Department of Finance, refers.

In so far, therefore, as claims management companies are seeking to directly or indirectly engage solicitors in their claims work, the Solicitors Acts 1954 to 2015 are being used as a bulwark against "claims harvesting" and the relevant regulatory and disciplinary provisions under the Acts are being applied rigorously by the Law Society. Under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, these are matters which I expect will be taken up by the Legal Services Regulatory Authority in the ongoing roll-out of its functions including of the new public complaints framework and of the new Legal Practitioners' Disciplinary Tribunal which are scheduled to take place early in 2019. Along with my Department I will, of course, continue to support the work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group including, as appropriate, in relation to those specific matters which have been raised by the Deputy.

### **Ticket Touting**

273. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the progress made in stopping ticket touts operating here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26243/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am currently seeking to finalise a legislative proposal on ticket resale and aim to bring that proposal to Government at the earliest possible date. While legislation has a role to play in curbing the resale of tickets at inflated prices, sporting bodies, artists and promoters also have a responsibility to address the issue. I am encouraged by the fact that the level of ticket resale for a number of recent major entertainment events, and the prices paid on the secondary ticket market for tickets to those events, have both been relatively low due to factors such as the use of personalised or paperless tickets and the decision of some acts to put on sufficient shows to meet the demand for tickets.

### **Work Permits Applications**

274. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the decision not to grant an employment permit to a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26502/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that an application for a General Employment Permit for the person concerned was received on 6 November 2017. A decision was made to refuse the granting of the application on 20 December 2018.

This application was refused as 'Career Guidance Teachers' are listed on the Ineligible List of Occupations (ICEL) for employment permits. The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and of their right to request a review of this decision, in line with the provisions of the Employment Permits Acts, within 28 days. No review was received within this timeframe.

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 the end of 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.

Changes to access to the Irish labour market for specific occupations via the employment permits system are made on the basis of research undertaken by the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs and, co-ordinated by the National Skills Council, the annual National Skills Bulletin and the annual Vacancy Overview Report in tandem with a public consultation process. The recently published Vacancy Overview Report indicates that despite recent employment growth, vacancy notifications for this sector remain limited to a small number of roles such as lecturers, TEFL teachers and instructors/trainers

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

### **IDA Ireland Site Visits**

275. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits that were taken by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland clients to each of the local electoral areas, LEAs, in counties Meath and Westmeath; the number of jobs that were created by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland in each of the LEAs in the counties; and the value of the investments made by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client companies in each of the LEAs in the counties in each of the past five years. [26244/18]

276. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits that were taken by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland clients to each of the local electoral areas, LEAs, in counties Louth, Kildare and Wicklow; the number of jobs that were created by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland in each of the LEAs in the counties; and the

value of the investments made by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client companies in each of the LEAs in the counties in each of the past five years. [26287/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 276 and 275 together.

IDA Ireland collates information on the value of investments by its client companies through the Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact (ABSEI) which includes data for exports, Irish economy expenditure and capital expenditure. This data is collated on a national basis only. Information on the value of investments made by IDA client companies in Local Electoral Areas (LEAs) is therefore unavailable. However, the value of investments is reflected in the number of jobs created across the country. I am pleased to say that the level of investment by IDA client companies in counties Louth, Kildare, Wicklow, Meath and Westmeath remains strong with 19,533 people employed in 104 FDI companies.

It should also be emphasised that FDI only forms one part of investment in regional locations. Indigenous enterprise is responsible for a significant portion of employment growth, especially outside Dublin. Enterprise Ireland supported companies continue to perform well in the regions with all five counties reporting increases in job numbers. In 2017, a 7% increase was reported in Westmeath, with a 5% increase reported in Meath, Louth and Kildare and a 4% increase reported in Wicklow.

Enterprise Ireland does not conduct site visits. Data on IDA Ireland site visits and jobs are collated on a county-by-county basis only and details on site visits in Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and Louth from 2013 to Q1 2018 are outlined in Table C. IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties of Ireland to its client base. It is important to remember, however, that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the company concerned. It is also the case that site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new FDI comes from existing IDA Ireland client companies.

Tables A and B provide a breakdown of employment by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client companies in counties Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and Louth from 2013 to 2017. The employment figures for 2018 will not be available until my Department's Annual Employment Survey is carried out in November 2018.

**Table A: Total employment of EI-supported companies in Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and Louth 2013-2017**

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Kildare	6,520	7,512	8,308	8,632	9,134
Meath	6,072	6,658	6,855	7,007	7,302
Wicklow	3,622	3,628	3,903	4,104	4,132
Westmeath	2,854	3,436	3,548	3,653	3,741
Louth	5,032	5,434	5,600	5,819	6,121

**Table B: Total employment of IDA-supported companies in Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and Louth 2013-2017**

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Kildare	10,327	10,285	10,628	10,229	9,282
Louth	2,568	3,053	3,236	3,593	3,702

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Meath	1,540	1,536	1,533	1,526	1,491
Westmeath	2,202	2,386	2,519	2,573	2,794
Wicklow	2,348	2,324	2,199	2,234	2,264

**Table C: IDA site visits in Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Westmeath and Louth 2013-Q1 2018**

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Q1 2018
Kildare	1	1	7	8	10	4
Meath	1	2	7	8	3	1
Wicklow	1	4	7	5	2	0
Westmeath	9	12	28	36	42	3
Louth	4	10	20	24	22	6

### Work Permits Eligibility

277. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the reinstatement of career guidance on the list of critical skills employment permits will be considered due to the shortage of guidance counsellors here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26327/18]

**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 the end of 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 with the relevant lead Department, in this case the Department of Education and Skills, in preparation of a detailed business case setting out the necessary data to substantiate a case for removal from the ICEL.

### Departmental Advertising Expenditure

278. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26383/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of payments made by my Department and its offices to the company referred to in respect of advertising services provided from January 2016 to date are set out in the following table.



My Department and its offices use external service providers having regard to the business needs for such services. In engaging service providers, the Department and its offices are mindful of the need to secure value for money and, accordingly, strive to keep costs to the minimum.

Year	Advertisement Type	Purpose	Cost €
2016	Newspapers	Advertisements relating to the statutory functions of the Department and its Offices	62,361
2016	Newspapers and accountancy publications	Advertisements by Companies Registration Office (CRO) regarding mandatory electronic filing being introduced for companies filing their annual returns	31,398
Total 2016			€93,759
2017	Newspapers	Advertisements relating to the statutory functions of the Department and its Offices	28,223
2017	Newspapers and accountancy publications	Advertisements by CRO regarding mandatory electronic filing being introduced for companies filing their annual returns	97,952
2017	Radio advertisements	Advertisements by CRO regarding mandatory electronic filing being introduced for companies filing their annual returns	49,993
2017	Website editions of newspapers	Advertisements by CRO regarding mandatory electronic filing being introduced for companies filing their annual returns	6,159
2017	Newspapers	Change of CRO public office address	7,145
Total 2017			€189,472
2018	Newspapers	Advertisements relating to the statutory functions of the Department and its Offices	7,743
Total 2018			€7,743

### EU Directives

279. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on concerns raised by a person (details supplied) in correspondence regarding EU Directive COM/2016/0593 on copyright in the digital Single Market; and if she has raised these concerns at Council of Ministers level. [26399/18]

**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 rights-holders 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, rights-holders, 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.

### Public Consultation Process

280. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of public consultations held by her Department or by a State agency under the remit of her Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26454/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The number of written public consultations held by my Department in the years in question are as following:

Year	No. of Consultations
2011	2
2012	4
2013	4
2014	13
2015	12
2016	25
2017	20
(June) 2018	13
Total 2011-18	93

Details of these public consultations are available on my Department's website at the following address: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Consultations/>.

The number of replies is not available for all the consultations on the Department's website, if however, there are any specific consultations that the Deputy is interested in, I will endeavour to provide this information.

Public consultations are generally carried out by staff of the Department and publicised on the DBEI website and do not involve the hiring of external resources. Newspaper advertisements are also occasionally taken out in respect of certain public consultations in the national media at competitive market rates.

My Department does not routinely collect information on the number of public consultations carried out by agencies under its remit, or the number of responses received in respect of any such consultations. If the Deputy wishes to request information on any specific public consultation carried out by one of the agencies, I will endeavour to provide this.

**IDA Ireland Data**

281. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the detail of the 11,300 job approvals and 139 new investments supported by the IDA Ireland in the first six months of 2018, by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26490/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** IDA Ireland has recently reported very strong mid-year results and expects that investments approved in the first half of 2018 will lead to the creation of over 11,300 jobs as companies roll out their plans over the coming months and years. This compares with 11,000 job approvals over the same period in 2017. There were 139 projects won in the first six months of the year – compared with 114 in the first half of 2017. The technology, financial services and pharmaceuticals sectors performed particularly strongly and I am pleased to say that there were 51 regional investments in the first half of this year also.

Details of the new investments announced by foreign direct investment companies (FDI) for the first half of 2018 are contained in the following table. However, it should be noted that not all companies choose to announce their new projects, so all 11,300 job approvals and 139 investments will not be reflected in this table.

The 2019 Annual Employment Survey will be carried out by my Department in November and will capture FDI jobs created in 2018.

**IDA Ireland: List of announced investments in 2018**

Company	Location	Origin	Jobs
Jaguar LandRover	Shannon	UK	150
AbbVie	Sligo	US	100
Almac Group	Dundalk	US	315
N3	Dublin	US	100
SK Biotech	Dublin	South Korea	N/A
Stripe Technology	Dublin	US	N/A
Google	Dublin	US	N/A
MSD	Dublin	US	350
Autodesk	Dublin	US	200
Quidel Incorporated	Galway City	US	75
Aberdeen Standard Investment	Dublin	UK	N/A
Deutsche Borse Group	Cork	German	200
Takeda Pharma	Grange Castle	Japanese	70
Edwards Lifesciences	Limerick	US	600
Affirma	Dublin	US	50
SentryOne	Dublin	US	50
Sojern	Dublin	US	36
ADvendio	Dublin	US	20
Enfusion	Dublin	US	20
Krypt	Dublin	US	20
Lifesize	Dublin	US	20
Vivino	Dublin	US	10
Guidewire Software Inc.	Dublin	US	40
Viasat Ireland	Dublin	US	100
LiveTiles	Sligo	Australia	50

Company	Location	Origin	Jobs
Mastercard	Dublin	US	175
Rubrik	Cork	US	50
PCI Pharma Services	Drogheda	US	70
PCI Pharma Services	Stamullen	US	50
New Relic Inc.	Dublin	US	200
Comrade Digital Services	Dublin	US	40
Wuxi biologics	Dundalk	China	400
Allianz/Darta Saving	Dublin	Germany	125
Avery Dennison	Longford	US	200
Leetha Industries	Longford	UK	200
Segment	Dublin	US	100
DMS	Tipperary	N/A	50
E3	Sligo	US	40
eBECS	Dublin	UK	100

### Work Permits Eligibility

282. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if consideration will be given to reinstating the role of career guidance teacher or counsellor onto the list of critical skills for employment permits in view of the shortage of guidance counsellors in schools (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26503/18]

**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 with 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.

### Work Permits Eligibility

283. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to reinstate career guidance on the list of critical skills employment permits due to the shortage of guidance counsellors here. [26631/18]

**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.

Changes to access to the Irish labour market for specific occupations via the employment permits system are made on the basis of research undertaken by the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs and, co-ordinated by the National Skills Council, the annual National Skills Bulletin and the annual Vacancy Overview Report in tandem with a public consultation process. The recently published Vacancy Overview Report indicates that despite recent employment growth, vacancy notifications for this sector remain limited to a small number of roles such as lecturers, TEFL teachers and instructors/trainers

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

### Ministerial Meetings

284. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the bilateral meetings she has had with her EU counterparts over the past six months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26647/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Since January of this year my Ministerial colleagues, Ministers of State Pat Breen and John Halligan and I have continued the Government's outreach agenda with Ireland's EU partners. Working closely with a range of EU partners has always been important for Ireland and continues to be a priority.

The following tables list the EU counterparts with whom we have recently engaged on issues related to current EU files at the Competitiveness and Trade Councils, bilateral trade relations and the position of the Irish Government in regard to the evolving Brexit negotiations. Over the same period we also had a significant number of non- EU meetings.

In addition to the bilateral meetings listed, my Ministerial colleagues and I engage with our EU counterparts on an ongoing basis at numerous EU related events.

Minister Heather Humphreys

Date of Meeting	EU Counterpart
25/01/2018	House of Commons Exiting the EU Committee chaired by Hilary Benn MP
27/02/2018	Mr Didier Reynders Belgium, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs & European Affairs.
27/02/2018	UK Minister of State in the Department for International Trade, Greg Hands MP



Date of Meeting	EU Counterpart
15& 16/05/2018	Swedish Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde
22/05/2018	EU Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmstrom
22/05/2018	EU Agriculture Commissioner, Phil Hogan
24/05/2018	Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel
13/06/2018	UK Minister of State at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Claire Perry MP
13/06/2018	UK Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox MP and Minister of State in the Department for International Trade, Greg Hands MP.

### Minister Pat Breen

Date of Meeting	EU Counterpart
12/03/2018	EU Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel
12/03/2018 & 28/05/2018	UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Lord Henley
14/03/2018	Scottish Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs, and Fair Work Keith Brown MSP
10/04/2018	UK Minister for State for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Margot James
15/05/2018	Netherlands State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Mona Keijzer
28/05/2018	Czech Republic Minister for Industry and Trade, Tomáš Hüner
28/05/2018	German Minister for Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, Peter Altmaier
11/06/2018	Polish Minister of Development and Investment, Jerzy Kwiecinski
11/06/2018	Polish Minister of Enterprise and Technology, Jadwiga Emilewicz
12/06/2018	Polish Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology Marcin Ociepa
12/06/2018	Czech Republic, Minister for Industry and Trade, Tomáš Hüner
13/06/2018	Czech Republic Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and European Union, Vladamir Bartl
14/06/2018	Czech Republic State Secretary for EU Affairs Ales Chmelar

### Minister Halligan

Date of Meeting	EU Counterpart
02/02/2018 & 10/05/2018	Minister Sam Gyimah, Minister for Higher Education and Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, UK
02/02/2018	Minister Mika Lintilä, Minister of Economic Affairs, Finland
02/02/2018	Minister Costas Fotakis, Minister for Research and Innovation, Greece
02/02/2018	Italian Minister for Education, University and Research Professor Luigi Nicolais
10/05/2018	Minister Sam Gyimah, Minister for Higher Education and Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, UK

### Job Losses

285. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she has taken to protect jobs at a company (details supplied); the supports in place for employees who will be made redundant; if she has spoken with the management of the company regarding these job losses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26690/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The announcement by Coca-Cola that it will be closing Athy International Concentrates, on a phased basis from September 2018 to December 2019, is very disappointing. While I very much regret this news, I welcome Coca Cola's stated commitment to making every effort to help those employees who will lose their jobs. This includes redundancy packages, as well as financial advice and re-training. Despite this disappointing decision, Coca-Cola has made it clear that it remains fully committed to its other facilities in Ireland. We understand more than half of the jobs that will be lost in Athy will transfer to its facility in Ballina, County Mayo.

The Government will also make every State support available to those impacted. The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection is aware of the situation and we will be working collectively, across Government, to help these workers transition and find new employment opportunities. The IDA is engaging closely with senior management at Coca-Cola Ireland and I met last week with stakeholders in Athy, including local representatives, to discuss the issue.

This meeting was a useful opportunity to hear first-hand the impact that this announcement will have on Athy and the surrounding area as well as specific challenges Athy faces. At the meeting, I reiterated the Government's commitment to work towards bringing regional unemployment to within one percentage point of the national average. I am pleased that the Mid-East, as a region, is currently performing very strongly on that measure with an unemployment figure of 5.2% at the end of 2017.

The Government's role is to ensure that the right conditions are in place to allow enterprise to thrive. I was glad to see that everyone around the table in Athy – TDs, Councillors, the Local Authority, and local businesses – are committed to a collaborative approach to drive enterprise in the region.

From the Government's part, and to back the ambition and potential of all regions, I announced in April the opening of the second call of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF) which is worth €30 million.

Under the first round of the Regional Fund, the Co. Kildare Community Network Company secured significant funding to develop a Mid-East Regional Innovation 'Think-Space' to be located in Naas which will be a great support to start-ups and businesses emerging in Kildare and the wider Mid-East. Also, IT Carlow was successful in securing funding for the Insurtech Network Centre, which again will be an important asset to the Carlow/South Kildare area.

I want to see more successful projects from this Region under the second call of REDF. In addition, under Project Ireland 2040, the Government will continue to make this funding available on a rolling basis.

The support of the National Development Plan over coming years will be crucial to delivering on regional development potential, where three quarters of new growth is envisioned for places outside of Dublin by 2040. The Government recently launched four Funds under Project Ireland 2040 which will also help to ensure more balanced regional development and will stimulate renewal and investment in rural and urban areas, the environment and innovation. In particular, the €1 billion Rural Development Fund will support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in our towns, villages and their hinterlands that enhance the quality of life of communities and enhance their attractiveness for families who want to live and work there. A collaborative mindset along with the Regional Action Plans will be important mechanisms to ensure this funding will be targeted in the right areas.

### **Orthodontic Services**

286. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26185/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

287. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26186/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

288. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26189/18]

**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, since 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**

289. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26190/18]

**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, since 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.

### **Orthodontic Services**

290. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26192/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

291. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26193/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

292. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26194/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

293. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26195/18]

**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.

### **Primary Medical Certificates Applications**

294. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a primary medical certificate by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26210/18]

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

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

295. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when an application for increased home support services by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26229/18]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services**

296. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26233/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

297. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26234/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

298. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26235/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

299. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodon-



tic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26237/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

300. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26238/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Charges**

301. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the charging of persons with medical cards for blood tests (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26247/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with “all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.” There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition.

The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient’s symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that some GPs have begun to charge GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

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

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

### **Ambulance Service Data**

302. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of emergency ambulances based in County Kerry; the locations in which are they are based; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [26251/18]

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

### **Ambulance Service Data**

303. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of intermediate care vehicles based in County Kerry; the locations in which the intermediate care ambulances are based; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26252/18]

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

### **Mental Health Services Data**

304. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescent mental health services inpatient beds; the number which are available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26255/18]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

305. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26256/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

306. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26260/18]

**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, since 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.

### **Orthodontic Services Data**

307. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of orthodontic referrals from CHO area 4 in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; the wait times for priority, functional and routine cases, respectively; the private referrals in CHO area 4 in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26268/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

308. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 419 of 24 April 2018, the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [26274/18]

**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, since 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**

309. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26275/18]

**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, since 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**

310. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26278/18]

**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, since 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.

### **Female Genital Mutilation**

311. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the progress made on the interdepartmental work to develop a national strategy on female genital mutilation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26282/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Female genital mutilation (FGM) is universally recognised as a form of gender-based violence and a fundamental violation of the human rights of women and girls. The Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012 provides for the creation of an offence of FGM and other offences relating to FGM. The legislation takes a human rights perspective and stipulates that the right to practice one's cultural traditions and beliefs cannot be used to justify FGM.

The HSE is working to raise awareness of the health implications of FGM among at risk communities through staff information and support. An FGM resource pack for health professionals and relevant staff in maternity and associated settings has been disseminated. The HSE provides funding to AkiDwA, a national network of migrant women, to facilitate working with target communities around raising awareness of the illegality of FGM and sharing information about the risks of this practice. In addition, the HSE funds a specialist clinic operated by the Irish Family Planning Association for girls and women who have undergone FGM.

I recently met with representatives of NGOs to discuss how their work on FGM can be supported by Government departments and agencies. The Department of Health and the HSE

will continue to work with relevant departments and with AkiDwA to improve health outcomes for groups vulnerable to this form of gender-based violence. In this regard, the HSE intends to include FGM in its forthcoming intercultural health strategy.

I understand that the monitoring committee for the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence has recently agreed that the strategy will include an action relating to FGM. This strategy comes under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality.

### **Legislative Programme**

312. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015; when the Bill will recommence in the Houses of the Oireachtas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26284/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is due to be considered at the Select Committee on Health on Wednesday the 20th of June.

I gladly acknowledge the sterling work of the Deputy on this Bill during her time as Minister of State in my Department and welcome her ongoing interest in its progression to enactment.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

313. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26291/18]

**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, since 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**

314. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26292/18]

**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, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Primary Care Centres**

315. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 109 of 28 April 2016, if the review promised in the reply was completed; if the results of the review will be publicised; if more detail will be given in respect of a timeframe for the provision of an extension to the building and for the appointment of a practice nurse; if the correspondence and the responses to parliamentary questions on the matter will be reviewed; the reason no action has been taken to prioritise the requirements for this centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26293/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to reply directly to you in relation to Ballyragget Health Centre.

### **General Practitioner Contracts**

316. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has met the groups representing general practitioners recently in regard to their contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26301/18]

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

Officials from my Department and the HSE met with the Irish Medical Organisation on 9 May to set out the State's position in relation to the GMS contract and to progress this important issue. The Department also wrote to the Irish Medical Organisation on 14 May to set out the proposals made at that meeting in writing and is currently awaiting the Organisation's official response.

In line with the long-established approach to such processes, and by agreement of the parties concerned, I am not in position to give further details while discussions between the parties are under way.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

317. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a home support application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26313/18]

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

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

318. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 158 of 23 May 2018, the timeframe for the introduction of the drug; if the latest correspondence will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26314/18]

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

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

Translarna (Atlauren) is a high cost medicine manufactured by PTC Therapeutics for the treatment of a subgroup of patients with Duchene Muscular Dystrophy – a rare disease. The medicine has conditional market authorisation from the European Medicines Agency for Europe - (the condition being that the company carries out further clinical trials to determine the clinical efficacy of the drug).

Applications for reimbursement were considered by the HSE Drugs Committee and Leadership Team in 2016 and 2017. The applications were considered carefully, however the final decision was that the HSE was not in a position to fund the medicine on the basis of the current clinical evidence of effectiveness and the prices being charged by the pharmaceutical company.

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

The HSE has informed the company that any new information it may have in relation to clinical benefits or evidence (or in relation to price) can be considered as part of a new application. The HSE has confirmed that there will also be no delay in bringing such an application to a speedy conclusion and decision stage.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

319. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26322/18]

**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**

320. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26323/18]

**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 since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Departmental Meetings**

321. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if minutes from a meeting (details supplied) will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26324/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I wish to advise the Deputy, regarding the meeting held on the 23 November 2017, no official minutes were taken of the meeting however a note was drawn up by one of my officials following the meeting, a copy of which you will find below.

#### **Minister Harris meeting with iCare, 23 November**

iCare representatives gave a history of the organisation and a summary of the services they provide. They currently support 150 families with a person with autism in the Inishowen region, many of whom have been referred to them by the HSE, although without funding.

iCare receives minimal state funding. HSE briefing indicated that iCare received €75,523 in funding in 2017 but iCare said that this is money the HSE pays through iCare to a landlord for the rental of a facility – iCare merely pay out the money but get no benefit from it. The HSE

Disability Manager CHO1, Jacinta Lyons, undertook to investigate this. The other state funding received is Lottery funding - €2k in 2017.

Services provided by iCare and primarily community support and day respite – approximately 2 hours a day for 25 children, and another 2 hours a day for over 18s. They also provide services at weekends and summer holidays, including nights away.

iCare is looking for two things:

- A SLA with the HSE providing funding of €100,000 per annum to cover the services it provides to families with autism in the area;

- Capital investment from the HSE to build a permanent centre on land that it has purchased. The operation is currently running out of two pre-fabs which are nearing the end of their usable life

iCare had previously submitted a business case for ongoing funding but it was turned down. They have submitted a new case as part of the 2018 estimates; this has been escalated to HSE National level.

The submission for capital funding needs to be submitted through the CHO. The Disability Manager supports the work of the organisation and will assist with the application.

The Minister undertook to follow up with the HSE regarding service planning and said that he and/or Minister McGrath may visit the facility when they are next in Donegal.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

322. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26325/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Staff**

323. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if other medical internship places are available at University Hospital Limerick; if the case of a person (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26340/18]

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

### **Medical Inquiries**

324. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff that have been allocated to assist a person (details supplied) with their investigation; if this will be increased to allow them to complete their report sooner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26346/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Scally Inquiry is an independent inquiry. As such, it is operating separately to my Department which is not therefore providing any staff directly to assist Dr Scally. My Department is of course providing Dr. Scally with any assistance he seeks to enable him to complete his work.

### **Cannabis for Medicinal Use**

325. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the process for accessing medicinal cannabis for ongoing chronic disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26349/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Cannabis is strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2016, and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder.

The two most common active components found in cannabis oil are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

- THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis. Under the Misuse of Drugs legislation products containing THC are strictly controlled and possession is unlawful except under licence.

- CBD is derived from cannabis. However, since it is not psychoactive it is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs legislation, and does not require a Ministerial Licence.

#### **Access to THC-based cannabis for Medical Use via the Ministerial Licence Route**

Irish-based medical practitioners who wish to prescribe cannabis products containing THC may apply to the Minister for Health, for a licence under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the granting of such a licence must be premised on an appropriate application being submitted to the Department of Health, which is endorsed by a consultant who is responsible for the management of the patient and who is prepared to monitor the effects of the treatment over time.

#### **How to apply for a Ministerial licence**

A medical cannabis licence application submitted to the Minister for Health, in line with the Misuse of Drugs Acts, must include

- An outline of the treatment the patient has received to date and justification from the doctor as to why it is appropriate in their patient's specific circumstances to prescribe cannabis.

- Details of the cannabis product which it is proposed to prescribe and administer to the



patient.

- The source of the cannabis product.
- The arrangements for the ongoing monitoring and care of the patient once the cannabis-based treatment has commenced.

The application must be submitted either by the patient's medical consultant, or by their General Practitioner (GP). Applications from the patients GP must include written endorsement for the proposed cannabis treatment for the individual patients by the patients' consultant.

The decision to prescribe or not prescribe any treatment, including cannabis treatment, for an individual patient is strictly a decision for the treating clinician, in consultation with their patient. The Minister for Health has no role in this clinical decision-making process.

Consultants or GPs requiring further information or clarification in relation to the licence application process are advised to contact the Department of Health directly.

### **Long-Term Illness Scheme**

326. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if Crohn's disease will be added to the long term illness list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26350/18]

**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 Data**

327. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the cost per residential place in centres (details supplied) as agreed under the last service level agreement in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26351/18]

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

### **Addiction Treatment Services**

328. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the cost to the HSE of an addiction treatment facility (details supplied) by year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26352/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne) (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Execu-

tive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services**

329. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time for an insulin pump at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, for children with type 1 diabetes; the number of children on the list for a pump at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26358/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting times for hospital procedures is a key priority of this Government. On April 12 2018 the Minister launched the Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018. This plan was compiled by the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive, and the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

As part of the plan the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures and the NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments. Under the plan there will be a significant reduction in the overall number of people waiting for a procedure. The target is that the waiting list numbers will fall to 70,000 by the end of the year, from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

In relation to your particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

330. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the chronic delays for cataract surgery and limited eye care services for children particularly in County Donegal (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26363/18]

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

Cataract surgery is among the most common surgical procedures carried out in the ophthalmology specialty. Through the work of the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the HSE, the overall number of patients waiting for cataract surgery has fallen by 22% since July 2017, while the number of patients waiting more than 12 months has declined by 71% in the same period. For 2018, under the Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan, all clinically suitable patients waiting for more than 9 months for a Cataract procedure will be offered treatment this year, with 5,000 NTPF funded procedures planned in both public and private hospitals.

Last year funding was allocated to provide additional capacity at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and as a result a cataract theatre is now operational three days per week. This year, in line with the Action Plan, the HSE is planning to open a dedicated Cataract theatre in Nenagh Hospital in July.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on eye care services for children in County Donegal.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

331. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is acceptable that the early intervention service in County Limerick has now written to parents in the region to state that only children in extreme urgent cases can be dealt with due to a lack of psychology staff and resources and all other children are to be put on waiting lists; if additional resources will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26364/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath) (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 Services**

332. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of a shared diabetes centre of excellence for Letterkenny University Hospital and Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26369/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Staff Data**

333. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of advanced nurse practitioner posts that will be allocated in 2018; if a previous commitment that two advanced nurse practitioner posts will be allocated to a hospital (details supplied) will be adhered to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26371/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I approved the Policy on Graduate, Specialist and Advanced Nursing Practice in 2017. The primary purpose of this policy is to show through a series of demonstrator projects how a critical mass of Advance Nurse Practitioners (ANP) can contribute to providing a solution to a number of challenges facing the health service including access to services, avoiding unnecessary hospital attendance, supporting early discharge and contributing to addressing waiting lists.

The first 120 ANP commenced the programme in October 2017 and a further 30 will commence in October 2018. The selection criterion for nurses to be appointed to this programme are clearly set out in the letters requesting expression of interest. The ANP programme is one of many initiatives to enhance the educational qualifications and improve career paths of nurses.

I understand that one ANP post was assigned to the hospital mentioned by the Deputy in 2017 as part of the central ANP programme. However it is important to note that this central ANP programme is only one pathway to becoming an ANP. One of the benefits of the programme is that in recognising the importance and benefits of having ANPs on their staff, approval to attend ANP or equivalent courses can be given at CHO or Hospital Group level provided costs can be met from within their existing resources.

### Ambulance Service Provision

334. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the reason the ambulance stationed in Killybegs, County Donegal has no crew leaving a single ambulance to cover the area from Dunkineely to Glencolumbcille, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26378/18]

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

### Disabilities Assessments

335. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26379/18]

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

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

### Primary Care Centres

336. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the services available at a centre (details supplied). [26380/18]

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

### Departmental Expenditure

337. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26392/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department uses the OGP National Framework for Media Strategy, Planning and buying services framework contract in respect of requirements for advertising public notices. The contract service provider Mediavest changed its name during 2017 to Spark Foundry. My Department's expenditure with this entity since 2016 is outlined in the following table.

Year	Service	Cost(incl VAT)
2018	Public Consultation on Private Practice in Public Hospitals	€7,465
2018	Public Consultation on Deprivation of Liberty	€5,193

Year	Service	Cost(incl VAT)
2017	Public Consultation Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities.	€6,167
2017	Prompt Payment Interest	€0,077
2017	Press Notice re SI 227 February 17	€0,984
2017	Patient Safety Advocacy Policy	€3,244
2017	Public Consultation Human Tissue Legislation, Newspaper Ads	€6,167
2017	Public Consultation Home care, Newspaper Ads	€5,518
2016	Public Consultation National Drugs Strategy	€11,699
2016	Public Consultation Taskforce on Personalised Budgets	€4,011
2016	Invite submission on the regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists	€6,167

### Hospital Appointments Status

338. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied); and when an appointment will be expedited. [26398/18]

**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, since 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.

### Paediatric Services

339. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the status of the publication of an action plan (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26401/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The CEO of the Children's Hospital Group has advised that the publication of the Paediatric Orthopaedic Action Plan 2018 is scheduled for early July 2018.

### Services for People with Disabilities

340. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Cork that are awaiting a diagnostic assessment for autistic spectrum disorder. [26403/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the servic-



es they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

341. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when a surgery date will be granted to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26413/18]

**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, since 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**

342. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to implement the motion passed by Dáil Éireann on 28 March 2018 regarding HPV vaccination; the expected timeframe to extend the national HPV vaccination programme to provide universal HPV vaccination to both boys and girls here; if a budget for universal HPV vaccination subject to the pending outcome of the health technology assessment carried out by HIQA will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26415/18]

344. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if a costing assessment has been carried out on the potential extension of the HPV vaccination to boys; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26417/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 342 and 344 together.

There was an extensive debate on the safety of the HPV vaccine and its efficacy in preventing the development of cervical cancer in this House on 28 March last in which a motion was passed unanimously which recognised that the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine protects young girls from developing a cervical cancer when they grow up, supported the campaign to encourage parents to avail of the HPV vaccine for their children in their first year of secondary school, and called for the programme to be extended to include boys.

The Health Information and Quality Authority is undertaking a health technology assessment, at the request of my Department, on extending the national immunisation schedule to include HPV vaccination of boys. This HTA will establish the clinical and cost-effectiveness of providing the vaccine to boys. The decision to extend the current programme which offers HPV vaccination to all girls in their first year of second-level education to a programme that also offers vaccination to boys will be informed by the evidence contained in the HTA.

As I said during the debate, I share the Deputy's view that it should be concluded as quickly as possible and, subject to a favourable HTA, I will seek to extend this vaccine universally as a priority.

### **Vaccination Programme**

343. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the cost of public information campaigns related to the HSE's national immunisation office in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; if the budget responsibility for such campaigns lies solely with the office; his plans to increase this budget to maintain the growth in vaccine confidence seen in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26416/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this PQ relates to a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 344 answered with Question No. 342.*

### **Audiology Services Provision**

345. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if a situation in which a person (details supplied) had to seek private medical intervention and pay for an operation due to the inadequate audiology services in counties Roscommon and Sligo will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26418/18]

**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.

### **Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision**

346. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 59 of 19 April 2018, if he will request the HSE to provide funding for a neurorehabilitation unit in County Longford based on the comprehensive business case put forward in 2016 and the need for such a facility in the region in order to address the high number of adults currently placed inappropriately in nursing home care; if the HSE has explored funding for the stated amount (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26419/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to reply directly to you in relation to the provision of a neurorehabilitation unit in County Longford.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

347. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is now denied the continuous glucose monitoring equipment he has been using for the past number of months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26421/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

348. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when a home care package will be provided for a person (details supplied); the waiting time for home care packages in County Kildare in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26426/18]

**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.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

349. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite care hours provided for the first quarter of 2017 in each CHO area. [26427/18]

**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.

### **Legislative Programme**

350. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to commence Parts 2, 3 and 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015; the timeframe for the commencement of these provisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26440/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** A number of technical drafting issues have come to light in relation to Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. Consideration of a resolution to these issues and the likely need for primary legislation are close to conclusion and I expect to be in a position to progress shortly.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

351. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a residential place for a person (details supplied); if the case will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26442/18]

**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.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

352. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26444/18]

**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, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

## **Home Care Packages Provision**

353. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the delivery of a home care package for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; the reason for the delay in an organisation processing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26448/18]

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

## Nursing Homes Support Scheme Appeals

354. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when an appeal by a person (details supplied) with regard to the fair deal scheme will be decided upon; if the decision process will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26450/18]

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

## Hospital Appointments Status

355. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment at Cork University Hospital or Mercy University Hospital; and if the appointment will be expedited. [26451/18]

**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, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

## Public Consultation Process

356. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26463/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department does not collect data in a manner which would allow the Deputy's question to be answered in full.

If there is a particular consultation held prior to 2017 for which the Deputy requires details please contact my private office.

Details of Public consultations for 2018 to date and 2017 are available on the Department's website at the address <https://health.gov.ie/consultations/>. Advertising costs in respect of public consultations held during since 2017 are as per the following table, staff costs would be met within the overall Departmental allocation for same.

As requested, I have forwarded your question to the HSE for direct reply.



Details for other bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly.

Date	Public Consultations	Cost
2018	Public Consultation on Private Practice in Public Hospitals	€7,465
2018	Public Consultation on Deprivation of Liberty	€5,193.
2017	Public Consultation Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities.	€6,167
2017	Patient Safety Advocacy Policy	€3,244
2017	Public Consultation Human Tissue Legislation, Newspaper Ads	€6,167
2017	Public Consultation Home care, Newspaper Ads	€5,518
2016	Public Consultation National Drugs Strategy	€11,699
2016	Public Consultation Taskforce on Personalised Budgets	€4,011
2016	Invite submission on the regulation of counsellors and psychotherapists	€6,167

### Home Help Service Eligibility

357. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be allocated home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26471/18]

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

### Home Care Packages Provision

358. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of a home care package for a person (details supplied); and the reason for the delay to the service. [26482/18]

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

### Hospital Waiting Lists

359. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the HSE's weekly review of children waiting longer than four months for scoliosis surgery takes place; the format the review takes; the way in which the resulting decisions are documented and recorded; and the persons who carry out the weekly review. [26484/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The long-term strategy to develop sustainable scoliosis services from 2018 has been prioritised by my Department and the HSE in the 2018 HSE National Service Plan. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including further increasing access to scoliosis services. The Children's Hospital Group committed to a two-year service development plan to implement an orthopaedic service that provides timely access for Outpatient and In-Patient services. The HSE has confirmed that as part of this plan it will maintain the 4-month target in 2018 and beyond, which is international best practice, for all patients who are clinically deemed to require surgery now.

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In addition, a Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive, contemporary, and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

Furthermore, two new consultant posts for paediatric orthopaedics have been provided in the HSE 2018 National Service Plan. The two new posts are currently being processed through the Consultant Appointment Approval Committee process and are expected to be appointed in quarter 4 of 2018. These posts are allocated to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital for paediatric orthopaedics and are expected to have a positive impact on current patient waiting times.

In relation to patient reviews, clinical recording, decision making, and staffing, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Vaccination Programme**

360. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to allow older children to obtain the meningitis B vaccine as part of an immunisation programme. [26489/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 2016 HSE Service Plan included additional funding for the expansion of the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule. Two changes were made to the schedule with the introduction of Meningococcal B (Men B) and Rotavirus immunisation for all babies born on or after 1 October, 2016. As the first doses of these vaccines are administered to children when they reach two months, these changes took effect from 1 December, 2016. There are no plans at this stage to introduce a catch-up programme for older children. Those who have a medical card are eligible to have the vaccine administered by their GP free of charge. However the purchase of the vaccine is not covered by the medical card scheme.

All vaccines administered through the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule are provided free of charge. Ireland is the second country in Europe to make the Men B vaccine available free of charge as part of its national immunisation programme.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

361. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a date to have surgery carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26495/18]

**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, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals

are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

362. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the wait times for young adults of 16 to 21 years of age in need of scoliosis care to see a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at the Mater Hospital when referred by a general practitioner. [26499/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The long-term strategy to develop sustainable scoliosis services from 2018 has been prioritised by my Department and the HSE in the 2018 HSE National Service Plan. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including further increasing access to scoliosis services. The Children's Hospital Group is committed to a two-year service development plan to implement an orthopaedic service that provides timely access for Outpatient and In-Patient services. The HSE has confirmed that as part of this plan it will maintain the 4-month target in 2018 and beyond, which is international best practice, for all patients who are clinically deemed to require surgery now.

In addition, a Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive, contemporary, and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

Furthermore, two new consultant posts for paediatric orthopaedics have been provided for in the HSE 2018 National Service Plan. The two new posts are currently being processed through the Consultant Appointment Approval Committee process and are expected to be appointed in quarter 4 of 2018. These posts are allocated to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital for paediatric orthopaedics and are expected to have a positive impact on current patient waiting times.

In relation to waiting times for scoliosis care at the Mater Hospital for 16-21 year olds, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

363. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the actions being taken to address the outpatient waiting lists for children who are waiting up to 36 months for an appointment. [26500/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the Programme for Government. While the Inpatient and Day Case (IPDC) Action Plan was published in April to address waiting times for IPDC procedures, the Outpatient waiting list remains a significant challenge to be addressed in 2018.

Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. The HSE has commenced the development of an Outpatient Department Action Plan for 2018. The HSE will work with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the Department of Health to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients.

The Children's Hospital Group (CHG) continues to work with the NTPF to manage long waiting lists for clinically appropriate groups, and with the HSE's Acute Hospital Division to secure year on year investment in critical pressure areas. Capacity challenges are managed daily with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

Part of the rationale for the development of the new children's hospital is the challenges with existing physical infrastructure across the hospitals in the Group. The design of the new children's hospital and Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals is based on a thorough analysis of capacity and demand and services will be provided in line with best practice and the National Model of Care for Paediatrics and Neonatology, the acute strand of the HSE's Integrated Care Programme for Children.

### **Public Services Outsourcing**

364. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason there has been no activity regarding outsourcing to other hospitals since 2017 in view of the fact that over 84 children are waiting over four month targets; and the reason there is no letter or information sent to parents to inform them regarding outsourcing (details supplied). [26504/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Following the provision of significant additional resources last year, firm foundations have been laid and significant results achieved since the establishment of the Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design Group. The intense efforts of 2017 primarily focused on addressing legacy issues. This involved the introduction of a number of short-term measures, including the outsourcing of surgeries abroad.

As part of the outsourcing initiative 46 surgeries were performed in 2017 at Cappagh and the Mater Hospitals, Stanmore and Portland Hospitals in the UK and St Franziskus Hospital in Germany. For those patients and their families who opted for overseas treatment, they have had a positive outcome and experience. These contracts are still in place between the HSE and the outsourcing hospitals for 2018.

In addition to outsourcing surgeries to specialist centres in the UK and Europe, other initiatives introduced resulted in an increase in public capacity in terms of additional theatre sessions at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin (Crumlin), Cappagh National Orthopaedic Hospital (Cappagh) and the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital (Mater).

In 2017, 22 patients opted to remain on the Crumlin list with their treating consultant rather than taking up offers of other treatment options in Ireland and overseas. Some of these patients have now had their surgery and others are continuously under review in relation to a plan. While no families have availed of the offer for treatment outside of Ireland thus far in 2018, Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin will be contacting families within the coming week to offer them outsourcing in the UK and Germany. The Children's Hospital Group (CHG) advise that their focus for 2018 is on reducing the backlog and the unacceptable waiting times for children and young people and ensuring that those patients, who require surgery, receive it. The CHG's plan for the year ahead in partnership with the clinicians and all other stakeholders is to drive further progress in reducing waiting times by developing a long term sustainable and safe paediatric model of care for paediatric orthopaedic services which will ensure that clinical criteria will determine the timeframe for the delivery of care.

In relation to the issuing of letters to patients, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

## **Departmental Reports**

365. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 451 of 30 January 2018, when the report on lymphoedema services will be published; and the reason it has been delayed. [26514/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am advised that the report of the Working Group on a Model of Care for Lymphoedema and Lipoedema Treatment in Ireland established by the HSE is being finalised and I expect that it will be published in the coming months.

## **Disabilities Assessments**

366. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the concerns being expressed regarding the operation of the assessment of needs process under a new standard operating procedure and that the change in the operation of this process will have a detrimental effect on the assessment of children in view of the fact that the assessment must be completed within a maximum of 90 minutes regardless of the child’s needs. [26524/18]

**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 particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

367. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if transport facilities will be available for day respite centres such as a facility (details supplied). [26586/18]

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

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

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

## **Services for People with Disabilities**



368. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the supports and services provided once a child reaches 18 years of age; and if a review of their social, medical and educational needs will be provided (details supplied). [26587/18]

**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 Provision**

369. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a respite care service will be provided in County Kilkenny in addition to a facility (details supplied). [26588/18]

**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.

### **Hospital Services**

370. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in discharging a person (details supplied); the length of time the person has been in St. Luke's; if a care package is in place for them at Crosspatrick, County Kilkenny; the reason for the very poor communication between the hospital, the HSE and relatives of the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26589/18]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

371. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an early appointment for a cataract operation will be arranged for a person (details supplied) at Waterford Regional Hospital; and the reason they were not called years ago as promised at the time of their assessment. [26591/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients. The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018. This plan marks a very important milestone in delivering on this commitment.

The Action Plan places a particular focus on cataract surgery. The plan commits to offering treatment to all cataract patients who are clinically suitable for outsourcing and who have been waiting more than 9 months for treatment.

In relation to your particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

372. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason a medical card issued to a person (details supplied) was withdrawn five weeks after being issued; and if the card will be renewed until the error or issues are resolved. [26592/18]

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

### **Advanced Healthcare Directives**

373. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of the findings of the working group established to assist in the development of the code of practice on advanced healthcare directives; the membership of the working group; the number of times it has met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26603/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the activities of the working group are coordinated by the HSE, the Deputy's query has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Dental Services Provision**

374. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when children at a school (details supplied) can expect to be called for routine dental check ups under the Health Service Executive. [26604/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Ambulance Service Provision**

375. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is no ambulance unit attached to the ambulance base in east County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26605/18]

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

376. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for surgery in University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26627/18]

**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.

### **Psychological Services**

377. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the provision of primary care psychology services in Maynooth, County Kildare, with particular reference to the importance of early intervention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26628/18]

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

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

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

378. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the level of engagement that has or will take place between the HSE, an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical

industry to ensure new medicines are available to persons with MS as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26633/18]

420. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to the need to provide access to new medicines for patients (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26835/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 378 and 420 together.

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

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drugs scheme, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the IPHA agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine. HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention. The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I am keen to engage with Industry and to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the fundamental pricing/funding issues in the context of finite Exchequer resources.

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

### **Industrial Disputes**

379. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the steps being taken to avert imminent industrial action at the department of psychiatry in a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26634/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly) (Deputy Jim Daly):** Further to the threat of industrial action by SIPTU staff concerning overcapacity at the Department of Psychiatry (DOP) in St. Luke's Hospital Kilkenny, local management have been in regular contact with the staff associations. Management were already engaged with the Psychiatric Nurses Association concerning limited action it commenced in December 2017 in relation to capacity issues at the hospital.

In April, SIPTU indicated to management through the Workplace Relations Commission that they were concerned with the level of overcrowding, believing it impacts on patient safety.

Since then, local management have introduced several measures to address the issues raised by the staff associations. These measures include: the provision of additional nursing staff resources when overcapacity arises; daily communication of in-patient activity and weekly “bed management” meetings. Regular delayed discharge meetings are held and measures taken to progress patient discharges. In order to address any potential risks a quality and patient safety committee has been established to deal with any risks highlighted in a positive, solution focussed and timely manner.

A dedicated recruitment campaign for CHO 5 commenced on the 28th May to source additional staff. For the longer term, work has commenced to include the development of two new units in the HSE Capital Plan.

It is hoped that these measures will go some way to address the concerns raised by the unions. While SIPTU have served notice of industrial action to commence on 26th June, local management remain actively engaged with the staff associations with a view to averting the proposed action. I have requested the management of CHO 5 to attend a meeting on Tuesday to up date me on progress on this issue.

### **Hospitals Data**

380. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the number of times An Garda Síochána has been called or attended the psychiatric unit in Roscommon Hospital in each of the years 2012 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26643/18]

381. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the number of serious medical incidents in the psychiatric unit in Roscommon Hospital in each of the years 2012 to 2017, in tabular form, in which a patient either suffered loss of life or had to be transferred to another hospital for treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26644/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly) (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 380 and 381 together.

As these are a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

382. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if the required service via the Kildare network disability team will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26650/18]

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



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

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

383. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults diagnosed with intellectual disability, autism, mental health difficulties or a dual diagnosis of mental health and intellectual disability that have been placed in specialist care facilities outside of the State by the Health Services Executive in 2017, by the nine CHO areas; the number of children or adults in out of State care; the type of care provided for the person; the corresponding funding allocated to each of the nine CHO areas itemised on an individual basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26655/18]

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

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

### **Hospitals Capital Programme**

384. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the status of the targeted 100 bed unit at the St. Mary's Hospital site, Dublin Road, Drogheda; the reason for possible changes in bed capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26656/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to reply directly to you in relation to St. Mary's Hospital, Drogheda.

### **Hospital Staff**

385. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a senior union official is being prevented from returning to work at University Hospital Limerick without explanation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26663/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** This issue is being progressed locally by the employer through the Health Services Executive (HSE) Dignity at Work policy. I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

### **Home Care Packages**

386. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) for home care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26666/18]

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

### **Primary Care Services Provision**

387. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of the HSE's primary care eye services review group report; the amount of funding that has been devoted to the implementation of this report in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26668/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

388. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to be called for orthodontic treatment. [26674/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Data**

389. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards that have been issued to persons with addresses in County Louth. [26675/18]

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

### **Medical Card Data**

390. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders that had an oral examination in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [26676/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Data**

391. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders that received one filling in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [26677/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Data**

392. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders who received two fillings in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [26678/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Data**

393. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders who had teeth extracted in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [26679/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Dental Services**

394. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he is working with a group (details supplied) to revise the dental scheme available to medical card holders. [26680/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The national approach to future oral health service provision will be informed by the National Oral Health Policy. The development of the policy included a needs assessment, a review of resources and involved consultation with stakeholders, including dental professionals and the public. The policy is currently being finalised and I expect it will be published later this year.

The aim of the policy is to develop a model of care that will enable preventative approaches to be prioritised, improve access, and support interventions appropriate to current and future oral health needs.

It is my intention to progress the development of appropriate contractual proposals on the part of my Department and the HSE once the oral health policy has been published. This will be a necessary precursor to a process of engagement with the Irish Dental Association on the future delivery of oral health services.

### **Dental Services Data**

395. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health if there was an audit or review carried out in the Southern Health Board circa 1993 to assess the average fee per dental item provided in the dental service; if so, the figure reached at the time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26681/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to investigate the issue raised by the Deputy and to reply directly to him.

### **Hospital Services**

396. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 167 of 10 May 2018, when a reply will issue from the HSE in view of the provisions of Standing Order 42A(1) of Dáil Éireann. [26703/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I understand that an answer to the previous Parliamentary Questions, Questions Nos. 163 and 165 of 10 May 2018, is being compiled and a reply will issue to the Deputy very shortly, however, as this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Data Protection**

397. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 749 and 750 of 12 June 2018, if there will be collaboration with the Department of Justice and Equality on same (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26733/18]

398. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 749 and 750 of 12 June 2018, the way in which his Department's approach to monitoring HFSS food marketing will be affected (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26734/18]

399. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 749 and 750 of 12 June 2018, the code which will take precedence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26735/18]

400. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 749 and 750 of 12 June 2018, the way in which his Department plans to work with the Data Protection Commissioner in a process to encourage the drawing up of a code of conduct to which entities which collect and process children's data would demonstrably adhere as per section 32(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018; the way in which this also relates to his Department's work in respect of a code of practice (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26736/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 397 to 400, inclusive, together.

Section 32(1)(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 provides that the Data Protection Commission shall encourage the drawing up of codes of conduct intended to contribute to the proper application of the Data Protection Regulation with regard to the processing of the personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles. My officials will collaborate with the Data Protection Commission and other Government Departments, as relevant, in drawing up such codes for the health sector.

I am fully committed to protecting the rights and privacy of all individuals, including children, as provided for in the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Acts.

The Deputy refers to Codes of Practice for the advertising and marketing of food and non-alcoholic drinks. In the context of these Codes, my Department holds no personal data or has no direct involvement in processing personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles. These Codes of Practice provide for monitoring for compliance and effectiveness of the Codes by a monitoring body which my Department will designate. Monitoring will include independent research to assess adherence. The designated monitoring body will have access to relevant data from companies and partner organisations.

Any new processing activity carried out on behalf of the Department in the future, which involves personal data, will be subject to the full requirements of the data protection legislation,

including a data protection impact assessment and any other additional safeguards which may be appropriate.

### **Health and Social Care Professionals Registration Boards**

401. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the regulation of psychotherapy and counselling under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. [26760/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Regulations to designate the professions of counsellor and psychotherapist under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 were approved by both houses of the Oireachtas on 22 March 2018. I am pleased to advise that I have since signed the regulations, which will come into force on 2 July 2018.

Work is now underway to appoint the 13 member registration board which will regulate the professions. The Public Appointments Service will undertake an advertisement campaign later this month inviting suitably qualified and experienced persons to apply for lay and professional positions on the board.

It is envisaged that CORU will arrange for the board to hold its first meeting later this year and begin the substantial programme of work required to establish its registers.

### **Assisted Human Reproduction Services Provision**

402. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 748 of 12 June 2018, if consideration will be given to putting in place public funding for IVF prior to the enactment of the assisted human reproduction Bill 2017 in order to honour his previous commitment to have such funding in place by 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26761/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As I indicated in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 748 of 12 June last, work is ongoing in my Department regarding policy options for a potential public funding model for AHR treatment and it is my intention to bring a Memorandum to Government for a model of public funding for AHR treatment for the Government's consideration and decision in due course. This Memorandum to Government will outline a framework in relation to the implementation of the proposed funding model, including the timeline involved.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

403. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a drug (details supplied) will be added to the long-term illness card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26765/18]

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



In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drugs scheme, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the IPHA agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I have been informed that Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS) and for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS) are currently undergoing a full pharmacoeconomic assessment by the NCPE.

### **Nursing Home Subventions**

404. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that the State subvention to community nursing homes is adequate to support the provision of an appropriate level of residential care for elderly persons; if the possibility of increasing the State subvention to community nursing homes ahead of budget 2019 will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26771/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

This statutory based scheme replaced the Nursing Home Subvention which had been in existence since 1993. Any person who was supported in a private nursing home before the commencement of the NHSS in October 2009 could choose to transfer to the NHSS or retain their existing subvention arrangements. Any person who was in a public or voluntary nursing home or in a contracted bed in a private nursing home before the commencement of the NHSS could also continue with their existing arrangements. The National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme states that nothing in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 or in the National Guidelines shall operate in a way that diminishes the overall financial position of an applicant in receipt of Nursing Home Subvention, or who is currently in a public nursing home bed, including contract beds.

The rules for qualifying for a subvention were that the person must be sufficiently dependent to need nursing home care and be unable to pay any or part of the cost of care in the home.

This involved a means test.

No new applications for the subvention scheme were accepted after the introduction of the NHSS on 27 October 2009 when the maximum weekly subvention rate was €300. There are no plans to increase the State Subvention rate in the 2019 budget. Subvention rates continue to be paid from the total NHSS budget which in 2018 is €962 million.

### **Departmental Consultations**

405. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the national conference on community care and community nursing homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26772/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** In autumn of this year, in my capacity as Minister of State with responsibility for Older People, I intend to host a joint expert conference on housing for older people, together with the Minister of State with responsibility for Housing and Urban Renewal. The conference will identify and discuss a range of issues including opportunities, barriers and enablers to guide future development of housing and support needs for older people.

I have no plans to hold a conference on community care or community nursing homes at this time.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

406. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of eligibility for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26781/18]

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

### **Home Care Packages Funding**

407. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the home care package for counties Kildare and Wicklow is exhausted in respect of the allocation for 2018; the requests and allocations for further provision of budgets to provide home care packages to enable a person (details supplied) to be supported when discharged from hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26783/18]

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

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

408. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26784/18]

**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.

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

### **HSE Staff Data**

409. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the annual funding for advanced paramedics; the number of filled positions operational within the HSE; the number of vacant positions; the number of training positions available to general paramedics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26788/18]

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

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

410. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case raised in Parliamentary Question No. 148 of 31 May 2018; and the reason the family in question have not been contacted. [26792/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has raised the particular case referenced by the Deputy with the HSE for urgent attention, and have asked them to respond as a matter of urgency.

My Department has also received direct contact from this family, and a response was issued to them on the 18th of June.

### **Medical Goods Regulation**

411. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the limits under the long-term Illness scheme that apply to prescriptions of diabetic medicines under this scheme; and if a situation could be allowed to arise whereby a person on this scheme could be left without medication as they have reached a prescription dispensation limit. [26796/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

412. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract op-

eration for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26809/18]

**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, since 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**

413. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26810/18]

**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, since 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**

414. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26811/18]

**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, since 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**

415. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26829/18]

**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, since 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**

416. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26830/18]

**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, since 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**



417. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26831/18]

**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, since 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**

418. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26832/18]

**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, since 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**

419. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26833/18]

**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, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

*Question No. 420 answered with Question No. 378.*

### **Primary Medical Certificates Applications**

421. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a primary medical certificate application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26842/18]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

422. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26844/18]

**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, since 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**

423. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26845/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since 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**

424. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26850/18]

**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, since 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**

425. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26851/18]

**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, since 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**

426. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26852/18]

**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, since 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**

427. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26853/18]

**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, since 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**

428. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details sup-

plied) in County Donegal can expect to be called for an operation in Tallaght Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26855/18]

**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 since 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**

429. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health to outline the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26856/18]

**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 since 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.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

430. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health when the decision was made to appoint a person (details supplied) to represent CervicalCheck; to identify the person who made the decision; the purpose for which the person was appointed; the role and responsibilities of the person; and the fee being paid. [26922/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** On Friday 26 April 2018, a helpline was established for women affected by news of the CervicalCheck audit. As part of managing queries to this helpline, the HSE has advised that it was agreed to recruit a small number of experienced physicians in the field of obstetrics/gynaecology. These were recruited on a temporary basis for



a short period to support and assist the call back team with specific complex medical queries. Their terms and conditions are in line with the rates delivered by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Ireland.

### **Poultry Industry**

431. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the regulatory system in place for the haulage, storage and disposal of poultry litter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26181/18]

435. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are penalties or criminal sanction for the misuse of poultry litter leading to an outbreak of botulism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26187/18]

437. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the licensing arrangements required for transportation, storage and end usage of poultry litter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26200/18]

438. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the regulations on the disposal of poultry litter; the penalties in place for failure to comply with disposal regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26206/18]

439. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the regulatory system in place for the haulage, storage and disposal of poultry litter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26214/18]

444. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the regulations on the disposal of poultry litter; the penalties in place for failure to comply with disposal regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26598/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 431, 435, 437 to 439, inclusive, and 444 together.

The collection, transport, handling, treatment, transformation, processing, storage, placing on the market, distribution, and use and disposal of all animal products (ABP) including poultry litter is governed by the EU animal By-product Regulation (EC) No. 1069 of 2009 and Regulation (EU) No. 142 of 2011 which are given legal effect by The European Communities (Animal By-Product) Regulations 2014 (SI No. 187/2014).

Where a person is in breach of the EU ABP Regulations, the above mentioned Statutory Instrument provides for the Minister to take enforcement action including the issuing of a compliance notice requiring a particular action and also the use of criminal sanctions where appropriate.

Poultry litter is categorised as a category 2 ABP and the options for its disposal are set out in Article 13 of Regulation 1069/2009. Poultry litter containing residual poultry carcasses must be disposed of in an incineration plant approved by this Department or the EPA or in a rendering plant also approved by the Department. However, as poultry litter that does not contain residual poultry carcasses is considered to be an organic fertilizer/soil improver and is a valuable source of nutrients for farmers, it can be disposed of by spreading on land subject to strict conditions. The other main disposal routes for this material is in composting and biogas plants or as a fuel for combustion.

Poultry litter must be transported by a haulier registered with the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine in accordance with Regulation No. (EC) 1069 of 2009 and must be accompanied by a commercial document that provides details of the place of origin of the material and place of destination of the material. The material must be transported in covered, leak-proof containers or vehicles which are maintained in a clean condition with signage stating “Category 2 Material - Manure”

Poultry manure must be spread without delay and, where in the event that the material is being held for a short time prior to land-spreading, it must be stacked on a concrete base away from rivers, streams and other water courses and any run-off must be collected.

The Department has issued Good Practice Guidelines for poultry farmers, for poultry litter hauliers and for the end-users of poultry litter to ensure each stakeholder is aware of their legal obligations for the transport, use and disposal of the material.

The codes good practice for poultry farmers, poultry litter hauliers and end-users of poultry litter can be found on the DAFM website at

[www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrol/botulism/](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrol/botulism/).

### **Animal Diseases**

432. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if botulism is a notifiable disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26182/18]

433. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action taken when an outbreak of botulism is detected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26183/18]

434. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has the power to investigate the source of an outbreak of botulism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26184/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 432 to 434, inclusive, together.

Botulism in cattle is not a notifiable disease. However, from an industry perspective it is of benefit that suspect cases of botulism are reported to my Department in order that the incidence and extent of outbreaks may be monitored. DAFM veterinary laboratories are available to assist in diagnosis and to rule out other diseases which can present in a similar manner to botulism. Suspect cases may be reported by the herd owner’s private veterinary practitioner to the Regional Veterinary Laboratory or the nearest Regional Veterinary Office (RVO).

Botulism outbreaks in cattle are most commonly, but not exclusively, associated with exposure to contaminated poultry litter – often coinciding with the recent spreading of poultry litter on land when the management of poultry litter is poor or deficient. Cattle grazing these contaminated pastures or coming into contact directly or indirectly with poultry litter are at risk of contracting the disease.

As part of controls on the poultry sector, my Department carries out certain inspections of poultry units to monitor compliance with the requirements of the Animal By-Products (ABP) Regulations as they relate to the proper disposal of dead poultry and the disposal of manure. Poultry producers are required to ensure that litter does not contain any residual poultry car-

cases. Transporters of poultry litter/manure are required to be registered as ABP transporters with the Department. Transporters must keep records, including the details of the place of origin of the material they are transporting and the place of destination.

My Department may also undertake follow-up investigations in situations where poultry litter is suspected of being the source of a botulism outbreak to ensure that adequate measures are being taken to prevent outbreaks - on the farm where the poultry litter is being spread, by the poultry litter haulier and on the poultry units that supplied the poultry litter.

The Department has drawn up Codes of Good Practice for poultry farmers, poultry litter hauliers and end-users of poultry litter, providing advice in relation to the management, transport and use of poultry litter in order to minimise the risks of contamination of pasture to cattle on the end user's farm and neighbouring farms. These and other information in relation to botulism are available on the DAFM website at this link: [www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealth-welfare/diseasecontrol/botulism/](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealth-welfare/diseasecontrol/botulism/).

I would particularly encourage all farmers handling or spreading poultry litter to advise their neighbours of the fact so that they can move cattle that may be susceptible to fields that are not adjacent to the handling/spreading area.

*Question No. 435 answered with Question No. 431.*

### **Basic Payment Scheme Eligibility**

436. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the eligibility of a person (details supplied) for a BPS payment will be reviewed in view of new evidence which has become available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26199/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the Terms and Conditions of the Basic Payment Scheme, an applicant, as well as meeting the scheme criteria, must comply with EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance.

A report detailing findings of an inspection carried out by Donegal County Council on 14th October 2016 was referred to my Department's Cross Compliance Unit for attention. This report detailed breaches relating to the cross compliance requirements under the Nitrates Regulations.

The breaches resulted in a 45% penalty being applied against the 2016 Direct Schemes payments. The person named was notified of this decision on 28 February 2017. A review was requested the outcome of which was to up-hold the inspection findings and the person named was notified on 30 August 2017.

A further review of this case will now be undertaken based on the additional correspondence provided by the Deputy. The person named will be notified of the outcome on completion of the review process.

*Questions No. 437 to 439, inclusive, answered with Question No. 431.*

### **Felling Licences Applications**

440. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

position regarding a felling licence application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26261/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A felling licence application for the above named was received by my Department on 3rd April. It was referred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the local authority, which is standard procedure. A reply has been received from the NPWS and will be reviewed by the Department's Forestry Inspector. The Inspector also requested that the application be referred to the local Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) office, as the site is near a sensitive water course for fisheries. The IFI has until 22nd June to respond to the Department.

### **GLAS Payments**

441. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when outstanding 2017 GLAS payments will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26290/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015. All 2015, 2016 and the 2017 Advance GLAS payments have been paid to the participant.

The 2017 GLAS balance payment has now cleared all validations and it is expected that the payment will issue shortly.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

442. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26382/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** It is not possible to provide a comprehensive response to the Deputy in the required timeframe. I will arrange for a reply to be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Public Consultation Process**

443. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26453/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Due to the volume of the information requested by the Deputy, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive response in the required timeframe. I will arrange for a reply to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as the information requested is available.

*Question No. 444 answered with Question No. 431.*

### **Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan**

445. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) did not enter the hen harrier scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26664/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** At the outset, I need to explain that while the new Hen Harrier Programme is fully financed through a combination of national and EU funds, it is nonetheless a locally-led, locally-designed and locally-administered scheme - it is not operated or managed directly by my Department.

However, I have made enquiries and while the person named was unsuccessful in gaining entry to the Hen Harrier Programme in the last round, recruitment into the scheme is an on-going process with Letters of Offer issued every month for each of the six SPA designated areas. The application of the person in question remains live and will be assessed by the local Project Team against the relevant selection criteria, and applications from other candidates, on a monthly basis.

### **Knowledge Transfer Programme**

446. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to persons (details supplied) in respect of their involvement in KT discussion groups. [26740/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Knowledge Transfer is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors. Department approved agricultural consultants acting as Knowledge Transfer Facilitators administer groups operating over a three year period.

Farmers may participate in a maximum of two KT Groups in different sectors. Participants who complete all of the requirements of the programme receive a reimbursement of €750 for their primary group while their KT Facilitator receives €500. Secondary participants who complete all of the requirements of the programme receive a reimbursement of €375 while their KT Facilitator receive €250.

The Herd number referred to by the Deputy is a joint herd number with only one of the herd owners being a participant in KT Beef and KT Sheep. In this regard the participant has received a full reimbursement payment of €750 for his KT Sheep discussion group.

However, an issue relating to his change of status to a partnership and his registration for a second group in the Beef sector is currently being resolved with a view to issuing this second payment shortly.

### **Common Fisheries Policy**

447. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken since SI 89 of 2018 was rescinded by Dáil Éireann on 29 May 2018; the persons, interested parties, groups or organisations from the fisheries sector or other political parties he has met or liaised with since 29 May 2018; the level of engagement his Department has had with all interested parties since the date of rescinding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26846/18]

448. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the



Marine if he has consulted with the fishing sector since the date of rescinding of SI 89 of 2018 on 29 May 2018; the consultation his Department has had with fisheries organisations or the sector since 29 May 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26847/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 447 and 448 together.

I am at present considering with my legal advisors next steps following the recent annulment by Dail Eireann of the European Communities (Common Fisheries Policy)(Point System) Regulations 2018 (SI 89 of 2018).

### **Common Fisheries Policy**

449. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 981 of 12 June 2018, if no legal costs have been paid or agreed in relation to the various third parties involved in proceedings against the State regarding the High Court and Supreme Court cases on actions taken in regard to SI 3 of 2014 and SI 125 of 2016; the complete costs incurred by the State in those cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26848/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The costs paid to date in the cases arising from the operation of the European Communities (Common Fisheries Policy)(Point System) Regulations 2014 (SI 3 of 2014) are as set out in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 981 of 12 June 2018. As previously advised, no cases arose from the operation of SI 125 of 2016.

I also indicated in that reply that certain matters pertaining to costs have yet to be finalised in a number of relevant cases. That remains the position. The Deputy will appreciate that it can frequently take some time post the conclusive determination of legal proceedings for matters pertaining to legal costs to be completely finalised.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications**

450. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been finalised in respect of an aquaculture licence application by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26854/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy is aware, my Department received an application for an Aquaculture Licence from the person referred to by the Deputy in June 2017.

There are a number of technical and scientific complexities associated with the application which are currently being examined by my Department in conjunction with the Marine Institute.

As the application is currently being assessed by my Department in accordance with the statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further pending the conclusion of that process.

### **Environmental Regulations**

451. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has completed its review of all levies and in particular incinerator levies; if not, when he expects this to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26344/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The potential introduction of economic instruments designed to improve environmental behaviour, including an incineration levy and a number of other options, is being considered in the context of a review of the Environment Fund. I understand that the initial review is very close to finalisation and will be submitted to me in the coming weeks.

### **Angling Sector**

452. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of plans to ensure that funding that was granted to an organisation (details supplied) is issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26422/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The funding referred to by the Deputy was conditionally awarded by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) under the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) in December 2016. The disbursement of grant aid in relation to NSAD is a day to day operational function for IFI. In common with other grant aid schemes involving public funds, there are terms and conditions as well as governance requirements to be met by project promoters before payment can be made. This is to ensure that public funding is spent in an appropriate manner, including value for money and that insurances and appropriate permissions are provided.

I am advised by IFI that the club delivered the project with a number of the requirements outstanding, most notably, approval to start the works and supervision of same by local fisheries staff. This conflicts with the requirements set out in the conditional award letter and funding agreement of December 2016.

Due to flooding damage in August 2017, there is no clear evidence of when the project began or when it was completed. It is unclear how much of the works were undertaken or to what standard because IFI were, contrary to the terms of the funding offer, not afforded the required opportunity to supervise or inspect the works so that payment of public funds could be approved. However, I am advised that the local fisheries inspector has confirmed what other works have been undertaken and evidenced.

IFI communicated with the applicant in May 2018, outlining the situation and advising that an appeal procedure is available under the NSAD. The appeals procedure is the appropriate mechanism for the applicant to address the issue. Details of the process can be found on the Inland fisheries Ireland website: [//www.fisheriesireland.ie/extranet/other-1/1503-grants-programmes-appeals-procedure.html](http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/extranet/other-1/1503-grants-programmes-appeals-procedure.html).

A reminder of the appeals procedure was issued to the applicant in early June but to date no appeal has been received.

### **National Broadband Plan Data**

453. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of homes to be passed and connected with regard to the national

broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26196/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, almost 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. By 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map, available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie), which shows those areas that will be served by commercial operators and those that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. This includes approximately 300,000 premises to be passed as part of eir's rural deployment of high speed broadband as part of the Commitment Agreement signed in April 2017. As of Q1 2018 circa 145,000 of those committed premises had been passed.

The NBP State led Intervention covers 96% of Ireland's land mass, traversing 26 counties and including some 542,000 premises. These premises are coloured AMBER on the Map and are part of an ongoing procurement process. The formal procurement process to engage a company who will roll out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area is now in its final stages. The successful bidder will deploy and operate this State intervention network for the next 25 years.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website at [www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx](http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx).

### Plastic Bag Levy

454. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the revenue from the sale of plastic bags in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26241/18]

455. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on long-life bags; his further views on the price that some outlets charge for the bags; the benefits or otherwise of such bags; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26242/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 454 and 455 together.

The plastic bag levy, currently 22 cents per leviable bag, was introduced primarily as an anti-litter measure, designed to influence consumers by encouraging them to reduce their use

of disposable plastic bags. “Long-life bags”, as referred to in the question, are not defined in legislation. However, the levy does not apply to plastic bags designed for re-use which are used to contain goods or products and which are sold to customers for a sum of not less than 70 cents each.

The introduction of the levy in March 2002 led to a dramatic reduction in the number of disposable plastic bags supplied to consumers, from an estimated 328 bags per person per year prior to the introduction of the levy, to 21 bags per person by the end of 2002, and a further reduction to an estimated 8 bags per person by the end of 2016.

My Department monitors the receipts from the plastic bag levy to gauge trends in the average per capita consumption of single-use plastic bags. This data is used to ensure that the plastic bag levy is set at an appropriate level. The National Litter Pollution Monitoring System Report 2016 reports that plastic bags constituted 0.23% of litter arising in 2016. This compares with 5% prior to the levy’s introduction.

Receipts from the plastic bag levy for each year are published in the Environment Fund Annual Accounts. The 2017 Annual Accounts will be published on my Department’s website after they have been audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, while copies of the Annual Accounts, up to and including 2016, are available on my Department’s website at the following weblink:

*[www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/environmental-protection-and-awareness/environmental-fund/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/environmental-protection-and-awareness/environmental-fund/Pages/default.aspx)*

I very much welcome the more sustainable practices resulting from the introduction of the plastic bag levy, and its very positive impact on litter and on our environment generally. Indeed, Ireland is often cited internationally as an example to others in this regard and the amendment to the EU Packaging Directive, which seeks to reduce the usage of plastic bags across the EU, was informed by the positive Irish experience.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

456. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the expenditure in the form of grants, aid and so on that is given directly or indirectly to universities and other institutions for courses including graduate and postgraduate connected to exploration or extraction of fossil fuel and the petroleum industry since 2010, in tabular form. [26265/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** There is no expenditure from my Department either directly or indirectly to universities and other institutions for courses connected to exploration or extraction of fossil fuels and the petroleum industry.

The Department administers a scheme granting a limited number of scholarships to students undertaking taught Master of Science (MSc) Degrees in topics of relevance to the development of Ireland’s indigenous oil and gas resources. The scholarship scheme’s objective is to encourage a potential pool of qualified Irish graduates with specialist qualifications of direct applicability to the sector in Ireland. The scholarship scheme seeks applications from students who have been accepted on to a relevant MSc degree course in petroleum geoscience, petroleum engineering or environmental science.

The cost of the scholarships is met from the Petroleum Infrastructure Programme - Expand-

ed Offshore Support Group (PIP-EOSG) managed by the Department. PIP-EOSG is funded by way of annual contributions from companies participating in Frontier Exploration Licences. The cost of this scheme since 2010 is set out in the table:

Year	Cost
2010	€17,891
2011	€23,379
2012	€25,568
2013	€18,384
2014	€39,764
2015	€19,456
2016	€35,431
2017	€21,583

### Petroleum and Gas Exploration

457. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the revenue from fees and so on from the granting of licences, grants and undertakings for the exploration and extraction of petroleum since 2010, in tabular form. [26266/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** In addition to revenue from Corporation Tax, and royalty payments where applicable, in respect of production from the four commercial gas fields (Kinsale Head, Ballycotton, Seven Heads and Corrib), the State derives revenue from petroleum exploration and production authorisation acreage rental fees, together with application fees. The aim of these fees is to help meet costs incurred by my Department in discharging its regulatory functions whilst encouraging effective and timely exploration. The details of these fees are set out in Appendix 1 to the Licensing Terms for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Development and Production 2007, which is available on my Department's website [www.dccae.gov.ie](http://www.dccae.gov.ie). Annual revenue in respect of petroleum authorisation acreage rental fees and application fees since 2010 are set out in the following table.

Year	Acreage Rental Fees	Application Fees
2010	€1,407,812	€10,700
2011	€2,420,485	€97,284
2012	€2,476,499	€66,880
2013	€1,805,709	€1,890,902
2014	€2,568,065	€34,960
2015	€2,992,211	€121,042
2016	€1,942,775	€39,520
2017	€2,443,439	€159,624
Total	€18,056,995	€2,420,912

Profits from the Kinsale, Ballycotton, Seven Heads and Corrib gas fields are subject to Corporation Tax at a rate of 25%. The operation of the taxation system and the receipt of taxation are matters for the Revenue Commissioners. As a consequence, I am not in a position to provide the Deputy with a figure for the Corporation Tax yield to the State in respect of the operation of the offshore gas fields.

Royalties from the Kinsale and Ballycotton gas fields are payable to the Exchequer at a rate of 12.5% of the fair market value of the gas at the well head. Royalties received from 2010 are



set out in the following table:

Year	Royalties
2010	€2,571,624
2011	€3,904,321
2012	€3,955,353
2013	€4,593,123
2014	€1,997,749
2015	€1,587,755
2016	€279,686
2017	€682,153
Total	€19,571,764

### Maritime Spatial Planning

458. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the costs of all sea bed geological mapping exercises and sea bed surveys conducted since 1995. [26267/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The ‘Integrated Mapping for the Sustainable Development of Ireland’s Marine Resource’ (INFOMAR) is a joint venture between Geological Survey of Ireland and the Marine Institute. The programme concentrates on creating a range of integrated mapping products of the physical, chemical and biological features of the seabed in the near-shore area. The primary use of the data is in improved charting for safer shipping, offshore environmental protection, fishing, aquaculture, marine planning, offshore renewable energy, marine tourism and marine development. The data is also used to a very limited extent by the oil and gas sector. The programme is a successor to the Irish National Seabed Survey (INSS). The combined costs of both of these seabed mapping programmes since 1995 is €78.5 million. An external independent evaluation indicated the return across all sectors to be more than four times the costs incurred. In respect of petroleum related surveys, these are primarily undertaken by exploration companies. However, since 1995 my Department has initiated and funded at a total cost of €7.4 million a seismic survey and a bathymetric survey for the purposes of the delineation of the Irish continental shelf, and a regional seismic acquisition programme over Ireland’s major Atlantic basins to complement existing datasets and to fill data gaps.

### Waste Disposal Charges

459. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence can apply for the annual support of €75 to help support the average annual cost of disposal of incontinence products which was announced on 27 June 2017. [26273/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I refer the Deputy to the reply to Question No. 191 of 14 June 2018 which sets out the current position.

### Energy Schemes

460. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will liaise with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to devise an insulation plan for housing under the flight path at Dublin Airport with particular reference to the types of grant aided schemes operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. [26306/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Government's energy efficiency grant schemes, which are funded by my Department. Those schemes fund insulation to improve the thermal efficiency of homes, and are available nationwide. A range of measures are available including attic and wall insulation. In addition the SEAI also administers the new Deep Retrofit Programme, which provides 50% funding toward the cost of an energy efficiency upgrade where a home can achieve an A3 energy rating after works are completed. Again, this scheme is available nationwide.

I understand from the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, that the Dublin Airport Authority (daa) holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport, including responsibility for the mitigation of aircraft noise which may affect neighbouring communities. I understand that daa launched a programme in June 2017 for dwellings impacted by noise from the current operations of the existing southern runway. The Dublin Airport Home Sound Insulation Programme is available to dwellings that are located within particular noise contours.

In addition, I also understand that, on the new North Runway project, the Deputy will be aware of a number of mitigation measures which were proposed by Dublin Airport and conditioned by An Bord Pleanála as part of the 2007 planning permission for the Runway. These measures include a Voluntary Dwelling Purchase Scheme and an Insulation Scheme for Homes and Schools which are expected to fall within certain noise measurement thresholds once the North Runway is operational.

### **Climate Change Policy**

461. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the role his Department had in relation to the special Project Ireland 2040 forum on empowering communities for climate action which he will attend on 20 June 2018. [25685/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** On 20 June, I will launch the 'Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society' Strategic Investment Priority of Project Ireland 2040. This event, which will also be attended by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, and other members of the Cabinet, will have the theme of Empowering Communities for Climate Action. The event is being organised by my Department.

Recognising the key role of communities as enablers and drivers of the low carbon transition in society, this event will include two panel discussions exploring how to engage society with climate change and how, once engaged with the challenge, citizens can be empowered to act, focusing especially on the role of Government expenditure policy, taxation measures and regulation in underpinning climate action. These panel discussions will, in turn, further inform the development of initiatives under the National Dialogue on Climate Action, with the first Regional Gathering under the National Dialogue scheduled to take place on 23 June in Athlone.

Building on the National Mitigation Plan, the publication in February of the National De-

velopment Plan will lead to a significant step change in funding available for climate action in the next decade. Reflecting the strong commitment of the Government on this issue, almost €22 billion will be directed, between Exchequer and non-Exchequer resources, to addressing the transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient society. In addition, the national development plan allocated a further €8.6 billion for investments in sustainable mobility. This means that well over €1 in every €5 spent under the National Development Plan will be on climate mitigation and this capital investment will enable us to deliver a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the period to 2030.

The key investment priorities in the national development plan that my Department will take forward include:

- energy efficiency upgrades of 45,000 homes per annum from 2021 and providing support for a major roll-out of heat pump technologies;
- delivering energy upgrades to BER 'B' level in all public buildings and a minimum of one third of commercial buildings;
- implementing the new renewable electricity support scheme to deliver an additional 3,000-4,500 MW of renewable energy, with the initial focus on shovel ready projects which could contribute to meeting our 2020 targets;
- the roll-out of the support scheme for renewable heat and national smart metering programme;
- transitioning the Moneypoint plant away from coal by the middle of the next decade;
- having at least 500,000 electric vehicles on the road by 2030 with additional charging infrastructure to cater for planned growth; and
- a €500 million climate action fund, under which I will shortly open applications for funding, to leverage investment by public and private bodies in climate action measures.

Both the National Mitigation Plan and the National Development Plan explicitly recognise that the reliance solely on Exchequer expenditure schemes is neither affordable nor adequate to meet the scale of the challenge to be addressed, and that climate mitigation action will require a targeted balance between Exchequer-supported expenditure, taxation measures, regulation and behavioural change.

In certain cases, taxation policy may have a stronger role to play in changing individual or business behaviour and investment decisions, including harnessing non-Exchequer finance. Carbon tax, in particular, has a critical role in climate mitigation policy and the national mitigation plan commits the Department of Finance to completing a review in 2018, with a view to setting a long-term trajectory for the evolution of this tax. Clear long-term signalling by the Government on the future evolution of the tax is vital, as well as an examination of what other changes to the taxation regime could be considered that would assist with the achievement of climate targets. The low emission vehicle task force is bringing forward proposals in this regard.

As regards significant regulatory change, the National Development Plan commits the Government to no new non-zero emission cars to be sold in Ireland post-2030, with no NCT certificates to be issued for non-zero emission cars post-2045. There is also to be a transition to a low emission urban bus fleet, including electric buses, with no diesel only buses purchased from 1 July 2019.

In terms of ongoing climate mitigation policy development, the European Union requires that we produce a draft National Energy and Climate Plan by the end of 2018, with the final plan to be developed by the end of 2019. This represents a further opportunity to build on the National Mitigation Plan and the National Development Plan to ensure Ireland moves to a pathway of long-term decarbonisation. Furthermore, as well as the ongoing development of the National Mitigation Plan as a living document, I am required, under the 2015 Act, to bring forward a new National Mitigation Plan at least once every five years. The latest date by which this must happen is, therefore, July 2022.

### Departmental Expenditure

462. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26385/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The following table sets out the amount paid to the company referred to in the Question since 1 January 2016:

Details of Spend	Amount paid in 2016 - €	Amount paid in 2017 - €	Amount paid in 2018 (to date) - €
Local Agenda 21/Local Environmental Partnership Fund press advertisements		5,835	
Newspaper advertisement of Clean Air Strategy public consultation		6,337	
Newspaper advertisement of Medium Combustion Plants public consultation			3,029
Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework	14,281		
Printed media space in national and regional newspapers for Public Information Notices for Geological Survey Ireland	16,777	50,579	
Advertising in relation to Statutory Matters -Inland Fisheries Division	11,168	12,511	8,355
National Broadband Plan			9,737
Statutory Publication of Notice - Petroleum Affairs Division	11,112	11,138	2,267
Advertising in National Newspapers to promote EU LIFE Information day.		1,947	
Advertisements in National Newspapers for statutory consultation on National Adaptation Framework		5,842	
Advertisements in National Newspapers and the Farmers Journal for a public consultation on the Draft National Mitigation Plan.		6,738	
Public Notices to inform the public of the Minister's intention to grant a Prospecting Licence in accordance with Section 7(2)(a) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended.	22,900	31,034	10,960
Getting Citizens Online Programme		1,176	
Trading Online Voucher Scheme		35,192	
Trading Online Voucher Scheme		9,553	
Trading Online Voucher Scheme		6,948	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€76,238</b>	<b>€184,830</b>	<b>€34,348</b>

Since 2 December 2016, the services of the company were procured under the Office of Government Procurement Framework for Media Strategy, Planning and Buying Services.

### **Legislative Process**

463. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the Waste Reduction Bill 2017; if the proposed deposit and return scheme will be supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26402/18]

469. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the progression of the Waste Reduction Bill 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26501/18]

470. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views in relation to the Waste Reduction Bill 2017; the reason that may cause a delay to the Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26600/18]

472. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to support the Waste Reduction Bill 2017 progressing to Committee Stage at which formal amendments can be proposed and considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26794/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 463, 469, 470 and 472 together.

I have welcomed the principles of the Private Members' Bill on Waste Reduction and I asked the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment to look at the merits of the proposals therein. The Committee have published their report on the Bill and there are clear issues arising that need to be addressed. Firstly, it is clear that the Bill as it currently stands cannot proceed without amendments. The EU recently published its proposal to address the top ten single use plastic items that make up approximately 70% of beach litter (cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, beverage stirrers, balloon sticks) and these proposals do include a possible ban on some items. I fully welcomed the EU proposal on plastics, having written to the EU Commissioner in support of this, and I will not delay in introducing the necessary bans on the items provided for in the proposal when the EU legislation is finalised. However, the provision provided in Section 3 of the Waste Reduction Bill goes beyond the EU proposal to include plastic beverage containers which are considered as packaging under the EU Packaging Directive. Under this Directive, I am prohibited from banning such items.

Secondly, more information is needed in relation to the introduction of a Deposit and Return scheme. As such I cannot support a mandatory introduction of a scheme about which we do not have sufficient information to fully understand the impacts, positive or negative. The Joint Oireachtas Committee report supports these concerns, particularly around costs of implementation, the effectiveness of this in achieving the desirable environmental outcomes and any potential impact on the existing kerbside collection system. To address this, I have asked my officials to set up a pilot scheme which is in early planning stages. This will allow us to assess the likely impacts and costs of Deposit and Return in an Irish context.

Finally, in line with Oireachtas procedures, once a Bill is examined after second stage, the Ceann Comhairle may write to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform requesting a money message which informs both the Committee and the sponsors of the Bill as to the decision received. The Ceann Comhairle has determined that this Bill could place a cost on the exchequer and as such, at this juncture the Bill can only progress in accordance with the



procedures of the Oireachtas.

I have made it absolutely clear to the Joint Oireachtas Committee, at every opportunity, that I am very happy to help progress this important Bill. However, in addition to the proposals which are incompatible with EU law, I cannot agree to the compulsory introduction of a national Deposit and Return Scheme. To agree to a mandatory scheme without proper analysis on the likely effect of increased costs for families and householders or evidence of its effectiveness in improving the recycling rates in this jurisdiction would be financially reckless.

### **North-South Interconnector**

464. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason he is delaying the publishing the studies in relation to the North-South interconnector; the timeframe for publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26414/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** In 2017 I commissioned two studies designed to address the main points of the motions passed in Dáil and Seanad Éireann as well as key concerns expressed by the parties opposed to the development of the North South Interconnector as an overhead line. The first is an independent study to examine the technical feasibility and cost of undergrounding the interconnector. The second study is focused on the levels of compensation provided to land and property owners in proximity to high-voltage transmission lines in a European context. I indicated previously that the Consultants undertaking the two studies have finalised their reports and it is my intention that these will be brought to Government and made publicly available. I expect to bring both reports to Government shortly.

### **Postal Codes**

465. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the inordinate delay in new houses being assigned Eircode postcodes (details supplied). [26449/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I have asked my officials to raise this important issue directly with An Post management, An Post GeoDirectory and Capita, as I appreciate the frustration that this matter is causing. I can assure the Deputy that my Department is working closely with the relevant bodies to improve and expedite the process of assigning Eircodes for new properties.

Eircodes are assigned to new property addresses using a valid postal address and verified geo-locations. An Post collects information on new and existing buildings, as well as changes to existing addresses and Ordnance Survey Ireland provides the geo-locations for these buildings. An Post GeoDirectory, issue a new release of the GeoDirectory database file on a quarterly basis to Capita Business Support Services Ireland, trading as Eircode, in accordance with their licence agreement.

Each new address assigned an Eircode is published on the free to use Eircode Finder website, a notification letter is issued to the occupant containing the Eircode of that address and an updated Eircode Database is provided to licensed businesses for their use. In 2017, Eircode informed my Department that 22,503 new addresses were assigned an Eircode.

### Public Consultation Process

466. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26456/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My Department has carried out a number of public consultations since 2011 to date this year in line with statutory and other requirements. In some instances the cost of the specific consultation is not available as the associated work would have been undertaken as part of the day to day operations of the particular Division in the Department involved and can not be quantified.

Information in respect of bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for those organisations and my Department does not have the information sought in this regard. I will, however, request the relevant Agencies and bodies under the aegis of my Department to respond directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Details of all of the public consultations are outlined in tabular form below:

Name of Public Consultation	Number of replies received	Cost (inc of VAT)	Year (2011 to 2018 to date)
To invite interested parties to submit their views on the Interim Report of the Post Office Network Business Development Group. The consultation assisted the Group in identifying opportunities that could benefit the post office network and inform the Group's final report which was subsequently published in January 2016.	16 - all of which are available on the Department's website.	n/a	2015
Energy Green Paper	1200	€25,000	2014
Clean Energy Package	22	n/a	2017
2nd National Implementation Report of the UNECE Aarhus Convention	24	n/a	2016
2nd Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) National Implementation Report	2	n/a	2016
Access to Justice & Implementation of Article 9 of the Aarhus Convention	48	n/a	2014
1st National Implementation Report of the UNECE Aarhus Convention	21 in Phase 1 13 in Phase 2	n/a	2013
1st Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) National Implementation Report	8	n/a	2013
Industrial Emissions Directive	24	n/a	2012
Transposition of Basic Safety Standards Directive	13	€492 which related to cost of translation	2017
Clean Air Strategy	116	€10,108 which includes cost of translation.	2017
Medium Combustion Plants	14	€3,460 which includes cost of translation.	2018
Consultation on development of National Adaptation Framework	26	n/a	2016
Consultation on draft National Adaptation Framework	27	€16,586	2017

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Name of Public Consultation	Number of replies received	Cost (inc of VAT)	Year (2011 to 2018 to date)
Draft order - Increase to Biofuel Obligation rate consultation	9	n/a	2018
Public Consultation on the Biofuel Obligation Rate Scheme	22	n/a	2017/2018
Public Consultation on the Biofuel Obligation Rate Scheme	6	n/a	2016
Public Consultation Regarding a Proposed Increase of the Biofuel Obligation Rate	156	n/a	2015
Draft order - Biofuel Obligation Rate Increase	5	n/a	2012
Consultation Regarding a Proposed Increase of the Biofuel Obligation Rate	13	n/a	2012
Public Consultation on the NIS Directive Security Measures and Incident Reporting for Operators of Essential Services	12	n/a	2017
Public Consultation on the Network and Information Security Directive	19	n/a	2016
Public Service Broadcasting Charge review	79	€3,779	2013
Review of the list of Events Designated as Events of Major Importance 2014	45	€6,125	2014
Notice of Events intended for Designation as Events of Major Importance 2015	604	€6,653	2015
Public Consultation: Draft National Mitigation Plan, Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Statement	124	€6,738	2017

Name of Public Consultation	Number of replies received	Cost (inc of VAT)	Year (2011 to 2018 to date)
Renewable electricity support scheme technology review	748	n/a	2015
Renewable electricity support scheme final stage	1250	n/a	2017
Renewable Heat Incentive technology review	85	n/a	2015
Renewable Heat Incentive final stage	119	n/a	2017
Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework	69	€14,280	2016
Electricity Support Schemes Transitioning to I-SEM	20	€4,920	2017
Draft Guidance on EIS and NIS Preparation for Offshore Renewable Energy Projects	20	n/a	2016
Draft Guidance on Marine Baseline Assessments and Monitoring Activities for Offshore Renewable Energy Projects	Not available but can be supplied to the Deputy at a later date.	n/a	2016
Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff (REFIT 3)	9	n/a	2015
The Mid-Term review of the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDP)	16	n/a	2017
Draft National Policy on Electricity Interconnection in Ireland: Public Consultation	15	n/a	2018
National Broadband Plan Call for Input	32	not available within time-frame	2014
National Broadband Plan High Speed Map Public Consultation	29	not available within time-frame	2014
National Broadband Plan Intervention Strategy Public Consultation	41	not available within time-frame	2015

Name of Public Consultation	Number of replies received	Cost (inc of VAT)	Year (2011 to 2018 to date)
Consultation on the Process for updating the High Speed Broadband Map - pre, during and post procurement	16	not available within time-frame	2015
Consultation on Map and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)	23	€9,736	2018
Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS) Industry Consultation - Review of the ECAS provision.	7	n/a	2016
Stakeholder Consultation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 (see 1 below)	27	n/a	2017
Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on Ireland's Voluntary National Review on the SDGs (see 2 below)	n/a	€612	2018
Collection of Stakeholder observations re the SDGs for transmission to the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2018 (see 3 below)	Consultation currently taking place.	n/a	2018
Public Consultation on a Possible Packaging Levy	68	n/a	2011
Public Consultation 'Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative Model in Ireland'	29	n/a	2012
Consultation on the Report on Corporate Governance in the Producer Responsibility Initiative sector in Ireland	11	n/a	2013
Consultation on the report on End of Life Vehicles (ELVs) in the Producer Responsibility Initiative sector in Ireland	13	n/a	2014
Consultation on the report on Tyres & Waste Tyres in the Producer Responsibility Initiative sector in Ireland	16	n/a	2014
Public Consultation on the Report on the Review of the PRI Model in Ireland	24	n/a	2014
The Regulation of Household Waste collection	96	n/a	2013
Reorganising Household Waste Collection	7	€3,950	2011
Towards a new National Waste Policy	99	€5,897	2011
Exporting a Resource Opportunity – Measures to Maximise Resource Efficiency & Jobs in Ireland*	20	n/a	2015
WEEE Recast Directive Transposition in Ireland	8	n/a	2013
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2011 for 2012 season. Statutory public consultation.	39	€998*	2011
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2012 for 2013 season. Statutory public consultation.	14	€784*	2012
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2013 for 2014 season. Statutory public consultation.	19	€692*	2013
Public Consultation on Inland Fisheries Legislation	70	€1,291*	2013
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2014 for 2015 season. Statutory public consultation.	21	€503*	2014
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2015 for 2016 season. Statutory public consultation.	13	€1,427*	2015
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2016 for 2017 season. Statutory public consultation.	98	€1,595**	2016
Draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Regulations 2017 for 2018 season. Statutory public consultation.	136	€2,015**	2017
Draft Designated Salmonid Waters Bye-Law.	5531	€6,045**	2018
Language Scheme 2018-2021	28	€1,720	2018
Consultation on Amendments to the Gas Directive-2009-73	2	n/a	2018
Regulation of Offshore Natural Gas Storage Consultation	7	n/a	2011
Commercial Sector Survey Consultation	163	n/a	2018

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Name of Public Consultation	Number of replies received	Cost (inc of VAT)	Year (2011 to 2018 to date)
Consultation on the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme	25	n/a	2016
Affordable Energy Strategy Review Consultation	47	€550	2015
Consultation on Implementation of the Energy Efficiency Directive in Ireland	30	n/a	2013
2050 Low Carbon Roadmap Consultation	16	n/a	2013
Consultation on Ireland's second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP 2)	34	n/a	2011
Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment - IOSEA 5	23	€57,900	2015
IOSEA 4	11 responses over the three year period 2010 to 2012 inclusive.	€149,151***	2010
IOSEA 4	as above	€76,312***	2011
IOSEA 4	as above	€12,151***	2012
Consultation on Spectrum Policy Priorities	16	n/a	2014

1 While this exercise was not a formal public consultation, the views of existing stakeholders were sought prior to the finalisation of the SDG National Implementation Plan 2018-2020.

2 While this exercise was not a formal public consultation, DCCAE did hold a consultation workshop in relation to the draft Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs, prior to its finalisation. The VNR will be presented by Ireland at the 2018 session of the UN High Level Political Forum. The consultation workshop was conducted by DCCAE and hosted by the Department of the Taoiseach. Costs relate to catering for the event.

3 While this exercise is not public consultation, DCCAE has provided the public with an opportunity to register their observations on the SDGs, and their importance to Ireland, through an online process on DCCAE's website. DCCAE has undertaken to transmit these observations from the public to the 2018 session of the UN High Level Political Forum. This process is still underway, with a deadline for submission of observations to DCCAE 22/06/2018.

\*Advertising costs only. All other costs would be within the day to day business of Inland Fisheries Division.

\*\*Advertising costs only. All other costs would be within the day to day business of Inland Fisheries Division.

\*\*\*These figures relate to the full cost of the IOSEA 4 process. It is not possible to identify, in the timeline provided, the components attributable to the public consultation.

### **Fishing Industry**

467. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a funding support scheme will be considered for the remaining draft and snap net salmon fishermen affected by the ongoing cessation of fishing activities; if an application for European maritime and fisheries funding from the European Commission will be made to compensate the fishermen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26470/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Envi-**



**ronment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The Salmon Hardship Scheme was introduced following a Government decision in 2006 to cease the commercial salmon mixed stock fishery for conservation reasons. Under this scheme, €25 million was targeted at commercial salmon fishermen, who were active in the fishery at the time, and funding was provided to fishermen for them to permanently cease fishing and diversify into new activity. In addition, €5 million was provided for community based initiatives in areas affected by the cessation of fishing. It closed for applications on 31st December 2007 and was ceased, with all funds expended, in 2008. There are currently no plans to revisit such a scheme. My officials have engaged with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine who are the National competent authority for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and with the European Commission. I understand that any support schemes aimed at cessation of fisheries are not eligible under EMFF.

### **Fishing Industry**

468. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the proposed compensation fund for former eel fishermen will reflect Ireland's status as effectively a conservation ground for eels in the EU following the ban introduced here in 2010. [26486/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Ireland's Eel Management Plan (EMP), including the closure of commercial fishing, was approved, in 2009, by the European Commission under EU Regulation 1100/2007. Fishing for eel was by way of public licence and therefore the issue of compensation does not arise. However, I directed my officials to engage with the European Commission in relation to Ireland's proposals to fund a support scheme for former eel fishermen. The outcome of that engagement confirmed that funding for the proposed measure is not eligible for support under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. However both Minister Naughten and I have secured Exchequer funding to support the measure and our position that this does not constitute State Aid has been confirmed to the Commission. Consultation with the Revenue Commissioners is at an advanced stage.

Until consultations are completed, it is not possible to elaborate on the terms and conditions for, or the prospective number of participants in, any potential support measure.

*Questions Nos. 469 and 470 answered with Question No. 463.*

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme Administration**

471. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider amending the better energy homes programme application procedure in order to ensure that the necessary checks on the national administration system for building energy ratings are carried out by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland before an approval for works can be issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26793/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Better Energy Homes scheme is funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The scheme provides grants towards the cost of a range of energy efficiency measures. Homeowners must use an SEAI registered contractor and SEAI recommend that homeowners obtain a number of quotes and compare the offers before choosing their contractor. While approval for works must be obtained from SEAI before works are commenced on the home, there is no check for a Building Energy Rating

(BER) certificate before this approval is given.

However, any homeowner who receives SEAI approval for grant aided energy efficiency works on their home must get a post works BER certificate published for their home before they can receive payment of their grant. The SEAI maintains a list of registered BER assessors. <https://ndber.seai.ie/Pass/assessors/search.aspx>.

A grant of €50 is also available toward the cost of getting the post works BER certificate. Further details of the procedure are available on the SEAI's website.

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-grants/better-energy-homes/ber-grant/>

*Question No. 472 answered with Question No. 463.*

### **Broadband Service Provision**

473. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the provision of fibre optic broadband services with speeds of at least 20 Mbps in an area (details supplied); the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26802/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. By 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention.

There are circa 297 premises in the townland of Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny. These premises fall within a BLUE area on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie) and are within the area targeted for delivery of high speed broadband by commercial operators. Therefore a high speed broadband service (minimum download speed 30 Mbps) for this area will be realised through commercial operators.

It is important to note that telecommunications companies operate in a liberalised market and while I have no statutory authority to intervene in their day to day operations, my Department is collating information in relation to cases/areas where commercial plans to provide access to high speed broadband to premises do not materialise. In this regard, where a premises situated in a BLUE area is unable to obtain a high speed broadband service I would encourage citizens to contact my Department directly at [broadband@dccae.gov.ie](mailto:broadband@dccae.gov.ie) with details - quoting their address, eircode and fixed line telephone number (if available) and details of operators they have contacted with a view to obtaining a broadband service. This information will assist my Department in identifying the areas of concern and will facilitate engagement with telecommunication operators on this issue.

In addition, for those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are

acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx>.

### **Public Service Vehicles**

474. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions his Department has had with relevant agencies and industry representative bodies with a view to commencing the Garda vetting of SPSV applicants at the start of the NTA application process in order to help fast track the supply of taxi drivers. [26488/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*. Also, under this Act, An Garda Síochána (AGS) is responsible for the granting of SPSV driver licences which includes the administration of the associated Garda vetting process.

While decisions regarding the detail as to how these procedures are administered by the NTA and An Garda Síochána respectively are clearly not for me or for my Department, I am aware that my Department has had discussions with taxi industry representatives in relation to a number of matters, including specifically the stage in the overall licensing process at which the Garda vetting process commences for SPSV applicants. Following that engagement, my Department has given a commitment to discuss this issue as raised by industry representatives with the NTA within the context of the Department's regular liaison with the NTA regarding taxi matters generally.

### **Rural Transport Programme Funding**

475. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the 2018 budget allocation to the rural transport programme; and the first and full year costs of a 15% increase on a straight line basis for the years 2019 to 2023, in tabular form. [26747/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I refer the Deputy to my answer of 29 May 2018 to her Question (ref no 23370/18, Proof 535). The position remains the same.

### **Public Service Obligation Data**

476. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the 2018 PSO subvention; and the estimated cost of increasing same by 5%, 10%, 15%, 20% and 25%, respectively, in tabular form. [26748/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware, in Budget 2018 I secured an 8% increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for Public Service Obligation (PSO) public transport services and €285 million is available this year to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for this purpose.

Potential percentage changes to the amount can be calculated from this base: 5% is €14m; 10% is €28m; 15% is €43m; 20% is €57m; and 25% is €71m. The overall PSO amount is set each year as part of the annual Estimates and Budget processes, and the 2018 allocation for the Vote was voted on and approved by this House earlier this year as part of the “Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018”. As the Deputy is aware, it is the statutory remit of the NTA to make PSO payments to the public transport operators who provide PSO services, and the payments are made in accordance with the PSO contracts that the NTA has in place with each of those operators.

### **Public Transport Subsidies**

477. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the subvention to CIÉ in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the amounts allocated to each of the primary transport providers, that is, Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath, a company (details supplied) and other operators, in tabular form. [26749/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware, in Budget 2018 I secured an 8% increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for Public Service Obligation (PSO) services and I can confirm that €285 million is available to the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2018.

Since 2010, the PSO subvention is no longer paid directly by my Department to transport operators. The award and subvention of PSO contracts now falls under the statutory remit of the NTA. I have therefore forwarded the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

478. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings for accessibility works to bus stations nationwide. [26750/18]

479. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings for accessibility works to railway stations nationwide. [26751/18]

480. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings for the construction of wheelchair accessible bus stops nationwide. [26752/18]

481. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings for the replacement of non-wheelchair accessible vehicles for Bus Éireann. [26753/18]

482. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the costings for accessibility works to the train fleet. [26754/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 478 to 482, inclusive, together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Accessibility features, such as wheelchair access and audio/visual aids, are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage. Newer systems such as LUAS are fully accessible.

My Department funds an ongoing programme of accessibility improvement grants to upgrade older existing infrastructure and facilities which is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA). In Budget 2018 I secured a trebling of the funding provided for the accessibility retro-fit programme to €28m, as part of the 4 year capital envelope announced.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 the NTA has functional responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network, as well as having responsibility for the management of the accessibility retro-fit programme.

During my appearance last February at the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport, in relation to the accessibility of public transport for people with disabilities, I undertook to ask the NTA to provide information on (i) the accessibility status of existing public transport infrastructure, (ii) the cost of making public transport services wheelchair accessible and (iii) the accessibility improvements planned with the available funding for the 4 year 2018-2021 under the retro-fit programme. My Office recently forwarded the information received from the NTA to the Clerk to the Committee. For the assistance of the Deputy, I have outlined in the table the cost figures provided by the NTA, of making public transport services wheelchair accessible.

Bus Stations	Buses/Coaches (PSO Services)	Bus Stops (PSO coach services)	Train Stations	Taxis/Hackneys	Total
€16.35 m	€22.5 m	€10 m	€76 m	€214 m	€339 m

I would emphasise that the figures provided by the NTA are estimates, due for example to complexities in relation providing accessible bus stops in rural/regional areas. In addition, the figures relate to Public Service Obligation (PSO) services only, and to Exchequer funding rather than industry costs in the case of Taxi/Hackneys.

Investment in public transport will be accelerated under the National Development Plan (NDP) over the next ten years and beyond to support the development of an integrated, accessible and sustainable national public transport system. A number of key new major public transport programmes are proposed to be delivered under the NDP over the period to 2027 and these will be fully accessible as part of the normal design. In addition, there will be continued investment in the retro-fit programme under the NDP.

### Rail Network

483. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the 2018 capital budget allocation to Iarnród Éireann. [26758/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Exchequer capital funding is provided to semi-State providers of public transport both directly and through the NTA.

In accordance with the requirements of EU law, my Department provides capital funding to Iarnród Éireann for the maintenance and renewal of the heavy rail network under the *Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract (IMMAC)*. The present IMMAC covers the five-year period 2014-2018. €160 million is allocated to Iarnród Éireann under the IMMAC for 2018.

Iarnród Éireann also receives capital funding, via the NTA, for heavy rail projects in the Greater Dublin Area as well as funding under the Accessibility Grants and Regional Cities Programmes. I understand that the NTA has allocated €18.5 million under these programmes



for 2018.

### **Cycling Facilities Funding**

484. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the spend in 2018 on the development of cycling infrastructure. [26759/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware, cycling infrastructure investment is spread across several programmes. Funding is allocated on a multi-annual basis, with details of individual projects and associated funding managed by the National Transport Authority in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

Funding of in the region of €8m has been allocated in 2018 to develop the cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, and in the regional cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford from an overall budget of €110m allocated for investment in cycling and walking infrastructure during the period 2018-2021.

Further funding of over €10m has been allocated in 2018 for investment in Sustainable Urban Transport projects, in the GDA and in the cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford which include projects that will provide either direct or indirect improvements for urban cycling, from an overall €135m budget package during the period 2018-2021.

In addition €4.3m had been allocated in 2018 to Greenways outside of the five cities, from the overall €55m budget package provided over the same 4 year period.

### **Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme**

485. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will make a recommendation to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine that under the TAMS, the construction of cattle underpasses be grant aided in view of his responsibility to ensure health and safety on roads. [26197/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As TAMS is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, it is for that Minister to consider whether it would be appropriate to include cattle underpasses in the Scheme, having regard to the requirement for any such expenditure to support agricultural modernisation. I note that the scheme is not intended to support road safety.

### **Sports Events**

486. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to bid for future sporting events (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26203/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The hosting of major sports events, both participative and spectator sports, can provide a great showcase for Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. In addition, the media coverage of sports events helps to put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination.

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I am very supportive of the ongoing efforts of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events. Any proposal to host an event must be subject to an assessment of the costs/benefits involved in any State financial support, in particular the number of overseas visitors.

As the Deputy may be aware, we hosted the Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017 and the tournament was a great success. Ireland will also host four games as part of EURO 2020 in June 2020. In partnership with the FAI and Dublin City Council, we won the bid to host three group games and one round 16 game of EURO 2020 back in 2014. Preparations have been progressing for 18 months with the Dublin Local Organising Committee's Project Working Group working closely with UEFA and key local and state agencies on all aspects of the hosting. Depending on qualification, up to 160,000 overseas visitors may attend Euro 2020 matches in Dublin.

Dublin also made a successful bid to host the EURO 2020 Televised Qualifying Draw which takes place this December in the Convention Centre – with almost 1,000 guests expected, including over 300 international media from more than 50 countries resulting in global international coverage.

Ireland will also host the UEFA European Under 17 Championships in 2019.

As regard any further events currently being considered, I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply directly to the Deputy in this regard. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

### **Bus Services**

487. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding is being provided to a private bus company (details supplied) having regard to its recent announcement of an €8.5 million investment and the creation of 450 jobs; the role played by his Department in relation to this initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26286/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten workingdays.

### **Road Safety**

488. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to regulate through a licensing system similar to other trades the trade of motor mechanic in order to ensure the road safety standards of motor vehicles. [26302/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of the trade of motor mechanics does not come within my remit as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport. However, as the Deputy will be aware, the road safety of all motor vehicles is very important to me and my Department, as exemplified by the National Car Test (NCT) and Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) which have both been very successful at improving the safety standards of motor vehicles used on our roads. I understand that all motor mechanics are required to complete a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate that is awarded upon

completion of a motor industry apprenticeship which has a minimum of four-years duration. This qualification is validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

### **Electric Vehicles**

489. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to monitor or regulate the safety and standard of electric vehicles, charging points in relation to same, the installation of such charging points and the qualifications needed to work on the vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26303/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In relation to the road safety and vehicle standards aspect of the question, which comes within the remit of my Department, Electric Vehicles (EVs) must undergo the same rigorous safety testing and meet the same safety standards required for any conventional vehicle driving on European roads and in addition must comply with national legislative requirements including the National Car Test (NCT) or the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT).

The remaining queries raised in the question do not fall within my remit however I understand that the responsibility for the regulation of the electricity and gas markets, including safety, is a statutory function of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities, which is an independent Regulator. I understand that the installation of electrical equipment, including public chargepoints for electric vehicles, is subject to the standards set out in the National Wiring Rules.

On 21 May 2018, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) published an amendment to the National Wiring Rules. This specifies requirements for ‘Supplies for Electric Vehicles’ by way of an additional section which will be included in a new version of the National Wiring Rules.

In relation to the installation of home chargers, a Safe Electric electrician can ensure the product installed is of an appropriate technical standard and provide the relevant certification to homeowners.

Finally, I understand all Motor Mechanics are required to complete a FETAC level 6 Advanced Certificate which is awarded upon completion of a four-year motor industry apprenticeship and which is validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

### **Motor Industry**

490. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the oversight in place to ensure that garages and motor trade dealers have the expertise and equipment to correctly calibrate the safety critical systems involved with new advanced driver assistance systems; and his plans to regulate this aspect of the motor trade. [26305/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** While the oversight of after-sales motor vehicle servicing does not fall within the remit of my Department, both the National Car Test (NCT) and the Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Test (CVRT) examine malfunction indicators such as those for Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Anti-Lock Braking Systems (ABS) and Electronic Braking Systems (EBS) to ensure these systems are in working order.

As regards the expertise of qualified motor mechanics, I understand that all motor mechan-

ics are required to complete a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate that is awarded upon completion of a motor industry apprenticeship which has a minimum of four-year duration. This qualification is validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

### Swimming Pool Programme

491. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided as requested by a company (details supplied) in County Limerick to address health and safety issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26335/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My officials recently wrote to Limerick City and County Council stating that the Department is not in a position to provide funding for the works referred to at this time. As the Deputy may be aware, the pool in question received funding of €3,809,214 under the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme with the final (retention) payment made in March 2009. As is the norm for grants under the Swimming Pool Programme, the original grant was conditional on the Council maintaining the facility.

In terms of any possible future funding, the recently published National Development Plan (NDP) contains a commitment to establish a new “Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund” (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. It is intended that the Fund will primarily be targeted at larger new projects, including swimming pools, where the proposed Government contribution exceeds the amount currently available for individual projects under the Sports Capital Programme. The draft terms and conditions of the new scheme are expected to be finalised shortly and an announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made once this work is complete. At this stage, it is envisaged that the fund will be initially focused on the National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities and the possibility of accepting applications for larger scale refurbishment work is being considered. Accordingly, it will be a matter for Limerick City and County Council to consider any possible suitable projects for application once the new scheme opens later this year.

### Departmental Expenditure

492. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26397/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following table:

Year	Project	Amount
2016	This is for advertising in Irish Times, Irish Independent and Irish Daily Mail for Gallantry Awards in 2016. Nominations were invited in respect of the National Marine Gallantry and Meritorious Service Awards 2016. The purpose of this awards scheme is to recognise outstanding acts of courage, heroism, skill and initiative in the context of marine emergency incidents. The scheme also recognises exceptional dedication to duty in the execution of Ireland’s marine emergency response.	€5,767.11
2017	This is for the advertising of the opening for applications of the 2017 Sports Capital Programme in The Irish Examiner, Irish Examiner, the Star, Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Mirror, Irish Daily Mail, Irish Sun and Seachtain.	€7,285.37

Year	Project	Amount
2017	The Climate Change Unit of the Department engaged the services of Mediavest on three occasions in 2017. On all three occasions, the company was engaged by them to place a statutory notice in a national newspaper, the Irish Times, required to fulfil obligations in relation to various policy documents. The company was paid a collective fee of €2,839.62 in relation to the placing and design of the statutory notice regarding policy document, entitled, National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland, 2017 to 2030 and was paid €1,476.60 in relation to the placing and design of the statutory notice regarding policy document on adaptation policy, entitled, Adaptation Planning-Developing Resilience to Climate Change in the Irish Transport Sector.	€4,316.22
2017	Medivest was paid €2,385.29 for placing an advertisement in the Irish Times regarding the Plan for the Dublin to Galway Greenway in December 2016. They were also paid €2,498.87 for an advertisement placed in the Irish Times to announce the Public Consultation on the Greenways Strategy that took place in June 2017	€4,884.16

### Road Projects Status

493. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a road project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26423/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The planning and implementation of the A5 upgrade project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities.

The current funding arrangements in relation to the A5 are governed by the Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start. This Agreement reaffirmed the Government's commitment to provide funding of £50 million for the A5 project and committed an additional £25 million towards the cost of Phase 1 of the project (Newbuildings to north of Strabane).

The funding allocated to my Department as part of the Capital Plan Review last year includes financial provision for meeting the Government's commitment regarding the A5 in three £25 million (sterling) tranches over the period 2019 to 2021. The project is the subject of legal proceedings at present.

### Sports Capital Programme Administration

494. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the sports capital programme will reopen for funding applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26424/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website ([www.dttas.ie](http://www.dttas.ie)). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round as soon as possible. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at this time.



### Taxi Licences Renewals

495. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the delay in the renewal of a taxi licence for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26425/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the issuing of taxi licences, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

### Public Consultation Process

496. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26469/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Deputy, in the following table are details of consultations held by my Department. Your query will be sent to agencies under my Department's remit for direct reply to you within 10 working days. If you don't hear with the timeline please contact my private office.

Year	Consultation	Replies Received	Cost
2011	Stakeholder Consultation on Maritime Labour Convention, 2006	6	Nil
2013	Proposed transfer of Bantry Bay Harbour to the Port of Cork Company	28	€1,849.24
2013	Public consultation on European Commission's proposals for a Fourth Railway Package.	4	2013
2013	Issues Paper in respect of the development of a National Aviation Policy for Ireland	74	Nil
2013	Tourism Policy Statement	170	€613.37
2013/2014	The development of the Maritime Safety Strategy.	37	€13,765.49
2014	Draft National Aviation Policy for Ireland	78	Nil
2015	English Language Proficiency Requirements for Certificates of Competency and for Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Irish Flagged Fishing Vessels	8	Nil
2016	Statement of Strategy	60	Nil
2016	Review of Regulatory Regime of Airport Charges In Ireland	22	Nil
2016	Consultation on EU Proposal Union certification system for aviation screening equipment	1	Nil
2016	Proposal for Amendment to National Legislation concerning Aviation Security Regulation and Related Matters	6	Nil
2016	Proposal for a revision of the European Aviation Safety Regulation 216/2008	9	Nil

Year	Consultation	Replies Received	Cost
2016	Aviation Emissions (CO2)	8	Nil
2016	Galway to Dublin Greenway Plan	55	€2,385.29
2016	National Sports Policy	54	Nil
2017	National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland	47	€1,590.19
2017	Adaptation Plan	10	€1,476.60
2017	Regulatory Impact Analysis for a Proposed Merchant Shipping (International Conventions) Bill	12	Nil
2017	Proposal for a Regulation on safeguarding competition in air transport	5	Nil
2017	Strategy for the future Development of Greenways	5,365	€2,498.87
2018	Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships	2	Nil

### Roads Maintenance Funding

497. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to allocate significant additional funding to roads in counties Cavan and Monaghan in budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26492/18]

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

Within the budget available to the Department, grant funding is allocated on as fair and equitable basis as possible. In this context, grants in the main grant categories are allocated based on the length of regional and local roads within a local authority area of responsibility and it is envisaged that grants will continue to be made available on that basis.

The grant allocations for 2019 will be decided following the conclusion of the Estimates process.

As State grants are intended to supplement local authority funding, my Department continues to emphasise to local authorities the importance of prioritising roads' maintenance when allocating their own resources.

### Roads Maintenance Funding

498. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be granted to address bad road conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26493/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are

funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Within the budget available to the Department, grant funding is allocated on as fair and equitable basis as possible. In this context, grants in the main grant categories are allocated based on the length of regional and local roads within a local authority area of responsibility and it is envisaged that grants will continue to be made available on that basis.

All grant funding available to my Department has now been allocated. It is a matter for each Council to determine its priorities and decide its work programme taking available of grant funding and its own resources into account. I always stress to Councils the importance of prioritising roads when allocating their own resources.

### **Wild Atlantic Way Project**

499. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason there are no wheelchair accessible points at the landmark locations along the Wild Atlantic Way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26497/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy. While the Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland to invest in tourism, it is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects. These are operational matters for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Ferry Services**

500. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he or his officials have had engagement with a ferry company (details supplied) in 2018 regarding its failure to accommodate booked passengers due to the delayed delivery of a new ferry; if the company will be contacted to discuss its latest announcement in view of the fact that thousands of passengers are directly impacted by the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26498/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Irish Ferries is a private commercial company operating ferry and passenger services between Ireland, Britain and France under the Cyprus flag or the Bahamas flag. In May 2016, the company entered into an agreement with a German company Flensburger Schiffbau-Gesellschaft & Co.KG (FSG) to construct the WB Yeats at a contract price of €144million.

My Department through the IMDO works closely with all existing ferry operators and have been in contact with the Company. Irish Ferries was advised by the German company on Friday 20 April of a delay in the delivery of the new vessel by at least a month. On the 12 June 2018 Irish Ferries issued a press release advising that the delivery of the W.B. Yeats from FSG was further delayed. The Company have stated that this delay is due to extraordinary circumstances beyond its control.

As a result of this Irish Ferries has now taken a commercial decision to cancel all planned sailings to France for the W.B. Yeats vessel this summer. They are proactively handling the

situation and they are contacting affected customers informing them of the cancellations and offering alternative travel options, including alternative direct sailings.

Up to 90% of those affected can be accommodated on the Oscar Wilde sailings from Rosslare to France or on sailings on the Epsilon from Dublin to France at weekends or can opt for a land-bridge option i.e. sailing to the UK from either Dublin or Rosslare and then to France.

I understand that customers who choose the land-bridge option will be reimbursed the cost of their fuel requirements from the port of arrival in the UK to the port of arrival in France.

If alternative travel options do not suit customers full refunds of any monies paid will be given. They are also offering each affected customer a €150 voucher which can be used on any of their Ireland-France routes next year.

### **Freedom of Information**

501. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to make all semi-State bodies under his remit subject to freedom of information; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26602/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** It is a statutory function of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to make Orders in respect of prescribed bodies for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and I have not been consulted by him in relation to the making of any such Order.

Exempted Bodies under my Department's aegis are typically those commercial companies which operate within a commercial environment.

In addition there are two bodies which are partially included - Iarnród Éireann which is included except in relation to its commercial activities in Rosslare Europort and the Medical Bureau of Road Safety which is excluded in relation to criminal investigation functions.

### **Taxi Regulations**

502. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans with regard to the regulation of rickshaws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26654/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy may be aware, my Department has been considering a range of options for regulating rickshaws from the perspectives of proportionality, public safety and enforcement as well as regarding the question of costs and benefits. Options considered included the introduction of regulation and the introduction of a full prohibition.

As I indicated recently when I attended a meeting of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport at which the matter of rickshaws was considered, the preferred approach at present is prohibition. However I am aware that there may be some obstacles and legal advice has been sought from the Office of Attorney General. Once consultations with that Office are complete, I expect to be in a position to finalise and announce my decision before the end of this Dáil term, with any corresponding legislative provisions to be developed thereafter.

### **Bus Services**

503. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on reports that the National Transport Authority plans to construct 16 new bus radial routes; the impact this will have on residents that live near these proposed new routes in view of the news that 1,300 homeowners may lose their gardens; when homeowners will be notified if they are to be subject to a compulsory purchase order; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26661/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The BusConnects Programme aims to transform the bus system in Dublin. It will include a full redesign of the bus network in order to provide a better and more efficient network for passengers; an expanded and modern fleet of vehicles; new road infrastructure to facilitate bus priority and faster journeys for public transport users, and also upgraded facilities for cyclists and pedestrians; improved passenger information and ticketing technology; and transition to a lower emission bus fleet.

Currently, on the busiest bus routes, bus lanes are only in place for less than one third of the corridor. This means that for most of the journey, buses are competing for space with general traffic and so are also affected by the increasing levels of congestion.

Approximately 70% of people travelling into Dublin city each morning do so by sustainable transport. The bus system is important because each day the majority (57% of all public transport trips) use the bus for this journey.

Bus is therefore the main component of the solution to address our current congestion problem and to meet our future transport needs. As those numbers grow, and as congestion worsens, it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate a reliable bus system with sufficient capacity to cater for the needs of the region.

Last week, the NTA published a discussion document outlining the Core Bus Corridor Project that is part of a wider BusConnects programme for Ireland's cities, starting in Dublin and rolling out to Galway, Cork and Ireland's remaining cities.

The NTA's document focusses on the 230 km of continuous bus priority across 16 core bus routes expected achieve up to 40%-50% savings on current journey times and the 200 km plus of cycle tracks/lanes and pedestrian facilities that are emerging as the likely core bus corridors in and out of Dublin city under this new investment Programme. These proposals are going to revolutionise traffic in the centre and outskirts of Dublin. It takes into consideration the current congestion situation and the challenges and opportunities that Dublin will face over the coming decades while setting out some of the key impacts, issues and challenges that relate to the 16 corridors.

In order to achieve this, in some areas on these corridors, roads will need to be widened, traffic lanes will have to be converted to bus lanes, on-street parking will have to be restricted and trees and parts of front gardens will have to be removed. These are the difficult decisions that have to be made if we are to provide a fit-for-purpose bus system for Dublin city. Dublin will become increasingly congested and a less attractive place to live and work if we decide not to make these changes now.

The document also sets out mitigations to these challenges including compensation as appropriate.

Following, last week's launch by the NTA of a discussion document focussed on 16 core bus routes, the NTA will conduct a public consultation on the redesign of Dublin's bus network, including proposals on a major redesign of routes, schedules and fare structures. This is expected in July.



Later this year, the NTA then plans to hold a public consultation on the emerging proposals for the 16 core bus corridors, expected in September/October.

This is to ensure that the public are fully informed by NTA about the BusConnects programme as it progresses and have ample opportunity to input at various stages to its development. It should be stressed that all of the routes and options are indicative only at this stage. Individual properties will not be identified until detailed designs have been completed and that will feed into the consultation process expected in September/October.

There is a clear need to expand attractive public transport alternatives to car transport to reduce congestion and emissions and enable the transport sector to cater for the demands associated with longer-term population and employment growth in a sustainable manner.

This is why the major flagship investments to be delivered within Project Ireland 2040 and the 10-year National Development Plan horizon such as Bus Connects for Ireland's cities and projects like the Metro Link, DART Expansion, expanded Luas services and cycling and walking infrastructure are needed to ease congestion, lower carbon output and add greatly to the quality and standard of our transport system.

Noting its responsibility with regards to this matter, I have referred your queries to the NTA for consideration and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Traffic Calming Measures**

504. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request TII to put in place a raised plateau at the junction on the N73 in Kildorrery village, County Cork in order to facilitate traffic calming measures. [26667/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

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

### **Civil Aviation Regulation**

505. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the delay in setting up a body to assist whistleblowers in the civil aviation industry as required under EU regulation 376/2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26695/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy points out, EU Regulation 376/2014 requires each Member State to make provisions for a new confidential reporting system for civil aviation. I can advise the Deputy that my Department is engaged with the Irish Aviation Authority - which has statutory responsibility for civil aviation safety oversight in Ireland - on how best to implement the Regulation to ensure that we put in place as soon as possible a robust, trusted and confidential system that will work across the

industry.

### **Tourism Promotion**

506. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons employed to deliver the Hidden Heartlands tourism initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26742/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin) (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. While the Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland for its organisational operations and investment in tourism, it is not directly involved in the management of individual tourism projects or the numbers of staff allocated to same. This is an operational matter for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Road Projects Status**

507. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the N5 road development from Ballaghaderreen to Scramogue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26743/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

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

### **Fáilte Ireland Expenditure**

508. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of funding expended by Fáilte Ireland tourism projects in County Roscommon in each of the years 2010 to 2017; the allocation for 2018; the level of funding expected to be allocated to tourism projects in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26744/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin) (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. While the Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism, it is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects and has no role in the administration of the agency's grant programmes. These are operational matters for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please

contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Rail Services Data**

509. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there has been an increase in service on the commuter train lines leading into Dublin since 2015; the service levels for each of the commuter lines in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26769/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Bus Services**

510. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the stage the development of the new town bus service for Mullingar is at as promised in Project Ireland 2040; when the service will commence; the regularity with which the route will be served; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26780/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Rail Services**

511. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given to the closure of level crossings along the Maynooth line (details supplied); if the National Transport Authority has undertaken traffic modelling of the use of level crossings in Dublin 15 either on its own or in conjunction with other State bodies such as Irish Rail or Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council; if there will be engagement with the public in the event of proposals to close or reduce the opening of these level crossings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26785/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA), working with the other relevant State bodies, is responsible for ensuring the planning and delivery of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area.

In light of the NTA's role, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for further response on the matter raised.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

512. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number

of his European counterparts he has met in the past 12 months to discuss the way in which they work together to mitigate against the negative impacts of Brexit. [26860/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Brexit remains the number one strategic risk that my Department is facing and to this end my officials and I continue to engage with our European colleagues and counterparts.

Most recently my office had arranged bilaterals with the French, German, Dutch, Finnish and UK Ministers for Transport to take place at the margins of June's Transport Council meeting. Unfortunately I was unable to travel to Luxembourg to attend Council on this occasion; however, I am hoping to reschedule these meetings in the near future.

In May, I met both Professor Péter Balázs, the EU Coordinator for the North-Sea Mediterranean TEN-T Corridor, and Brian Simpson, the EU Coordinator for the Motorways of the Sea programme. Brexit was a key point on the agenda and both Coordinators are cognisant of the unique challenges facing Ireland as a result of the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

In October 2017 I met the EU Transport Commissioner, Ms Violeta Bulc, during her visit to Ireland and raised with her Ireland's concerns in relation to the implications of Brexit on transport and connectivity. I previously met Commissioner Bulc at the Transport Council in Luxembourg in June 2017.

In September 2017, I held a conference call with Ken Skates AM, the Welsh Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, on Brexit related matters.

In June 2017, I met the Austrian Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Jörg Leichtfried, in relation to Brexit and Road Safety. I also met with members of the External Affairs Committee of the National Assembly for Wales on matters primarily relating to Brexit.

In May 2017, I met the Swedish Minister for Infrastructure, Anna Johansson, on road safety and Brexit matters.

I also met the UK Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, on two occasions in 2017.

As can be seen from the above, I have engaged with relevant European colleagues on this importance issue throughout the last 12 months and will continue to do so in the coming months ahead.

### **Greenways Provision**

513. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will publish the greenway strategy; and when the greenway will be completed directly from Dublin to Galway. [26861/18]

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

It is important that the National Strategy for the future development of Greenways would

be subject to indepth consultation with relevant stakeholders. That consultation has now been completed and my officials are currently finalising the Strategy. I expect to publish the Strategy in the coming month. This will be followed by call for applications later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for drawdown between 2019 to 2021. In this regard, I was pleased to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9m.

With regard to the Galway to Dublin Greenway it is not possible at this stage to estimate how long it will take for it to be constructed. The development of the Greenway west of the Shannon was paused in 2015 to allow all stakeholders to reflect on the issues raised locally and to consider how best to progress this project, especially in terms of route selection and land-owner consultations.

With this in mind I recently requested TII and the Steering Group managing this project to look again at the route options report to see if a route can be identified that works locally and has the support of key landowners. While the work of TII and the Steering Group is ongoing I am not in a position to comment on either the timeframe or budget required to construct the greenway between Athlone and Galway.

Since 2015 progress has been made on other greenway projects, namely the sections of the Galway to Dublin Greenway in Kildare and Meath, and the opening of the Waterford Greenway. The high standard of accommodation works provided to adjacent landowners on the Waterford Greenway have demonstrated how measures can be put in place to significantly mitigate potential impacts on operational farm holders. The Waterford Greenway has also had a very significant economic impact on towns such as Kilmacthomas. I believe the same impact can be replicated in Roscommon and Galway and development of the Dublin-Greenway remains an objective for the Government.

### **Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries**

514. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to conduct a geophysical survey at a location (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26262/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy will be aware, Sean Ross Abbey Mother and Baby Home is one of the institutions currently being investigated by the statutory Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters. As part of its terms of reference the Commission is directed to investigate and to make a report on burial arrangements in respect of persons who died while resident in these institutions.

The Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 provides the Commission with significant powers in the conduct of its investigations. It is a matter for the independent Commission to determine the methodology and approach it employs in the course of its investigation.

Therefore, I have no plan to conduct a geophysical survey at the site of the former mother and baby home at Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, County Tipperary.

I await the outcome of the Commission's investigations.

### **Departmental Expenditure**



515. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26384/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information in respect of payments made to the company (details supplied) by my Department is set out in the following table.

Year	Amount €	Project Name
2016	€37,724.22	Print Media advertising campaign re Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters
2016	€24,043.75	Advertisement on the National Public Consultation on the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme
2017	€91,170.70	Media advertising campaign re Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters
2018	€83,113.34	Media advertising campaign re Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters

### Public Consultation Process

516. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of public consultations held by her Department or by a State agency under the remit of her Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26455/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Details of the number of public consultations, replies received and costs incurred from 2011 to date in 2018 by my Department are set out in the following table. The overall objective is to keep costs of this nature to a minimum.

As regards the State agencies under the remit of my Department, I have requested Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Oberstown Children Detention Campus to forward the requested information directly to the Deputy.

YEAR	CONSULTATION	No. of replies	COST
2011	National Children's Strategy 2012-2017	66705	€9,056.87
	DCYA Statement of Strategy	31	No cost
	Public Consultation for Scheme under the Official Languages Act	5	€1207.58
2012	Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC)	13611	€1,873.22
	Body Image Survey	2156	€17,548.42
	Being Young & Irish 2012	800	No cost to DCYA
2013	Consultations with Young People Living in the Care of the State	211	€13,383.83
	TACTIC	211	€7,626.49
	Young People and the Gardaí	361	€2,401.15
	A Study of the Experiences of Pupils with Special Educational Needs at Post Primary School	270	No cost to DCYA
2014	Terms of reference of proposed Commission of Investigation into Mother & Baby Homes	160	No cost
	Structured Dialogue – Trio Presidency: Ireland-Lithuania-Greece	712	€12,889.78

Questions - Written Answers

YEAR	CONSULTATION	No. of replies	COST
	Consultation with Children – Empowering the Voice of the Child	Exact figure not available	€510.00
	National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020	66700	€3,075.00
2015	Public Consultation on GAL Reform	26	No cost
	AIM: Access & Inclusion Consultation	62	No cost
	National Youth Strategy Consultation	200	€27,414.03
	Universal Periodic Review	3930	No cost to DCYA
	DCYA Statement of Strategy	20	No cost
2016	Public Consultation on the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme	4106	€28013.60
	DCYA Statement of Strategy	7	No cost
2017	Mother & Baby Homes facilitated meeting (Dublin)	100	€24,977.41
	Mother & Baby Homes facilitated meeting (Cork)	28	€8,110.90
	Written Consultation on the review of CCA 1991	39	No cost
	Open Policy Debate on the review of the Child Care Act 1991	82	€10,402.00
	Public Consultation on Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures DCYA website survey	32	No cost
	LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy	3998	€135,000.00
	Design of targeted youth funding scheme	731	€19,334.15
	So, how was school today?	3242	€40,678.41
2018	Mother & Baby Homes expressions of interest in collaborative forum	89	€543.90
	Stakeholder engagement on outline of a new youth funding scheme in line with recommendations of the Value for Money Policy Review	125	€592.50
	Public Consultation on measuring outcomes for young people engaged with youth services	In Progress	In Progress

### Home Schooling

517. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children awaiting a Tusla inspection for home schooling by county; the number of children awaiting an appointment for more than six, 12, 18 and 24 months, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26496/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Educational Welfare Service of Tusla has informed my Department that as of 31st May 2018 there are 261 children awaiting an appointment for preliminary assessment for admission to the register of children receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school. 217 of these children are waiting less than 6 months while 42 are waiting more than 6 months. 2 children have been waiting more than 12 months while no child has been waiting more than 18 months for an assessment.

The following spreadsheet contains the information requested by the Deputy.

#### **Tusla Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service**

#### **Home Education - Children awaiting an appointment for preliminary assessment**

19 June 2018

By County	31/05/2018	Less than 6 Months	More than 6 months	More than 12 months	More than 18 months	More than 24 Months
Carlow	3	2	1			
Cavan	2	1	1			
Clare	8	4	4			
Cork	37	30	7			
Donegal	14	11	2	1		
Dublin	45	34	10	1		
Galway	13	13				
Kerry	12	9	3			
Kildare	7	7				
Kilkenny	1	1				
Laois	3	2	1			
Leitrim	2	1	1			
Limerick	13	12	1			
Longford	2	1	1			
Louth	9	7	2			
Mayo	18	17	1			
Meath	7	7				
Monaghan	4	4				
Offaly	2	2				
Roscommon	2	2				
Sligo	5	4	1			
Tipperary	6	6				
Waterford	9	8	1			
Westmeath	5	5				
Wexford	15	14	1			
Wicklow	17	13	4			
Totals	261	217	42	2	0	0

**Home Education - Children awaiting an appointment for comprehensive assessment**

By County	31/05/2018	Less than 6 Months	More than 6 months	More than 12 months	More than 18 months	More than 24 Months
Cork	1	1				
Kerry	1		1			
Laois	1		1			
Limerick	1	1				
Westmeath	4	4				
Wexford	2			2		
Totals	10	6	2	2	0	0

**Registered Children Awaiting Review**

Awaiting Priority review - 89

Awaiting review - 466

518. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding the ECCE year. [26613/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In the first instance I would like to inform the Deputy that officials from my Department have written to the parent on this matter.

The ECCE programme began in 2010 as a one-year (38 week) free pre-school programme for all children aged 3 years and 2 months on or before 31st August of the programme year as long as they would not turn 5 years and 6 months during that programme year.

In 2016, the programme was expanded by reducing the age of eligibility to 3 years, thus increasing the number of weeks of pre-school to an average of 61 weeks for eligible children.

I announced further changes to ECCE eligibility in Budget 2018 where the lower age will be further reduced to 2 years and 8 months. The upper age limit has remained the same through all these changes and has been set at 5 years and 6 months in conjunction with the Early Years Policy Unit in the Department of Education and Skills to limit the age range of children commencing primary school education.

It must be noted that exceptions to the upper age limit are made only in cases where a child has special needs and an application for such an exemption must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from the child's specialist.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Data**

519. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children participating in Early Childhood Care and Education, ECCE, scheme; and the number of childcare services offering the scheme. [26660/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** A total of 115,581 children (i.e. unique child registrations) were participating in ECCE on 14th June 2018 and a total of 4,214 childcare services had signed contracts offering ECCE on that date.

### **Commencement of Legislation**

520. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 496 of 12 June 2018, if all sections of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, which incorporated the provisions of Part 11 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, have now been commenced; if not, the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26798/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Part 11 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 provided for the adoption of a child by civil partners and cohabiting couples. The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 repealed Part 11 of that Act. The relevant sections (amended as necessary) from Part 11 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 were then brought forward into the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017.

The Minister signed the Commencement Order to give effect to the provisions in the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 last year. These provisions were commenced on the 19th of October 2017.

## Departmental Schemes

521. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the roll out of a specific scheme (details supplied). [26248/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The scheme referred to by the Deputy is currently being developed as part of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by my Department.

I have established a Steering Group to oversee the design and delivery of the scheme on a pilot basis. The Steering Group is chaired by my Department, and involves a number of other key Departments and agencies, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Finance, and the County and City Management Association which provides representation from the Local Authority sector.

Work in relation to developing the pilot scheme is ongoing and I expect that substantial progress will be made in developing the pilot over the coming months. It is envisaged that the scheme will be piloted in a small number of towns initially, with a view to a wider roll-out over time if the pilot is successful.

## Departmental Expenditure

522. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26396/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established on 19 July 2017, and since that date has paid the following amounts to the company in question:

2017 to-date:

- Advertising the Public Consultation process on the Department’s Statement of Strategy (2017-2020): €1,687.82

- Advertising the Public Consultation process on the Department’s Library Strategy: €11,024.00

## CLÁR Programme

523. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when an announcement will issue regarding CLÁR funding applications; if an application by a school (details supplied) will be supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26400/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme on 15th March last, with an indicative allocation of €5 million for qualifying projects under the following measures:



Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas/Multi-Use Games Areas

Measure 3: First Response Support Measure

The closing date for CLÁR 2018 was 30th April and, in total, more than 400 applications were received by my Department under the programme. I can confirm that an application has been received in respect of the school referred to by the Deputy.

My officials are currently assessing all applications received under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful 2018 CLÁR projects shortly.

### Public Consultation Process

524. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26467/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The table following contains the relevant information regarding the number of public consultations held by my Department since its establishment on 19 July 2017, and for three of the four State agencies under the remit of the Department.

In relation to Pobal, the information is currently being collated and will be forwarded separately.

The costs referred to relate to advertising costs only, other work relating to the processes was carried out by Departmental and Agency staff.

	Number of Replies Received	Cost of Consultation
Public consultations held by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)		
2017 DRCD consultation on the Statement of Strategy 2017-2020	41	€1687.82
2018 Consultation on new Library Strategy, Our Public Libraries 2018-2022	200	€11,024
Public consultations held by agencies under the remit of my Department.		
2016 Consultation on Guidelines for Charitable Fundraising(Charities Regulator)	450	€1,270
2017 Consultation on the Governance of Charitable Organisations (November – December 2017)(Charities Regulator)	1,193	€1,170

### CLÁR Programme

525. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of playgrounds which have been funded under the CLÁR programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26787/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** CLÁR provides funding for small scale capital projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of depopulation. The programme, which has a budget of €5 million this year, forms part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and will continue to support investments such as play areas for children, traffic calming measures around schools, and support for emergency responders.

A modest investment under the CLÁR scheme, such as the provision of a playground or play area, can have a significant impact on a rural community.

Funding for playgrounds and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) was provided under Measure 2 of the Programme in 2016 and 2017, with funding of €1,752,496 and €2,207,676 approved for these types of projects in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

The following table provides details of projects which have been supported under Measure 2 of CLÁR in each of these years:

#### **Play Areas, Enhancement & MUGAS 2016 & 2017**

YEAR	New Play areas	Enhancement/Improvement Works to Play Areas	MUGA's	Total Approved Measure 2 Projects
2016	15	41	1	57
2017	28	28	7	63
Total	43	69	8	120

Details of approved projects can be found on my Department's website – [www.drcd.gov.ie](http://www.drcd.gov.ie).

The 2018 CLÁR programme was launched in March this year and once again includes a measure to develop play areas and MUGAs. Applications for funding under CLÁR 2018 are currently being assessed by my officials and I hope to be in a position to announce details of the successful applicants shortly.

#### **Disability Allowance Data**

526. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications for disability allowance received in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and the number of applications which were approved and refused, respectively. [26191/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The breakdown following relates to the total number of applications received and decided for the period concerned. The number of disability allowance (DA) claims awarded includes all claims awarded at initial application stage, at review stage and on appeal.

#### **Breakdown of DA claims received and decisions**

Disability Allowance		2016	2017	2018 to end of May
Received		23,804	23,657	9,869
Awarded		16,669	17,469	7,118
Disallowed		12,027*	12,022*	5,364*

\*The number of cases disallowed includes some claims also recorded as awarded in the above table where those cases were subsequently allowed following review or appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Social Welfare Benefits Waiting Times

527. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the average time for payments to be awarded as of 1 June 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26202/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The information (where available) requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

Average Weeks to Award	May 2018
State Pension Contributory	6
State Pension Non-Contributory	13
Jobseeker's Benefit	1
Jobseeker's Allowance	2
One-Parent Family Payment	5
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	4
Maternity Benefit	6
Paternity Benefit	6
Disability Allowance	13
Illness Benefit	1
Invalidity Pension	7
Carer's Allowance	15
Child Benefit (Domestic & FRA)	4
Working Family Payment (New Claims)	2
Household Benefits	1
Free Travel	1
Domiciliary Care Allowance	9
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	1

### Disability Allowance Applications

528. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application under the habitual residency clause in the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26212/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 18 April 2017. Her application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on habitual residency as she was not found to be habitually resident in the state. The person concerned appealed to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) the decision by a deciding officer to disallow her application for DA.

Following due consideration, the appeal of the person in question was disallowed by an appeals officer (AO) on 11 May 2018 and she was notified of this decision in writing on the same date.

An AO's decision is final and conclusive in absence of any fresh facts or evidence. It is open to the person in question to reapply for DA.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Applications**

529. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to reform the social welfare forms in relation to workplace injuries in order to take account of scenarios in which a person is out of work as a result of bullying and harassment at work. [26249/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** New illness and injury benefit claim forms will issue to GPs by the end of July this year. Part 7 of the form contains questions regarding entitlement to injury benefit. One of the questions refers to whether the illness or injury was caused by an accident or incident at work. This is an open question as it must cover all scenarios that could take place in the workplace. Instances of bullying and harassment which lead to absence for work due to illness can be included in this section.

### **Exceptional Needs Payment Applications**

530. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an exceptional needs payment will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26257/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As advised in the reply to Question No. 1224 of 12 June 2018, the person concerned was awarded an interim payment of supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) following the withdrawal of her widow's pension on grounds of cohabitation. The SWA payment was awarded as an interim payment while the person was awaiting a decision on an appeal against the disallowance of their Pension and was advised that a negative decision on the appeal would result in discontinuation of the SWA payment.

On 27th April, 2018 the Social Welfare Appeals Office advised the appellant of their decision to uphold the disallowance of widow's pension. Accordingly, the SWA payment was suspended on 10th May, 2018.

The purpose of an exceptional needs payment (ENP) is to assist people with once-off expenditure which is exceptional and unforeseen and cannot be met from any other source, and given the circumstances of the case, they could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their normal weekly income.

ENPs are not intended to cater for expenses which are of a predictable and recurring nature or to replace a weekly income.

If the person concerned feels that she meets the qualifying criteria for receipt on an ENP, it is open to her to submit an application to the community welfare service where her circumstances will be assessed and a decision made accordingly.

If there have been any changes in her circumstances, the person concerned should submit a new claim for widow's pension or supplementary welfare allowance.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Public Services Card**

531. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26269/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A person's date of birth is verified during the SAFE registration process which results in a Public Services Card (PSC) being issued. It is not, however, inscribed on the card.

In many instances, holders of the PSC have expressed an interest in having their date of birth inscribed on the card in order to access certain services. To address this, one provision contained in Section 5 of the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 would, if enacted, provide that the cardholder's date of birth be inscribed on the PSC. This would only occur in circumstances where the cardholder wished to do so and with their consent. This measure is intended to permit the PSC to be used as a means of verifying age.

This measure would be very beneficial to holders of the PSC, in particular those that do not hold a driving licence or passport. One of the main benefits of the PSC is that it is free of charge compared to other State produced documents used for identity purposes.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Springboard Programme**

532. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection why, when persons are assessed as being long-term unemployed with respect to JobPath, having completed a Springboard programme, they are excluded from eligibility for a conversion course due to the fact they are not deemed to be long-term unemployed; her plans to make changes in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26272/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Springboard+ is a specific initiative that strategically targets funding of free higher education courses for jobseekers in areas where there are identified labour market skills shortages or employment opportunities. Courses to date have been delivered in areas such ICT, Manufacturing which includes the biopharma sector, Construction, Entrepreneurship, Cross-Enterprise Skills, the Hospitality Sector and International Financial Services.

In order to participate in a Springboard course as laid out by the Higher Education Authority, participants must be unemployed. Participants on ICT Conversion Courses are not required to be unemployed. However, in order to receive income support/credits participants of all courses must qualify for Back to Education Allowance for full-time courses of study.

JobPath is an activation service for Jobseekers. JobPath does not interrupt duration on Jobseekers payment and participants are permitted to be considered for conversion courses such as Springboard.

For customers of this Department a qualifying period of 9 months (234 days) is required for full-time Springboard+ third level courses under BTEA. If a person in receipt of a jobseekers payment or engaged in activation receives an offer of a place on a full-time Springboard+

course, they should attend their Local Intreo /Social Welfare Office or Branch Office to complete an application to retain their payment via the Back to Education Allowance prior to starting the course.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Programmes**

533. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications for funding that were received for the Ability Programme by county; the number of applications that were approved for each county; the amount of funding allocated by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26277/18]

534. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications received from County Donegal for funding under the Ability Programme; the reason such applications were not supported; if she will revise her decision and allocate funding to County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26280/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 533 and 534 together.

The ‘Ability’ programme is a new pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities. The 27 projects to be funded will provide supports and assistance to more than 2,600 young people with disabilities aged between 15 to 29 years old. The programme will promote employment prospects and meaningful social roles for young people with disabilities and in particular, young people who are distant from the labour market, using a range of person-centred supports.

The initiative is being co-funded by the Exchequer and the EU (under the European Social Fund, as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020) which demonstrates the commitment, at both a Governmental and EU level, to supporting and assisting young people with disabilities to achieve their individual employment and other goals.

Pobal have been contracted by DEASP to manage the programme including the application and evaluation process. Details of the application process are available on Pobal’s website (under “Useful Links”) at <https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/Ability%20Programme/Pages/Ability%20Programme.aspx>

As part of the application process, Pobal undertook an extensive information campaign (including information events held in Cavan, Dublin and Limerick) and a facility to address questions that potential applicants might have about the process.

Pobal received 59 applications which were assessed in detail and made recommendations for funding for 27 applications to the total value of €15,615,690 over three years. At the time of the launch of the measure, it was expected that funding for the programme would amount to some €10 million over a three year period. However, given the number and quality of the proposals received, enhanced funding arrangements have been put in place of €16 million to support all 27 projects recommended for funding by Pobal. When account is taken of costs associated with administration and evaluation of the programme, total programme cost over its entire lifetime is expected to be in excess of €16 million.

Summary of statistics related to number of applications, number of successful applications and financial allocation by county are shown in Table 1.



**Table 1: Ability programme – applications, recommendations and funding by county**

County	Number of Applications received	Applications recommended for funding	Recommended funding by county
Carlow	1	0	N/A
Cavan	1	0	N/A
Clare	1	0	N/A
Cork	5	3	€1,929,042
Donegal	1	0	N/A
Down	1	0	N/A
Dublin	24	13	€8,007,900
Galway	3	1	€724,583
Kerry	2	1	€531,176
Kildare	3	1	€264,421
Kilkenny	2	0	N/A
Leitrim	1	0	N/A
Limerick	1	1	€514,776
Louth	1	0	N/A
Mayo	2	0	N/A
Offaly	1	1	€570,853
Roscommon	1	1	€633,919
Sligo	1	0	N/A
Tipperary	3	3	€1,240,655
Waterford	1	0	N/A
Westmeath	1	0	N/A
Wexford	2	2	€1,198,365
Total	59	27	€15,615,690

Recommendations as to which applications should receive funding were based on a detailed and independent assessment process undertaken by Pobal. Pobal awarded scores (out of 100) for all applications, with scores being assigned to each proposal based on a weighted marking system linked with the schemes evaluation criteria as follows:

- Meeting the programme/ measure priorities (40%)
- Need for the proposal (20%)
- Capacity of the organisation (20%)
- Value for money (20%)

The assessment process was based on the materials provided by the applicant as to how they proposed to address the objectives of the scheme in line with the award criteria, as set out above. This process was based entirely on the quality of the application and this applied irrespective of where the application originated. Only projects receiving a score of 60 or above were deemed by Pobal to be of sufficiently high standard to be recommended for funding.

On this basis, Pobal recommended 27 projects as being suitable for funding; this represents some 46% of the proposals received. These recommendations were accepted as they were made by Pobal on the basis of the above objective criteria only, which were communicated to all applicants equally as part of the information campaign and programme materials.

One application was received from Co. Donegal. It was not recommended for funding as it received a score of less than 60.

Decisions as to funding were based entirely on the assessment and on the recommendation coming from the Pobal assessment process. Neither I, Minister Doherty nor the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection had any role to play in deciding on individual recommendations under this completely independent assessment process. Therefore the question of the application being supported by the Minister or otherwise did not arise.

It is important to note that Pobal has put in place an appeals procedure for applicants who feel that decisions taken and procedures followed by Pobal in relation to its administration of funding applications was not applied fairly or consistently. Details of the procedure are on Pobal's website (under "Useful Links") at: <https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/Ability%20Programme/Pages/Ability%20Programme.aspx>

It is also important to note that while some of the successful applications came from organisations that are headquartered or based in particular locations, some of the projects will be providing services beyond that county in which they are based, and in some cases providing services across the country.

It is also important to acknowledge that even though support has not been allocated to specific counties under the Ability programme, the DEASP and other agencies provide a range of supports throughout the country. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection continues through its nationwide network of Intreo offices and through the EmployAbility service (a specialist service that has been designed to support people with disabilities – which is delivered on behalf of the department by 23 companies located around the country) to offer a full range of supports and services to people with disabilities who wish to pursue their employment ambitions.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

### **Tús Programme**

535. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend the duration of Tús schemes beyond one year; and if the number of persons that find employment in the period after completing Tús schemes is recorded. [26361/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As the Deputy will be aware, my Department provides a range of activation supports catering for long-term unemployed jobseekers and those most distant from the labour market. Tús provides part-time temporary work in local communities, as a stepping stone back to employment. The objective of the scheme is to break the cycle of unemployment and maintain work readiness, thereby improving a person's opportunities in returning to the labour market. I can confirm that 42.4% of those that participated in Tús in the last 12 months are no longer on the Live Register.

All participants and community groups are aware of the time limits for participation on these schemes. The twelve month duration of the Tús contract is set to reflect a number of inter-related elements. These include the need to ensure the benefit of participation on a work scheme is available to the widest possible number of jobseekers and that weaknesses identified in other work programmes with longer duration placements are not replicated in Tús. There are no circumstances under which a person's term on Tús will be extended beyond twelve months and it is not in the interest of any participant that such work placements extend for prolonged periods of time. Accordingly, there are no plans to extend the Tús scheme to longer than 12

months duration.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

536. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision on a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied) will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26376/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 2 May 2018. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 20 June 2018.

Arrears of payment due have issued to this gentleman.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Appeals**

537. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and when they can expect a decision on their case. [26381/18]

**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 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.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

538. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26389/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A breakdown of all payments to Mediavest for the years 2016 and 2017 is set out in the following table. Expenditure was on routine newspaper advertising such as public notifications of permanent or temporary office closures, relocations or recruitment to branch offices, and customer job events.

Company	Project Description	Date	Amount (Incl. VAT)
Mediavest Ltd	Advertising Christmas & New Year Opening Times	19/02/2016	€5,597.54
Mediavest Ltd	Jobs Week, 28 September to 2 October 2015, in Killarney, Co. Kerry	26/02/2016	€2,650.61
Mediavest Ltd	Vacancy for Manager of Social Welfare Branch Office, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo	26/02/2016	€3,444.50
Mediavest Ltd	Print advertising	17/05/2016	€3,138.16
		Total for 2016:	€14,830.81
Company	Description	Date	Amount (Incl. VAT)
Mediavest Ltd	Joint Advertisement: DSP and Revenue	28/02/2017	€5,716.02
Mediavest Ltd	Advertising Intreo Careers Fair - Dublin Castle	03/03/2017	€2,540.82
Mediavest Ltd	Vacancy for Manager of Department of Social Protection Branch Office - Macroom Co. Cork	03/03/2017	€5,046.95
Mediavest Ltd	Closure of Macroom Branch Office	24/04/2017	€6,585.45
Mediavest Ltd	Print Advertisement - Macroom Branch Officer Ad Re-run	06/11/2017	€10,194.15
Mediavest Ltd	Jobsweek 2017 - Regional Print Ads	30/11/2017	€2,893.98
		Total for 2017:	€32,977.37

### Carer's Allowance Applications

539. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied). [26412/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 16 May 2017.

As the applicant is self-employed, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 28 July 2017 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Public Consultation Process

540. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of public consultations held by her Department or by a State agency under the remit of her Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26460/18]

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

information requested is currently being compiled by my Department and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Applications**

541. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to instances in which resignation letters are automatically drafted on software (details supplied) and issued to clients of a company indicating that the client has refused and/or declined an extended period of probation in employment; if these persons can be sanctioned in the context of reduced payments for declined extended probation periods in view of the fact that the persons may have met or exceeded all that was required of them in the work placement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26476/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** In this case the customer submitted an application for Jobseekers Allowance on the 2/5/18. The customer was previously in full time employment but left the employment on the 1/5/18 following a probationary period of 3 months. The customer stated in the application the reason the employment ended was because the probationary period of employment was unsuccessful. The employer offered the customer an extended employment period of 3 months following the probationary period but the customer did not accept this offer and informed the employer he would leave the company. The employer offered to reinstate the customer's employment but the customer did not reply to the employer's offer.

The regulations state that persons may be subject to a disqualification period on Jobseekers Allowance as determined by a Deciding Officer, but in any case not exceeding 9 weeks, in certain circumstances.

For example

- Refusal of offer of suitable employment
- Loss of employment because of wilful misconduct
- Leaving employment voluntarily without just cause
- Refusal or Failure to Engage with Activation Measures where penalty rate applied

It is at the discretion of the Deciding Officer whether to apply a disqualification period based on the information provided by the customer and also taking into account information supplied by the employer. In this case a decision was made that a disqualification period of 5 weeks was appropriate and in line with current legislation and guidelines.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **JobPath Programme**

542. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) had to complete the same JobPath programme twice and was not allowed a 12 month break after their most recent employment in March 2018; if the matter will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26491/18]

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

the Deputy will know the JobPath activation service is to help long-term unemployed jobseekers find sustainable full time work. The duration of a person's jobseekers claim is recorded in terms of days of unemployment, any two such periods not separated by more than 52 weeks are considered to be the same continuous period of unemployment – this is known as linking the claims. Long-term jobseekers that have left the live register to go into employment for less than a year are still considered to be long-term if they reopen their claim within that 52 week period. The linking of claims allows the client to retain certain entitlements (for example no waiting days and other supplemental benefits), it also ensures they are also available for selection for activation services including JobPath as it is a priority of my Department to ensure that all Jobseekers receive support in returning to the workforce in a most timely and efficient manner as possible

In the case mentioned, the person concerned engaged with the JobPath service up to August 2017 and shortly afterwards was successful in finding a temporary position for 5 months before returning to the live register where they were again eligible for selection for receipt of activation support and the person was randomly selected for referral to the JobPath service in March 2018.

For this person in common with other jobseekers who are referred to the JobPath service after short periods of employment, the one to one case managed service will provide the support and assistance necessary to build on skills gained in the employment; to reconsider employment preferences if necessary and ensure that the work experience and other relevant information is factored into all future job applications.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Household Benefits Scheme**

543. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to expand the household benefits package qualifying criteria to include those under 66 years of age in receipt of a widow's or widower's contributory or non-contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26515/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The household benefits package (HHB) comprises the electricity or gas allowance, and the free television licence. My Department will spend approximately €237 million this year on HHB for over 437,000 customers.

The package is generally available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test. The package is also available to some people under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments. Therefore anyone aged less than 70 years of age must be in receipt of a qualifying payment from the Department or satisfy a means test in order to qualify for HHB.

People in receipt of HHB aged under 66 are generally in receipt of payments such as Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance or Carers. These payment types mean that the recipients are unable to work full time and earn additional income. This is not the case for people in receipt of widow's contributory payment who are aged less than 66. These recipients, who are of working age and generally are capable of work, may take up full-time employment, at any level of remuneration, without losing entitlement to their widow's contributory payment.

In general, widow's pension only becomes a qualifying payment for HHB once the recipient reaches the age of 66 (State pension age) to ensure alignment with secondary benefits that are



available to people in receipt of the State pension.

The concession whereby widows aged between 60 and 65 years, whose late spouse/civil partner received HHB from my Department, may qualify for the package was introduced at a time when State pension age was 65 and this cohort of widows were seen as significantly less likely to be in a position to take up employment than those of a younger age.

Any decision to extend the concession to widows aged less than 60 or to allow recipients of widow's pension of any age to qualify for HHB would have budgetary consequences and would have to be considered in the context of budget negotiations. It would also be necessary to consider whether they would be a priority group for the extension of such benefits ahead of other groups such as the unemployed or lone parents.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

544. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue on an application by a person (details supplied) for carer's allowance in view of the fact that the matter has been ongoing for some time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26517/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on the 18 January 2018.

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.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

As the applicant is a self-employed farmer, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 4 May 2018 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Enquiries by the SWI are continuing. Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Data**

545. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of claims for illness benefit and disability allowance that have been made and approved, respectively, in the two and a half year period since the introduction of JobPath in July 2015 to December 2017; and the comparison with the two and a half year period January 2013 to June 2015 prior to the introduction of JobPath. [26642/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

Disability Al- lowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Jan-17	1577	1385	Jan-17	20837	15774
Feb-17	2179	1469	Feb-17	17755	12755
Mar-17	2507	1552	Mar-17	18691	14943
Apr-17	1840	1065	Apr-17	14903	12089
May-17	2490	1721	May-17	19047	13732
Jun-17	1766	1900	Jun-17	17432	12598
Jul-17	1813	1713	Jul-17	16499	15379
Aug-17	2182	1627	Aug-17	16938	12730
Sep-17	1890	1299	Sep-17	16810	12859
Oct-17	1820	1278	Oct-17	17305	12860
Nov-17	2215	1436	Nov-17	19494	12746
Dec-17	1378	1024	Dec-17	13673	10565
Disability Al- lowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Jan-16	1634	1146	Jan-16	17616	13081
Feb-16	1936	1053	Feb-16	20509	14900
Mar-16	2155	1165	Mar-16	18438	12666
Apr-16	1986	1458	Apr-16	17813	14284
May-16	1941	1349	May-16	17257	13640
Jun-16	2203	1490	Jun-16	17155	12674
Jul-16	1837	1546	Jul-16	16374	12717
Aug-16	2126	1475	Aug-16	16739	12293
Sep-16	1973	1843	Sep-16	17769	12392
Oct-16	2155	1632	Oct-16	16990	13591
Nov-16	2471	1483	Nov-16	18561	14105
Dec-16	1387	1029	Dec-16	14464	9810
Disability Al- lowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Jan-15	1594	1181	Jan-15	19944	13501
Feb-15	1913	1476	Feb-15	18844	13614
Mar-15	1745	1455	Mar-15	18947	13853
Apr-15	1663	1301	Apr-15	17485	13061
May-15	2277	1361	May-15	16275	12395
Jun-15	1872	1089	Jun-15	17591	12555
Jul-15	2312	1291	Jul-15	17996	13738
Aug-15	1590	1198	Aug-15	14585	11301
Sep-15	2246	1378	Sep-15	17645	12324
Oct-15	1737	1464	Oct-15	17679	12747
Nov-15	1976	1429	Nov-15	17779	14206
Dec-15	1613	1191	Dec-15	14980	11397
Disability Al- lowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Jan-14	1435	1176	Jan-14	24057	17688

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Disability Allowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Feb-14	1897	1044	Feb-14	22716	15334
Mar-14	1616	900	Mar-14	21296	15597
Apr-14	948	1072	Apr-14	18966	13295
May-14	2332	1077	May-14	18426	13951
Jun-14	1125	1134	Jun-14	16970	11512
Jul-14	1588	1487	Jul-14	18302	13754
Aug-14	2135	1466	Aug-14	15269	11096
Sep-14	1927	1467	Sep-14	18419	13321
Oct-14	1485	1044	Oct-14	19203	13408
Nov-14	3141	885	Nov-14	17426	12604
Dec-14	1442	1124	Dec-14	15224	10627
Disability Allowance	Registered	Awarded	Illness Benefit	Registered	Awarded
Jan-13	1579	844	Jan-13	29932	25913
Feb-13	1614	773	Feb-13	27648	22879
Mar-13	1841	777	Mar-13	24678	22182
Apr-13	1732	621	Apr-13	26085	22200
May-13	2002	1089	May-13	24808	21258
Jun-13	1456	930	Jun-13	20890	18011
Jul-13	1547	997	Jul-13	23804	21123
Aug-13	1601	970	Aug-13	20491	16799
Sep-13	1863	1509	Sep-13	22251	18334
Oct-13	2362	1490	Oct-13	25735	21677
Nov-13	1894	1435	Nov-13	22708	20470
Dec-13	1047	1062	Dec-13	19022	14610

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

546. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application will be processed for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26683/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 28 May 2018.

The application is currently being examined by a deciding officer and once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Legislative Process**

547. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017. [26686/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 was examined at the Select Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection on 17 May 2018 and passed Committee Stage in Dáil Éireann on that date. Report Stage of the Bill in the Dáil is scheduled for 26 and 27 June.

The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is an important piece of legislation. It contains a range of measures designed to improve the security and predictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours. It aims to do this by:

- Providing that employees are better informed about their terms of employment, particularly their core terms at an early stage - this includes much greater clarity about the hours they will be expected to work in a normal working day and a normal working week.

- Improved compensation for low-paid employees called in to work but sent home without the expected work.

- Introducing a Banded Hours provision for employees whose contracts of employment do not reflect the reality of the hours they have worked consistently over a 12 month reference period.

- Stronger anti-penalisation provisions for employees where they seek to exercise their rights under the Bill.

I will continue to work with colleagues on all sides of the House to progress this Bill as expeditiously as possible so that we deliver legislation that is fair, balanced and that works in practice.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Applications**

548. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a full application form for rent supplement is required in the case of a person (details supplied) when they are currently in payment and had recently contacted the section to update their circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26777/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The purpose of Rent Supplement is to assist with reasonable accommodation costs of eligible persons living in private rented accommodation, where they are unable to provide for their accommodation costs from their own resources and do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. Rent Supplement claims are regularly reviewed to ensure there is an ongoing need for the payment and that the conditions of entitlement continue to be met.

All Rent Supplement claims in the South Kildare /West Wicklow area are currently in the process of being reviewed. As part of that review, there is a standard list of items requested from all claimants including form (SWA 3A) that a claimant is requested to complete to establish their current circumstances. It is expected that all Rent Supplement claims will be reviewed on an annual basis.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Eligibility**

549. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when carer's allowance will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26778/18]

**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 the person's means must be less than the statutory limit.

It is a further condition for receipt of payment that the carer must furnish such certificates, documents and information affecting their right to payment, that are requested by an officer of my department and the person concerned must notify the department of any change in circumstances which affect their right to payment.

During the course of a review of entitlement, it was discovered that the person concerned had not fully disclosed her means to the Department and to date she has not provided all the documentation that was requested from her by a social welfare inspector (SWI).

Accordingly, the deciding officer has decided that the person concerned is not entitled to CA.

The person concerned was notified on 14 March 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of appeal.

If the means of the person concerned are insufficient to meet her needs she should apply for a means-tested supplementary welfare allowance from her local community welfare service.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Applications**

550. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the grounds upon which no jobseeker's allowance payment issued to a person (details supplied) in the week commencing 11 June 2018; when payment will be restored in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26779/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned was in receipt of a jobseeker allowance claim up to 1/5/2018 at which time they secured employment. Upon termination of this employment the person concerned submitted an application for jobseeker allowance with effect from 28/5/18 and as part of this application was asked to provide evidence that employment had ceased. As an interim measure the person concerned was referred to the Community Welfare Officer who awarded a Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment. This is still in payment.

The jobseeker allowance claim was awarded but immediately suspended as the person concerned advised their local Intreo Centre they would be commencing a 7 week course with Kildare Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB) on 28/5/18. A form F103 was submitted by the person concerned confirming jobseeker allowance entitlement for the KWETB.

It is standard procedure when a customer commences a course of this length that their claim is suspended for the period of the course, as they receive payment from the relevant body. Following these representations, the Intreo Centre made contact with the KWETB and it appears that the person concerned did not commence the course. The person concerned should contact their Intreo Centre to clarify their current circumstances in order to have a jobseeker allowance payment re-instated.

I trust this clarifies this matter for the Deputy.

### **Legislative Measures**

551. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 496 of 12 June 2018, when the provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014, upon which the commencement of some sections of Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 are dependent will be commenced; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26799/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Sections 96 and 98 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 amend sections 6, 9 and 13 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014.

A number of amendments to civil registration legislation, including those referred to above, remain to be commenced pending the roll-out of training to staff of the Civil Registration Service who are employees of the HSE. The General Register Office is in a position to begin provision of training as soon as the HSE notifies it of the dates and venues. Discussions to commence the training are well advanced and it should hopefully commence shortly.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals**

552. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) regarding a refusal for a domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26834/18]

**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, 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.

### **Social Welfare Code**

553. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the supports in place for self-employed persons that have to stop work due to illness for a number of weeks or months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26859/18]



**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Self-employed persons are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4% which covers them for access to long-term benefits such as State pension (contributory) and widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory) as well as some treatment benefits, maternity and paternity benefit, adoptive benefit and guardians payment (contributory).

Self-employed contributors have been covered for invalidity pension since December 2017. This gives the self-employed access to a safety-net of income supports if they become permanently incapable of work as a result of a long-term illness or disability without a means test.

Class S contributions do not provide access to short-term social insurance benefits such as illness benefit. However, the means tested supplementary welfare allowance scheme may be available to those who are experiencing financial difficulty

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

### Social Welfare Appeals Data

554. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications for various social welfare payments that have been refused in each of the past five years to date; the number referred for appeal; the extent to which appeals overturned the original decisions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26901/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The number of refused applications, by scheme, for the past five years, and the number of appeals received in the same years, by outcome, are shown in the following tables.

#### Refused applications by scheme, 2013-2018

Scheme	Jan-May 2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Illness Benefit	20,445	44,709	46,118	50,083	61,165	37,615
Occupational Injury Benefit	1,050	2,019	1,682	1,470	1,832	1,061
Maternity Benefit	582	1,570	1,370	1,568	1,458	1,343
Paternity Benefit*	168	542	115	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child Benefit Domestic	346	674	801	682	549	623
Treatment Benefit	N/avail	16,863	17,728	23,495	24,719	27,333
Working Family Payment (New)	3,808	10,042	8,915	9,208	7,225	10,082
Working Family Payment (Renewals)	7,112	17,512	14,188	11,538	3,149	2,787
Carer's Allowance	3,802	8,599	11,144	7,920	7,078	9,881
Disability Allowance	5,364	12,022	12,027	14,800	12,621	14,691
Invalidity Pension	1,938	4,579	3,909	5,070	5,496	8,546
State Pension Contributory (Irish)	3,682	9,442	9,051	9,099	7,404	6,991

Scheme	Jan-May 2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Widow(er's) Contributory Pension	476	1,240	1,436	1,361	1,250	1,263
State Pension Non-Contributory	872	2,139	2,332	2,188	2,350	2351
Living Alone/ Island Allowance	679	1,347	1,557	1,403	1,406	1,245
Free Travel	1,055	2,193	2,552	2,103	2,447	2,268
Domiciliary Care Allowance	896	2,187	1,683	2,102	2,024	2,442
Household Benefits	6,997	18,030	16,806	17,282	14,459	16,030
Supplementary Welfare Allowance Total	3,011	19,043	18,673	18,741	22,116	26,265
Of which, Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance	1,120	2819	2,693	2,671	2,850	3,413

\*Paternity Benefit introduced on 1 September 2016

### Appeals received and Outcome Decisions of Appeals Finalised (2013 – 2018)

	Appeal Receipts	Appeals Finalised	Favourable Decisions	Appeals Disallowed	Withdrawn
2013	32,777	38,421	21,139	14,985	2,297
2014	26,069	31,211	17,636	11,751	1,824
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

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.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Data**

555. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the longest and shortest waiting times recorded in dealing with appeals in each of the past five years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26902/18]

558. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she can take to ensure the time taken to deal with appeals is kept to a minimum, having particular regard to the hardship caused to those awaiting decisions over long periods which in some cases result in homelessness and desperation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26905/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 555 and 558 together.

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. Nevertheless, the Department is concerned that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

The average processing times for all appeals determined by Appeals Officers from 2013 to 2017 and to the end of May 2018 broken down by all social welfare scheme types are set out in the tables.

The Deputy will be aware that these times are averages only. Some straightforward appeals may take much less time than the average to be determined, while others can take considerably longer depending, for example, on the type and complexity of the case and whether an oral hearing is required.

In cases where new evidence is provided with an appeal the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person without the need for the case to be referred to an Appeals Officer.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects a number of factors including that the appeals process is a quasi-judicial process with appeal officers being required to decide all appeals on a 'de-novo' basis. In addition, appeals decisions are themselves subject to review by the higher courts and decisions have to be formally written up to quasi-judicial standards.

Other factors that influence appeals processing times include the quality of the initial decision – in this respect the Department has changed the decisions process in respect of medical schemes, in order to provide more information to the claimant. I expect that this will help to reduce the number of appeals over time.

Significant efforts and resources have been devoted to reforming the appeal process in recent years. As a result, appeal processing times improved between 2011 and 2017 from 52.5

weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 26.4 weeks in 2017 and from 25.1 weeks for a summary decision in 2011 to 19.8 weeks in 2017. The most recent figures to the end of May 2018 are 30 weeks for an oral hearing and 24.6 weeks for a summary decision.

A number of new Appeals Officers have joined the Appeals Office over the past year to replace staff leaving on retirement. Given the complexity of the appeals process it takes some time for new staff to be trained up and develop expertise and this has led to somewhat longer processing times during this period. The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times will continue to be a priority for her office.

Finally, it should be noted that an appellant can claim supplementary welfare allowance pending the outcome of their appeal and that any favourable decisions are backdated to the original date of the claim.

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	34.2	-
Blind Pension	24.6	16.1
Carers Allowance	27.9	33.5
Carers Benefit	22.5	27.4
Child Benefit	28.8	37.7
Disability Allowance	29.0	36.2
Illness Benefit	37.4	43.3
Domiciliary Care	27.6	34.4
Deserted Wives Benefit	31.6	26.1
Deserted Wives Allowance	12.2	-
Farm Assist	23.0	28.2
Bereavement Grant	26.7	12.4
Family Income Supplement	30.7	41.0
Homemaker	19.0	-
Invalidity Pension	35.0	42.5
Liabile Relatives	30.1	42.9
One Parent Family Payment	29.4	38.3
Maternity Benefit	28.4	50.0
Partial Capacity Benefit	39.2	38.1
State Pension (Contributory)	26.4	44.5
State Pension (Non-Cont)	26.8	41.9
State Pension (Transition)	23.7	43.2
Occupational Injury Benefit	36.1	54.1
Disablement Pension	30.7	36.9
Incapacity Supplement	25.8	60.8
Guardian's Payment (Con)	21.9	44.9
Guardian's Payment (Non-con)	45.5	27.5
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	21.2	29.7
Jobseeker's Allowance	20.5	26.7
Jobseeker's Benefit	21.1	28.9
Jobseeker's Fraud Control	17.6	101.8
Respite Care Grant	28.6	33.1
Insurability of Employment	35.8	78.4
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	17.1	24.1

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Treatment Benefits	27.7	-
Survivor's Pension (Con)	26.4	39.2
Survivor's Pension (Non-Con)	28.0	38.5
Widowed Parent Grant	26.3	-
All Appeals	25.8	33.9

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	17.1	-
Blind Pension	20.5	24.9
Carers Allowance	30.1	34.4
Carers Benefit	22.9	23.1
Child Benefit	23.8	32.9
Disability Allowance	20.8	26.7
Illness Benefit	29.5	34.8
Domiciliary Care Allowance	22.6	29.1
Deserted Wives Benefit	-	64.7
Deserted Wives Allowance	-	41.8
Farm Assist	23.2	28.3
Bereavement Grant	25.6	31.9
Family Income Supplement	26.0	32.6
Invalidity Pension	25.9	31.2
Liable Relatives	21.5	33.2
One Parent Family Payment	24.4	33.5
Maternity Benefit	22.4	44.7
Partial Capacity Benefit	48.5	48.5
State Pension (Contributory)	25.2	41.9
State Pension (Non-Cont)	20.3	29.4
State Pension (Transition)	27.0	35.1
Occupational Injury Benefit	33.6	33.7
Disablement Pension	23.6	30.6
Occupational Injury Benefit (Medical)	-	53.9
Incapacity Supplement	21.5	59.6
Guardian's Payment (Con)	25.9	24.9
Guardian's Payment (Non-con)	19.7	30.3
Pre Retirement Allowance	17.3	-
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	18.1	27.5
Jobseeker's Allowance	16.2	21.1
JA/JB Fraud Control	12.1	-
Jobseeker's Benefit	16.7	21.1
Treatment Benefit	20.8	-
Respite Care Grant	24.9	27.1
Insurability of Employment	45.0	62.3
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	14.4	22.1
Survivor's Pension (Con)	20.2	32.5
Survivor's Pension (Non-Con)	24.7	24.6
Widowed Parent Grant	22.2	-
All Appeals	21.1	28.6

**Appeals processing times by scheme 01/01/2015 – 31/12/2015**

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	21.1	30.7
Carers Allowance	20.6	25.9
Carers Benefit	19.7	21.8
Child Benefit	24.8	34.7
Disability Allowance	15.8	21.4
Illness Benefit	26.3	33.1
Partial Capacity Benefit	25.7	43.4
Domiciliary Care Allowance	21.7	28.7
Deserted Wives Benefit	19.7	26.2
Deserted Wives Allowance	-	16.2
Farm Assist	21.0	28.6
Bereavement Grant	65.7	26.0
Death Benefit (Pension)	-	22.6
Family Income Supplement	19.4	27.7
Invalidity Pension	26.2	28.4
Liabile Relatives	22.8	31.2
Maternity Benefit	22.6	17.5
One Parent Family Payment	22.9	33.9
State Pension (Contributory)	26.0	46.0
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	20.4	30.8
State Pension (Transition)	80.1	53.4
Occupational Injury Benefit	20.3	35.0
Disablement Pension	23.7	35.3
Incapacity Supplement	41.2	51.5
Guardian's Payment (Con)	18.2	27.5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	18.7	31.0
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	15.8	26.0
Jobseeker's Allowance	15.2	21.9
JA/JB Fraud Control	-	46.1
BTW Family Dividend	14.1	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	12.9	21.3
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	21.0	30.3
Jobseeker's Benefit	14.3	21.2
Pre-Retirement Allowance	15.0	-
Treatment Benefit	17.9	-
Carer's Support Grant *	21.2	23.6
Insurability of Employment	47.6	69.4
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	13.1	23.5
Survivor's Pension (Con)	24.1	46.6
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	23.7	38.3
Widows Parent Grant	18.4	-
All Appeals	18.1	25.5

\* Previously called Respite Care Grant



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-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	18.2	33.8
Carers Allowance	17.6	21.6
Carers Benefit	20.7	22.4
Child Benefit	22.1	38.2
Disability Allowance	14.6	20.1
Illness Benefit	27.2	34.3
Partial Capacity Benefit	27.3	33.6
Domiciliary Care Allowance	24.3	30.6
Deserted Wives Benefit	13.0	32.8
Farm Assist	21.9	26.0
Bereavement Grant	23.1	-
Death Benefit (Pension)	19.7	-
Liable Relatives	14.0	16.9
Family Income Supplement	20.4	25.5
Invalidity Pension	21.3	28.2
Maternity Benefit	18.9	21.7
One Parent Family Payment	21.7	31.9
State Pension (Contributory)	25.6	45.9
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	22.7	32.9
State Pension (Transition)	67.7	61.3
Occupational Injury Benefit	25.0	31.9
Disablement Pension	25.8	26.8
Incapacity Supplement	27.7	50.9
Guardian's Payment (Con)	15.8	24.5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	18.4	23.3
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	16.7	25.5
Jobseeker's Allowance	16.0	20.9
BTW Family Dividend	21.0	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	19.0	22.3
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	32.5	31.6
Jobseeker's Benefit	16.0	27.2
Treatment Benefit	17.1	-
Carer's Support Grant *	18.1	23.3
Insurability of Employment	36.6	85.7
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	15.0	24.1
Survivor's Pension (Con)	16.6	28.8
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	18.4	23.4
Widows Parent Grant	23.5	63.8
All Appeals	17.6	24.1

\* Previously called Respite Care Grant

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	13.4	-
Blind Person's Pension	20.1	24.4

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Carers Allowance	21.7	24.0
Carers Benefit	17.8	21.3
Child Benefit	22.8	32.4
Disability Allowance	17.3	24.1
Illness Benefit	28.0	30.6
Partial Capacity Benefit	33.3	35.7
Domiciliary Care Allowance	27.2	34.4
Deserted Wife's Benefit	13.1	27.7
Farm Assist	20.7	25.8
Bereavement Grant	15.1	-
Family Income Supplement	22.9	34.6
Invalidity Pension	16.9	23.7
Liable Relatives	25.3	24.0
Maternity Benefit	18.8	19.3
Paternity Benefit	18.3	-
One Parent Family Payment	26.1	34.7
State Pension (Contributory)	32.1	45.7
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	25.9	35.3
State Pension (Transition)	60.4	-
Occupational Injury Benefit	20.0	26.4
Disablement Pension	25.0	28.3
OIB-Medical Care	-	27.3
Incapacity Supplement	47.8	37.2
Guardian's Payment (Con)	23.7	27.0
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	16.0	23.1
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	19.6	27.3
Jobseeker's Allowance	18.3	24.8
BTW Family Dividend	19.8	27.5
Jobseeker's Transitional	22.1	23.2
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	27.4	-
Jobseeker's Benefit	20.6	24.2
Carer's Support Grant *	18.5	25.6
Treatment Benefit	14.0	-
Insurability of Employment	42.8	90.4
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	16.4	25.8
Survivor's Pension (Con)	23.0	44.7
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	23.3	24.7
Widowed Parent Grant	19.5	-
All Appeals	19.8	26.4

\* Previously called Respite Care Grant

-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Pension	15.7	-
Carers Allowance	24.2	28.0

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-	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Carers Benefit	20.5	27.2
Child Benefit	36.5	49.4
Disability Allowance	17.9	25.9
Illness Benefit	30.5	37.9
Partial Capacity Benefit	31.7	21.3
Domiciliary Care Allowance	31.2	36.2
Deserted Wife's Benefit	-	30.5
Farm Assist	41.4	39.4
Working Family Payment	29.1	31.6
Invalidity Pension	23.7	24.1
Liabile Relatives	-	30.7
Maternity Benefit	26.7	38.8
Paternity Benefit	27.7	20.6
One Parent Family Payment	25.3	40.5
State Pension (Contributory)	39.2	48.2
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	30.5	38.9
Occupational Injury Benefit	38.1	60.8
Disablement Pension	35.7	29.6
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	30.7	32.4
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	10.4	37.3
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	31.5	35.7
Jobseeker's Allowance (Payments)	25.4	30.4
BTW Family Dividend	32.2	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	39.5	30.5
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	46.6	-
Pre-Retirement Allowance	64.0	29.9
Jobseeker's Benefit	24.6	26.7
Carer's Support Grant	27.5	28.7
Incapacity Supplement	-	29.0
Insurability of Employment	48.8	81.5
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	22.2	28.3
Survivor's Pension (Contributory)	39.2	22.4
Survivor's Pension (Non-Con)	34.6	23.4
Widowed Parent Grant	35.8	-
All Appeals	24.6	30.0

### Social Welfare Overpayments

556. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which due process and natural justice remains paramount in the context of dealing with social welfare recipients whose cases come under review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26903/18]

563. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection whether the manner in which investigations into overpayments are carried out will be reviewed to ensure strict adherence to due process and natural justice; and if she will make

a statement on the matter. [26910/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty) (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 556 and 563 together.

My Department is committed to ensuring that the principles of natural justice are followed in all claim decisions. This applies equally to decisions at initial claim stage and when claims are subsequently reviewed. The Department's guidelines on Decision Making and Natural Justice are published on the website - *www.welfare.ie*. This message is reinforced through guidelines, bulletins and staff training.

Overpayments of social welfare assistance and benefit payments arise as a consequence of decisions made under the relevant sections of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 2005.

As part of the process of finalising a decision and assessing an overpayment, the deciding officer or designated person (in the case of the administration of payments under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance provisions), is required to engage with the person concerned and offer them the opportunity to provide additional information in support of their claim. In addition, the customer may seek a review or may appeal any decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

I am satisfied that the current processes meet the needs of members of the public and the administration of the social welfare system and I do not have any plans to change them.

If there is a particular case that the Deputy is concerned about, he should bring it to my attention and I will ask my officials to examine it.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Data**

557. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she can take to provide extra personnel to deal with appeals against decisions made by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26904/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department, like all Government departments and agencies is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget, which for this Department has involved reductions in staff.

The staffing needs for all areas within the Department, including the Social Welfare Appeals Office and all areas involved in the processing of appeals, are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the ongoing need to respond to increasing demands in a wide range of services. This is to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

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. Nevertheless, the Department is concerned that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects all aspects of the appeal process including time spent in the Department preparing the appeal submission. The quasi-judicial nature of the appeals system means that there are inevitable time-lags involved. The time taken is proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal which require a high level of judgement, and the need to ensure due process and natural justice. The system is designed to be flexible and fair and allows for review and submission of further information at all stages which is to the benefit of the appellant.

Appeal processing times are kept under constant scrutiny by the Chief Appeals Officer. The Deputy will be aware that significant effort and resources have been devoted in recent years to reducing the length of the time taken to finalise an appeal. As a result, appeal processing times improved between 2011 and 2017 from 52.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 26.4 weeks in 2017 and from 25.1 weeks for a summary decision in 2011 to 19.8 weeks in 2017. The most recent figures for May 2018 are 30 weeks for an oral hearing and 24.6 weeks for a summary decision.

A number of new Appeals Officers have joined the Appeals Office over the past year to replace staff leaving on retirement. Given the complexity of the appeals process it takes some time for new staff to be trained up and develop expertise and this has led to somewhat longer processing times during this period. The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times will continue to be a priority for her office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 558 answered with Question No. 555.*

### **Data Protection**

559. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which information received from third parties in respect of recipients of various social welfare payments complies with GDPR; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26906/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department receives the vast majority of personal data direct from customers themselves mainly on foot of an application for one of my Department's schemes or for other supports and services provided.

My Department has a firm legal basis for the processing of this personal data in accordance with the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005, as amended.

Circumstances where my Department receives and processes information from third party organisations is also provided for by law and underpinned by written agreements which outline how the information is shared and also what it is used for. This is fully in compliance with the GDPR. Indeed, my Department's GDPR privacy statement outlines how the Department collects, stores and uses personal and is available on the Department's website and in hard copy on request.

### **Social Welfare Schemes**

560. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if disability allowance or invalidity pension payments are being disallowed on the

basis that a person has a serious disability such an amputation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26907/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath) (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Medical eligibility for Disability Allowance (DA) and Invalidity Pension (INVP) is assessed on a case by case basis and is determined by its severity, and resultant effects on activities of daily living and work-related activities. Eligibility is not based solely on diagnosis or treatment but rather is assessing the person's eligibility for the relevant scheme in accordance with the relevant statutory conditions. Entitlement to DA is based on satisfying medical, means and residency conditions. The person must be between the age 16 and 66.

The medical condition for DA is that a person must be suffering from an injury, disease, congenital deformity or physical or mental illness or defect, as a result of which they are substantially restricted in undertaking work which would otherwise be suitable having regard to the person's age, experience and qualifications.

INVP is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the statutory social insurance contribution conditions.

A person is regarded as being permanently incapable of work if;

- For the period of 1 year immediately before the date of application the person had been continuously incapable of work and a Deciding Officer or an Appeals Officer is satisfied that the person is likely to continue to be incapable of work for at least another year,

OR

- A Deciding Officer or an Appeals Officer is satisfied that the likelihood is that the person will be incapable of work for life.

Where a person is not satisfied with the decision of a Deciding Officer regarding their entitlement to either of these payments, they can appeal that decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Exceptional Needs Payment Data**

561. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which exceptional needs payments continue to be restricted even in cases in which the need clearly exists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26908/18]

565. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications for exceptional needs payments pending or refused in the past five years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26913/18]

571. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which community welfare services are readily available to meet the needs of those in society who may ordinarily have had no reason to call on the social services but who may due to circumstances outside their control have to rely on exceptional needs payments in order to get by in a crisis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26919/18]

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



propose to take Questions Nos. 561, 565 and 571 together.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The Department may make an urgent needs payment (UNP) to a person who may not normally qualify for SWA but who have an urgent need which they cannot meet from their own resources or an alternative is not available at that time. The Government has provided over €36.4 million for ENPs and UNPs in 2018.

There are a number of categories specifically excluded in legislation from receiving assistance under the SWA scheme, including ENPs. These include people in full-time work and people in full-time education. These exclusions do not apply under the UNP scheme.

The ENP scheme is demand led and payments are made at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. The principle consideration in making a payment under the ENP scheme is to address a particular once-off and exceptional need.

The guidelines issued to staff administering the ENP scheme assist them in the decision making process. The guidelines do not affect the discretion available to officers in issuing an ENP to assist an individual or household in any particular hardship situation which may arise, so that the payments target those most in need of assistance.

Statistics are maintained relating to payments under the ENP and UNP schemes, however they are not maintained on the number of applications or the outcome of those applications. Details of the number of payments made under the ENP scheme for the years 2013 to 2017 and to end of May 2018 are set out in the following tabular statement. For reporting purposes this data also includes the numbers of urgent needs payments (UNP).

The Community Welfare Service has an important role within the overall social welfare system in providing a responsive and flexible approach to meeting the needs of the disadvantaged. CWS staff have extensive engagement with a range of stakeholders and advocacy groups working with vulnerable people.

Any person who considers that they have an entitlement to an exceptional needs payment should contact the Community Welfare Service at their local office.

If the Deputy has concerns in respect of a particular case or circumstances where he feels the administration of the scheme is being restricted, he should bring it to the attention of the Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Table 1 - Number of Exceptional Needs Payments, 2013 - 2018 (end of May)**

Year	Number of Payments
2013	133,000
2014	107,100
2015	101,600
2016	100,100
2017	103,500
2018 ( to May)	42,500

### Carer's Allowance Data

562. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of carer's allowance applications in payment in circumstances in which the recipient is caring for more than one person; the extent to which these numbers have fluctuated over the past ten years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26909/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The information requested by the Deputy is shown in the tabular statement.

I note that this breakdown is not available for periods prior to July 2013.

#### Carers Allowance Recipients by number of Carers: July 2013 to present

Number of Carers	July 2013	July 2014	July 2015	July 2016	July 2017	May 2018
1	51,727	53,252	56,848	60,806	67,440	70,104
2	4,553	4,621	4,964	5,427	6,437	6,990
3	5	10	15	31	57	51
4			1		1	1
Grand Total	56,285	57,883	61,828	66,264	73,935	77,146

*Question No. 563 answered with Question No. 556.*

### Social Welfare Schemes Data

564. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which backlogs have been addressed in respect of various headings and payments operated by her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26912/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The numbers of claims on hand pending decision in May 2017 and May 2018 for my Department's principal schemes are shown in the tabular statement.

Pending Figures	May-17	May-18
State Pension (Contributory)	3493	4491
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	244	543
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	2334	2190
Jobseekers Allowance	5896	4313
Jobseekers Benefit	2088	1599
One-Parent Family Payment	1123	766
Supplementary Welfare Allowance Basi	583	580
Maternity Benefit	5366	3026
Paternity Benefit	1953	1308
Carer's Allowance	4552	5236
Disability Allowance	5863	5826
Invalidity Pension	1620	1965
Illness Benefit	4428	3071
Occupational Injury Benefit	148	251
Child Benefit	1327	1360

Pending Figures	May-17	May-18
Working Family Payment	3631	2981
Domiciliary Care Allowance	3263	1585
Free Travel	8	15
Household Benefits	2161	1161

*Question No. 565 answered with Question No. 561.*

### Social Welfare Code

566. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which self-employed persons can qualify for various social welfare supports now and in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26914/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Self-employed workers, who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable for PRSI at the class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. This provides them with access to the following benefits: State pension (contributory), widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's pension (contributory), guardian's payment (contributory), maternity benefit, adoptive benefit, paternity benefit, treatment benefit (from March 2017). Entitlement to invalidity pension was extended to the self-employed from December 2017.

This compares favourably with employees who, in general, are liable to the PRSI Class A rate of 4%. In addition their employers are liable to PRSI at the rate of 8.6% on weekly earnings up to and including €376 or at the rate of 10.85% where weekly earnings exceed €376. Accordingly the combined rate of PRSI rate paid in respect of Class A employees is 12.6% or 14.85%, depending on the level of weekly earnings. These Class A employees are entitled to the full range of social insurance benefits.

The issue of extending additional social insurance benefits to the self-employed paying Class S PRSI was considered in the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance fund (SIF) as at 31 December, 2015, which I published in October 2017. The review, required by legislation, was carried out by independent consultants, KPMG. It examines the projected income and expenditure of the SIF over the course of the 55 year period from 2016 to 2071.

The review found that the fund currently has a modest surplus of income over expenditure. In 2016 there was a surplus of €0.4 billion on expenditure of €8.8 billion and receipts of €9.2 billion. However, this will reduce over the next two years and will return to a small shortfall in 2020. The annual shortfalls are projected to increase from 2021 onwards as the ageing of the population impacts. Projections indicate that, in the absence of further action to tackle the shortfall, the excess of expenditure over income of the fund will increase significantly over the medium to long term. The shortfall in expenditure over income is projected to increase from €0.2 billion in 2020 to €3.3 billion by 2030 and to €22.2 billion by 2071. It should be noted that as self-employed workers were to be eligible to apply for invalidity pension from December 2017, the cost of this introduction has been factored into the actuarial review's findings.

As part of the review the independent consultants were required to project the additional PRSI expenditure if invalidity pension and illness, jobseeker's and carer's benefits were extended to Class S self-employed workers and the PRSI contribution rates required to provide these benefits on a revenue neutral basis.

The review found that the combined cost of introducing the invalidity, illness, jobseeker's and carer's benefits for PRSI Class S contributions is estimated to be €118 million in 2018, ris-

ing steadily to €223 million in 2020. By 2025 the projected cost is €413 million and, over the period of the review the cost would rise to €1.3 billion in 2071.

The review indicates that, where these benefits are extended to the self-employed, the Class S rate of PRSI contribution would need to increase substantially in order to ensure that the benefits are delivered in a revenue neutral manner. It estimates that when expenditure on the additional benefits is considered over the entire projection period, PRSI rates would need to increase by 94% under a scenario of no subvention from the Exchequer. This is equivalent to an increase of the Class S contribution rate from the current 4% rate to 7.8%.

This increased contribution is attributable to the costs of extending these additional benefits to PRSI Class S contributors. It does not take account of the value to PRSI Class S contributors of access to the range of existing benefits, and in particular State pension contributory. The consultants estimated that the typical cost of State pension (contributory) on its own is of the order of 10% to 15%, depending on other factors including rate of average earnings and date of commencing paying PRSI. Adding in the other benefits referenced the total Class S rate of contribution to ensure revenue neutrality would be of the order of 20% per annum.

The findings of the Review will play an important role in informing the overall debate on policy developments in relation to the SIF in the years ahead, including the financial sustainability of the Fund given the expected demographic challenges and consideration of extending the scope of benefits for workers generally, including the self-employed.

### Unemployment Levels

567. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the current extent of long-term unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26915/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Government policy to reduce unemployment is twofold. First, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs; and second, through Pathways to Work to ensure that as many of these new jobs and other vacancies that arise in our economy are filled by people taken from the Live Register, and in particular the long-term unemployed.

To date, these policies have been effective in reducing long-term unemployment. For example, the most recent data shows that the rate of long-term unemployment in Ireland has fallen from a peak of 9.5% in 2012 to 2.5% in Q4 2017. This downward trend indicates that Ireland is well on course to bring long-term unemployment below 2.5% in accordance with *Pathways to Work* targets for 2020, and maybe even improve on it.

Policy continues to focus on support for the long-term unemployed. For example, the Pathways to Work 2016-2020 strategy prioritises long-term unemployed people – most notably through the roll-out of JobPath to engage more systematically with this group; through targeted wage subsidies under JobsPlus; and through reserved places for long-term unemployed job-seekers on employment and training programmes.

The table shows the most recent end of month statistics on the number of people availing of a range of programmes targeted primarily at the long-term unemployed (over 12 months). Statistics for April 2018 are compared with those for April 2017.

### Activation Programmes (April 2017 and April 2018)

*Questions - Written Answers*

Activation Schemes	Apr-17	Apr-18
Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme – self-employed strand.	10,658	8,525
Short-term Enterprise Allowance <sup>1</sup>	407	345
Total - Back to Work Schemes	11,065	8,870
Part-time Job Incentive	466	409
TÚS - Community Work Placement Initiative	7,165	6,300
JobBridge - National Internship Scheme <sup>2</sup>	746	0
Gateway (2013)	345	8
Other Activation Programmes	8,722	6,717
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	5,000	5,000
Back to Education Allowance <sup>3</sup>	13,362	10,552
Total - Back to Education Courses:	18,362	15,552
Community Employment Schemes (excluding Supervisors)	22,161	21,766
FAS (Solás) full time training for the unemployed <sup>4</sup>	6,489	5,995
TOTAL	66,799	58,900

This scheme was introduced from 1st May 2009. It provides immediate support for someone in receipt of Jobseekers Benefit who wants to start a business.

This scheme was closed to new applications from 21 October 2016.

BTEA figures include all schemes but participants from JA & JB are not entitled to BTEA during the summer holidays. Includes Momentum participants from February 2013.

Figure as at December 2017. Data for 2018 is currently unavailable.

I am confident that the current policy approach, and continuing economic recovery, will support further reductions in long-term unemployment and add to the substantial improvements that have already been seen over the last few years.

### **Social Welfare Code**

568. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the degree to which efforts are being made to award State pensions to those men and women whose contribution record was interrupted for family or other reasons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26916/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 sets out how the Government intends to introduce and implement a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to calculating entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards.

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 and which will be open until 3rd September. Issues such as the number of years required for a full pension are addressed in the consultation questions, and in the accompanying documentation. The final details will not be decided upon until I have considered the submissions received in

this process.

This public consultation is available on my Department's website and I would encourage all interested stakeholders to contribute to the survey there.

Separately, under an interim Total Contributions Approach I announced in January, a person who reached pension age after 1 September 2012 (i.e. who is among those affected by the new rate-bands introduced from that date) and who has a 40 year record of paid and credited social insurance contributions, subject to a maximum of 20 years of credits, will qualify for a maximum contributory pension where they satisfy the other qualifying conditions for the scheme. Up to 20 years of HomeCaring credits, and/or 10 years of other qualifying credits, for example when unemployed or ill, may be used, subject to the total number of credits not exceeding 20 years.

Legislation has to be drafted and enacted to enable implementation of these arrangements with effect from 30th March 2018. Following this, IT solutions must be developed in line with that legislation.

Pensioners do not need to contact the Department about this. Instead, the Department will invite over 50,000 pensioners, who were assessed under the current rate bands in place since 2012, to have their pensions recalculated under this interim TCA solution to determine if they qualify for a higher rate of entitlement. The Department expects to send out these invitations from Quarter 4 of 2018 and to begin payments, including arrears for any period from 30 March 2018, from Quarter 1 of 2019.

I hope this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

### **Live Register Data**

569. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which she has identified specific trends arising from the study of the age profile of those on the live register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26917/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Live Register Figures by detailed age group for all months from October 2009 to May 2017 are accessible from the CSO Statbank on the CSO Website, (available at <https://cso.ie/px/pxeires-tat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=LRM11&PLanguage=0>).

At the end of May 2018, there were 223,502 people on the Live Register. This is less than half the number of people signing on the Live Register at the crisis peak in mid-2012. While this reduction in Live Register numbers has been especially large for younger people, people of every age have benefitted from the economic recovery, so that numbers on the Live Register are lower now than at the crisis peak for every age group.

### **Social Welfare Code**

570. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on whether changes are required in the criteria governing cohabitation with a view to ensuring that hardship is not caused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26918/18]

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



question of whether a couple is cohabiting as husband and wife or civil partners affects entitlement under the Social Welfare Acts in a number of ways:

- A person may be entitled to an increase for a qualified adult for a person who is not a husband, wife or civil partner provided the couple are cohabiting;

- A disqualification applies in various schemes where there is cohabitation, for example, under the One-parent Family Payment scheme;

- Means are calculated similarly for a cohabiting couple as for a married couple/civil partners;

- In Jobseeker's Allowance cases a limitation is applied to payment rates where the person with whom the claimant is cohabiting is also in receipt of certain Social Welfare payments.

My Department has set down the guidelines it uses in considering issues relating to cohabitation. These guidelines are updated from time to time to take into account changes to policy, legislation or best practice. These are available on the Department's website at <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Cohabitation.aspx>.

With regard to the issue of hardship, if a person does not qualify for a particular Social Welfare payment due to cohabiting, they should be advised to apply for a payment that is appropriate to their particular circumstances.

Any changes to these arrangements could involve significant costs and there no plans under consideration to change the existing criteria.

*Question No. 571 answered with Question No. 561.*

### **Social Welfare Schemes Data**

572. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the applications for various social welfare payments which are most commonly refused on application and referred to appeal or oral hearing; the number of cases subsequently rejected or approved on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26920/18]

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

The schemes with the highest number of appeals to the Social Welfare Appeals Office in 2017 and 2018 (to the end of May) were - disability allowance (5,077 in 2017 and 1,883 in 2018), carer's allowance (3,200 in 2017 and 1,137 in 2018), jobseeker's allowance - payments (1,676 in 2017 and 637 in 2018), jobseeker's allowance - means (1,504 in 2017 and 607 in 2018), supplementary welfare allowance (1,302 in 2017 and 390 in 2018), invalidity pension (1,381 in 2017 and 576 in 2018) and domiciliary care allowance (1,199 in 2017 and 577 in 2018).

The tables set out the following in respect of 2017 and 2018 (to the end of May); (1) all appeal receipts, (2) the appeal outcomes in respect of the schemes with the highest number of appeals and (3) the outcomes of appeals determined by way of oral hearing.

Overall, 60.1% of the 18,980 appeals which were finalised in 2017 had a favourable out-

come for the appellant, i.e. were either allowed in full or in part, or resolved by way of a revised decision by a Deciding Officer/Designated Person. 57.5% of the 7,562 appeals finalised to date in 2018 had a favourable outcome for the appellant.

Of the 13,556 appeals which were finalised by Appeals Officers in 2017, 5,412 (39.9%) were determined following an oral hearing. 3,444 (63.6%) of these had a favourable outcome for the appellant. Of the 5,620 appeals finalised by Appeals Officers to date in 2018, 2,100 (37.4%) were determined following an oral hearing. 1,289 (61.4%) of these had a favourable outcome for the appellant.

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 wrong.

Where new evidence is provided with an appeal the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person as was the case in some 37% of favourable appeal outcomes in 2017 and some 35% in 2018. Where the decision is not revised in 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 the oral hearing which may influence the outcome of the appeal.

Decisions concerning entitlement to a social welfare payment or insurability of employment often require a high level of judgment and may involve complex legal questions. The Courts have found that decision makers are required to be free and unrestricted in discharging their functions.

Where an appellant requests an oral hearing, the request is generally granted unless the Appeals Officer is of the opinion that the appeal can be allowed on a summary basis, or where there is clearly nothing to be gained by granting an oral hearing, for example where the appeal question relates to contribution conditions or means and the underlying PRSI contribution figures or means are not disputed. Social Welfare legislation provides that an Appeals Officer may determine an appeal without an oral hearing where s/he is of the opinion that it can be determined fairly on the basis of the documentary evidence provided. In general, where there is a conflict in the documentary evidence presented, an Appeals Officer will convene an oral hearing in order to explore the evidence and seek to resolve any conflict.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Appeal Receipts 2017 – 2018**

	2017	2018(to 31 May 2018)
Adoptive Benefit	2	-
Blind Person's Pension	19	6
Carers Allowance	3,200	1,137
Carers Benefit	110	67
Child Benefit	473	205
Disability Allowance	5,077	1,883
Illness Benefit	443	247
Death Benefit	-	1
Partial Capacity Benefit	38	29
Domiciliary Care Allowance	1,199	577
Deserted Wives Benefit	7	4
Deserted Wives Allowance	1	-
Farm Assist	130	45

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	2017	2018(to 31 May 2018)
Bereavement Grant	1	1
Working Family Payment	477	141
Invalidity Pension	1,381	576
Liabale Relatives	9	2
Maternity Benefit	84	21
Paternity Benefit	16	9
One Parent Family Payment	244	101
State Pension (Contributory)	408	121
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	370	149
State Pension (Transition)	3	-
Occupational Injury Benefit	51	22
Disablement Pension	347	151
Occupational Injury-Medical Care	2	2
Incapacity Supplement	7	3
Guardian's Payment (Con)	34	6
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	16	3
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	1,504	607
Jobseeker's Allowance	1,676	637
Pre-Retirement Allowance	2	-
BTW Family Dividend	43	19
Jobseeker's Transitional	41	30
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	25	23
Jobseeker's Benefit	545	240
Treatment Benefit	1	-
Carer's Support Grant	164	50
Insurability of Employment	132	40
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	1,302	390
Survivor's Pension (Con)	45	13
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	23	8
Widows Parent Grant	6	-
All Appeals	19,658	7,566

**Outcome of Disability Allowance Appeals 2017– 2018**

	Appeals Finalised	Favourable Decisions			Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
		Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers		
2017	4,934	563	2,975	70	1,211	115
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	1,933	145	1,167	43	551	27

**Outcome of Carer's Allowance Appeals 2017– 2018**

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2017	3,416	780	1,204	161	1,199	72
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	1,124	174	440	56	414	40

### Outcome of Jobseeker's Allowance (Payments) Appeals 2017– 2018

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2017	1,573	309	349	66	665	184
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	698	116	133	43	343	63

### Outcome of Jobseeker's Allowance (Means) Appeals 2017– 2018

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2017	1,453	264	187	82	708	212
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	577	76	61	27	320	93

### Outcome of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals 2017– 2018

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2017	1,349	229	304	34	602	180
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	511	96	123	13	221	58

### Outcome of Invalidity Pension Appeals 2017– 2018

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2017	1,348	691	365	7	262	23

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		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Partly Allowed by Appeals Officers	Appeals Disallowed by Appeals Officers	Withdrawn
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	460	166	159	8	114	13

**Outcome of Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals 2017– 2018**

		Favourable Decisions				
	Appeals Finalised	Revised Deciding Officers Decisions	Appeals Allowed	Appeals Partly Allowed	Appeals Disallowed	Withdrawn
2017	801	343	297	10	135	16
2018 (to 31/5/2018)	616	289	194	5	117	11

**Number and Outcome of Appeals Determined following Oral Hearings 2017**

	Allowed	Partially allowed	Disallowed	No. of Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	1	1	-	2
Carers Allowance	831	100	555	1,486
Carers Benefit	11	2	10	23
Child Benefit	35	7	30	72
Disability Allowance	1,077	35	433	1,545
Illness Benefit	78	6	81	165
Partial Capacity Benefit	5	1	5	11
Domiciliary Care Allowance	167	9	63	239
Deserted Wives Benefit	1	1	1	3
Farm Assist	17	12	26	55
Liabile Relatives	-	2	2	4
Family Income Supplement*	25	6	37	68
Invalidity Pension	187	4	78	269
Maternity Benefit	3	-	4	7
One Parent Family Payment	36	13	23	72
State Pension (Contributory)	14	9	45	68
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	40	23	35	98
State Pension (Transition)	-	-	1	1
Occupational Injury Benefit	-	-	7	7
Disablement Pension	58	14	44	116
Occupational Injury-Medical Care	-	-	1	1
Incapacity Supplement	3	1	1	5
Guardian's Payment (Con)	9	-	4	13
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	3	-	2	5
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	111	50	144	305
Jobseeker's Allowance	171	33	165	369

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	Allowed	Partially allowed	Disallowed	No. of Oral Hearings
Jobseeker's Benefit	25	9	35	69
Jobseeker's Transitional	4	3	-	7
BTW Family Dividend	1	-	1	2
Carer's Support Grant	18	1	18	37
Insurability of Employment	22	3	10	35
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	122	15	96	233
Survivor's Pension (Con)	3	-	5	8
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	3	3	6	12
All Appeals	3,081	363	1,968	5,412

**\*Now called Working Family Payment**

**Number and Outcome of Appeals Determined following Oral Hearings 2018 - (to 31/5/2018)**

	Allowed	Partially allowed	Disallowed	No. of Oral Hearings
Carers Allowance	283	36	157	476
Carers Benefit	8	2	4	14
Child Benefit	7	1	4	12
Disability Allowance	413	20	184	617
Illness Benefit	23	1	29	53
Partial Capacity Benefit	2	-	2	4
Domiciliary Care Allowance	91	1	63	155
Deserted Wives Benefit	1	-	-	1
Farm Assist	4	2	8	14
Liable Relatives	-	-	1	1
Working Family Payment	8	6	14	28
Invalidity Pension	92	5	39	136
Maternity Benefit	1	-	1	2
Paternity Benefit	-	-	1	1
One Parent Family Payment	4	1	13	18
State Pension (Contributory)	8	3	10	21
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	17	6	18	41
Occupational Injury Benefit	-	-	3	3
Disablement Pension	31	4	17	52
Incapacity Supplement	3	-	-	3
Guardian's Payment (Con)	-	-	3	3
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	-	-	1	1
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	22	13	52	87
Jobseeker's Allowance	54	23	94	171
Jobseeker's Benefit	15	6	18	39
Jobseeker's Transitional	2	-	1	3
Pre-Retirement Allowance	1	-	-	1
Carer's Support Grant	6	5	8	19
Insurability of Employment	7	2	14	23
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	42	4	51	97
Survivor's Pension (Contributory)	2	-	-	2



	Allowed	Partially allowed	Disallowed	No. of Oral Hearings
Survivor's Pension (Non-Contributory)	-	1	1	2
All Appeals	1,147	142	811	2,100

### Community Welfare Services Provision

573. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which community welfare services remain readily accessible in all areas throughout County Kildare with particular reference to meeting out of hours and emergency needs in circumstances in which it is necessary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26921/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Welfare Services in County Kildare are administered by the Mid-Leinster Division (Naas, Newbridge, Athy and surrounding areas) and the Dublin Central Division (Leixlip, Maynooth, Celbridge, Kilcock and surrounding areas).

In the Mid-Leinster Division and Dublin Central Division areas, customers may contact the Community Welfare Service through their local Intreo Centre, by telephone or by post. For telephone enquiries, customers may leave a message with their contact details at any time. All telephone calls are responded to within one working day. Enquiries are followed up by appointments or home visits as appropriate.

Emergencies are responded to as they arise, a recent example being during Storm Emma and the subsequent serious snowfall when Community Welfare Officers, despite all Department offices being closed, maintained a mobile service for customers and responded to emergency situations such as provision of shelter, fuel supplies, etc.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Home Loan Scheme

574. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to report on the findings of the review of the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme and the proposed changes from the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26236/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Following a review of the two existing local authority home loan schemes, the House Purchase Loan and the Home Choice Loan, a new loan offering, known as the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL), was introduced on 1 February 2018.

Following the initial roll-out of the scheme, in April I met with the Chief Executives of the two main agencies involved in the implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, the Housing Agency and the Housing Finance Agency, and I requested that they address a number of issues to improve the operation of the scheme.

On foot of this engagement, some minor clarifying amendments have been made to the application form, while a number of additional FAQs have been added to the dedicated Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan website in order to further clarify issues for potential applicants. The

on-line calculator on this website has also been amended in order to take the cost of mortgage protection insurance into account. This will therefore give potential applicants a clearer indication of the amount that they could be eligible to borrow under the scheme.

My Department will continue to clarify issues that arise around the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, as necessary, as is the case with any other scheme. I have not asked for a formal review of the scheme at this stage, nor do I believe that one is necessary, given the positive response to it to date. This is evident from the almost 1,500 loan applications submitted by local authorities to the Housing Agency, for assessment, as of the end of May.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

575. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1046 of 20 March 2018, if a separated person who is remaining in the family home can potentially qualify for a loan under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme to refinance their mortgage to give effect to the removal of their former spouse from the mortgage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26258/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Further to my reply to Question No. 1046 of 20 March 2018, which sets out the limited circumstances that would apply where a separated or divorced person who is not a first-time buyer could qualify to apply for a Rebuilding Ireland home loan (RIHL), the circumstances of the individual outlined in the Deputy's question would not appear to meet the criteria to apply for a loan under this scheme.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

576. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications to date under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; the number and value of approvals to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26259/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Agency provides a central support service for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme by assessing valid loan applications that are made to the local authorities and make recommendations to the authorities as to whether loans should be offered to applicants. I have asked the Agency to centrally compile figures of the numbers of applications that it has assessed.

The most recent figures, as at the end of May, indicate that the Agency has received a total of 1,499 applications for assessment from local authorities, 1,150 of which were deemed to be valid. Of these valid applications, 876 have been assessed and 52% of the valid applications that have been assessed by the Agency have been recommended for approval.

The average loan amount for applications recommended for approval was €189,133.

It is subsequently a matter for the relevant local authority credit committee to ultimately determine whether a loan application is approved, having regard to the Agency's recommendation.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Funding**

577. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if emergency funding will be made available to the older person and disability housing adaptation grant section of Louth County Council in order to deal with the extremely long waiting lists; his plans to restructure this funding strand for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26276/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I recently announced funding of €66.25 million nationally for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. This includes €1,498,067 for Louth County Council comprising Exchequer funding of €1,198,454 and €299,613 from the local authority, which represents an increase of €293,388 over the 2017 funding.

Details of the 2018 allocations to all local authorities are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/special-housing-needs/minister-english-announces-eu6625-million-funding-improve-homes-older>.

Each local authority, including Louth, receives an overall allocation for the three grant schemes that make up the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. Responsibility for the apportionment between the schemes is a matter for each authority. The funding is carefully managed by my Department so that any underspends can be re-distributed to local authorities where demand and activity is high.

My main focus in terms of these grants has been to secure increases in funding, as has been achieved successfully in recent years, including for 2018. In addition, the funding is now being allocated more in line with population and this saw Louth County Council, in 2018, receive a higher than average increase in funding.

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

578. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the fund that was allocated using the proceeds of the sale of An Bord Gáis; when the special vehicle for housing was deemed not possible; if it is specifically being used for housing; the specific assets from the sale that were ring fenced for housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26295/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Prior to the publication of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, it was planned to establish a financial vehicle to facilitate the aggregation of private investment into a fund for subsequent lending as project finance. The intention was that this investment would be off-balance sheet and in Budget 2015, the Government announced that €400m of public investment would be made available, including the proceeds from the sale of Bord Gáis, to provide 2,000 homes. The objective was that this investment could leverage private sector finance from the EIB, ISIF, pension funds, credit unions and other financial institutions.

A structured, formal process was put in place to facilitate engagement with these bodies. A body called the Social Housing Investment Proposals Clearing House Group was established in 2015 to examine and consider proposals and to meet with the companies, groups and institutions involved. However, despite a detailed investigation of options to use the available funding in this way, including a high level of engagement with potential social housing providers and potential financiers of social housing, no new model that would, of itself, be capable of providing and/or financing social housing on an off-balance sheet basis could be identified that would be capable of utilising the available funding.

In response to this outcome, it was decided to modify the original commitment in relation to the €400m funding to provide €10m per annum, indexed for inflation, over a longer period (20 years), which could be used to secure the development of a pilot affordable rental scheme, as envisaged in Rebuilding Ireland. Provision was made for €10 million to be allocated to my Department's Vote in 2017.

Furthermore and taking account of the work and analysis of the Clearing House Group, it was considered that it would be more constructive to use the existing social housing funding and support mechanisms and, where appropriate, make adjustments to those mechanisms, in order to provide a framework with more realistic prospects of harnessing private investment in an off-balance sheet manner.

This approach resulted in the design of an alternative delivery mechanism, the Enhanced Long-term Leasing Social Housing Scheme, which was launched on 31 January 2018. Funding is in place to support the delivery of this new scheme and the principal objective of the scheme is to encourage larger levels of private investment in social housing, while ensuring that the resulting leasing arrangement is off-balance sheet in respect of Government expenditure. The scheme is targeted at new build or new to the market properties to be delivered at scale and will complement the existing long-term leasing arrangements, which will continue to be available for leasing existing properties.

In respect of the commitment to develop an affordable rental model, this is now being progressed through an initial pilot project in Dublin, based on a cost rental model, where local authorities can release the value of their land, and also access funding for enabling infrastructure, to reduce the construction costs of providing such rental units and facilitate the delivery of the optimal number of affordable homes to rent for low- to moderate-income households, as part of mixed-tenure developments. Lands held by local authorities, particularly in urban areas where there are high rental costs and significant housing demand, are being identified for cost rental projects, including a large-scale cost rental site in Dublin city, details of which I expect to announce shortly.

### **Local Authority Members' Remuneration**

579. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the financial supports available to members of local authorities to carry out their role; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26336/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** The financial supports available to elected members of local authorities to assist them in carrying out their statutory functions are provided for under the Local Government (Expenses of Local Authority Members) Regulations 2014-2017, given effect with the consent of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform under section 142 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended.

My Department has issued directions to local authorities concerning the range of supports that are available to elected members under the Regulations and the terms and conditions that apply. The most recent directions, issued on 31 January 2018, are available on my Department's website at the following link:

*[https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/lg\\_01-2018\\_appendix\\_i\\_expenses\\_and\\_allowances\\_for\\_elected\\_members.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/lg_01-2018_appendix_i_expenses_and_allowances_for_elected_members.pdf)*

To ensure that financial supports provided to elected members remain fit for purpose into the

future I have agreed with my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, that an independent person will be appointed to carry out a full review of the role of elected members of local authorities, as well as the remuneration and other supports provided to assist them in carrying out their duties. The review will be undertaken in consultation with elected members and their representative organisations and a report providing a full update on the review's progress will be prepared before the end of the year.

### Social and Affordable Housing Data

580. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Part 8 local authority social housing units that have been built in counties Longford and Westmeath in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26348/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The local authority homes that have been built in counties Longford and Westmeath in 2016 and 2017 are set out in the Social Housing Construction Status Report which is published on a quarterly basis. That report contains information on all new social housing construction, both that contracted by the local authorities and that being advanced by AHBs in agreement with the authorities.

The report covering the period up to the end of Quarter 4 2017 was published on 19 April 2018 and is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>. The report is also available on Ireland's Open Data Portal at the following link: <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017> which provides the information in a reusable format. The report covering the period to the end of quarter 1 of 2018 is being compiled and will be available shortly.

My Department also publishes a wide range of statistical information in relation to housing, including the number of houses that have been built, acquired or leased by local authorities. Those statistics are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>. Details relating to delivery in each quarter of 2018 will be published as soon as the statistics are gathered and validated.

### Departmental Expenditure

581. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26393/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department places advertisements with Mediavest, who are on Lot 3 of the Media Strategy Planning and Buying Framework, following a tender process run by the Office of Government Procurement. The following is the list of payments made to Mediavest by my Department from 2016 to date.

Year	Amount	Project
2016	€671.74	Planning Policy
2016	€7,693.86	Marine Strategy



Year	Amount	Project
2016	€3,168.32	Planning Policy
2016	€15,237.29	Draft Register of Electors Awareness Campaign
2016	€20,283.74	Constituency Commission
2016	€50,011.98	General Election
2016	€1,652.90	Planning Policy
2016	€4,905.47	Maritime Spatial Planning
2017	€3,462.00	Rebuilding Ireland Rental Market & AHB Reg Section
2017	€4,881.86	Water Quality - Nitrates Regulations
2017	€6,468.80	Water Quality- River Basin Management
2017	€3,715.10	Marine Planning & Foreshore - Microbeads
2017	€4,880.01	EIA Public Consultation
2017	€2,707.48	Housing Assistance Payment & Current Programme - Repair & Leasing
2017	€4,023.12	Constituency commission reminder
2017	€4,582.07	Dog Breeding
2017	€22,572.48	Ireland 2040 (NPF)
2017	€22,747.36	Ireland 2040 (NPF)
2017	€20,405.55	Ireland 2040 (NPF)
2017	€4,747.70	Ireland 2040 (NPF)
2017	€7,479.05	Register Awareness campaign
2017	€8,438.65	4th Action Nitrates Programme
2017	€44,515.28	Extension of deadline for submissions for Ireland 2040
2017	€11,024.00	Library Strategy 2018-22
2018	€1,687.82	Transfer of Functions
2018	€43,078.09	Inviting submissions to Boundary Committees
2018	€5,307.73	Public consultations on Hinkley Point

### Local Authority Boundaries

582. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the report of the Drogheda Boundary Commission review has been formally adopted; if Louth and Meath county councils have formally entered into a service-level agreement based on the recommendations of the review to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26441/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** Issues in relation to the boundary between counties Louth and Meath at Drogheda, and other areas which were subject to recent boundary reviews, are being addressed in the context of proposals on local government pursuant to the Programme for a Partnership Government. I have been engaging in that regard with Government and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government, and I intend to announce proposals on completion of this process.

Regarding agreements between the local authorities, while the Drogheda Boundary Review Committee Report did not recommend an extension of the local authority boundary, it called for more enhanced co-operation between Louth and Meath County Councils. There are already many instances of successful practical working relationships between the councils which continue to be built upon through cross boundary co-operation.

The proposals which I will be announcing will ensure that effective joint arrangements are



in place in all cases to address cross-boundary issues.

### Public Consultation Process

583. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26464/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Information on the public consultations held by my Department and the number of replies received per consultation is set out in the second table. Work carried out by staff in my Department in relation to public consultations forms part of the Department's staff costs and is not itemised separately. Information in relation to the external costs that are sometimes associated with public consultations, e.g., venue hire or printing costs, is not routinely collated in my Department. However, where this information has been identified, it is set out in column four of the table.

Information in relation to public consultations held by agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. Arrangements have been put in place by each agency to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email addresses for each agency under my Department's remit are provided in the following table:

Agency	Email address
An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie
Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland	oireachtas@ervia.ie
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	publicreps@housingagency.ie
Housing Finance Agency	oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie
Irish Water	oireachtasmembers@water.ie
Local Government Management Agency	corporate@lgma.ie.
Ordnance Survey Ireland	Oireachtas@osi.ie
Property Registration Authority	reps@prai.ie
Residential Tenancies Board	OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie
Valuation Office	oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie

**Question:** To ask the Minister for Housing; Planning and Local Government the number of public consultations held by his Department or by a State agency under the remit of his Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form.

Year	Title of Public Consultation	No. of Replies Received	External Costs
2011	Public Consultation on Review of Part L (Dwellings)	60	0
2011	Public Consultation on the Review of Part A (Structure) of the Building Regulations	14	0
2011	Public Consultation on the Review of Part K (Stairways, Ladders, Ramps and Guards) of the Building Regulations	6	0
2011	Public Consultation - Draft Retail Planning Guidelines	102	0

Year	Title of Public Consultation	No. of Replies Received	External Costs
2012	Public Consultation on Draft Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2012	503	0
2012	Public Consultation - Draft Local Area Plan Guidelines	41	0
2012	Public Consultation on the Draft Development Contribution Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2012 - September 2012)	55	0
2012	Consultation on Water Sector Reform	c. 280	0
2013	Wind Energy Guidelines Focused Review	540	3,203
2013	Public Consultation - Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Article 19	8	0
2013	A New Planning and Consent Architecture for Development in the Marine Area	57	4,330
2013	Draft European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment)(Foreshore) Regulations and Draft European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Planning and Development) Regulations	4	4,390
2013	Public Consultation on Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme	30	4,405
2013	Public Consultation on Draft European Union (Construction Products) Regulations 2013	5	0
2013	Public Consultation on the Review of Part D (Materials and Workmanship) of the Building Regulations	4	0
2014	Consultation on the Timetable and Work Programme for the Development of the Second Cycle River Basin Management Plans	22	924
2014	Licensing of Outdoor Music Events – Review of Legislative Framework	52	8,350
2014	Public Consultation on Irish Language Scheme 2013-2016	4	740
2014	Call for Submissions - Statement of Strategy 2015 - 2017	0	0
2014	Proposed Water Charges Policy Direction to Commission for Energy Regulation 2014	21	0
2014	Planning Application Process and Procedures/Development Management Guidelines 2007	62	3,302
2014	Wind Energy Guidelines Focused Review: Draft statutory guidelines	c. 7500	4,898
2014	The National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee - Call for Submissions	4	0
2014	Proposed Amendment to Part E (Sound) of the Building Regulations	11	0
2014	Consultation Process on the General Scheme of the Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Amendment) Bill 2014	21	0
2015	Organisational review of an Bord Pleanála	113	2,531
2015	Significant Water Management Issues in Ireland	46	10,470
2015	Review of Building Control Regulations following 12 months of operating under S.I. No. 9 of 2014 (statutory certification of design and construction)	171	0
2015	Proposed Amendments to Technical Guidance Document H – Drainage and Wastewater Disposal	15	0
2016	Public consultation on a draft Code of Practice for Fire Safety in New and Existing Community Dwelling Houses	22	0
2016	Public Consultation on the Review of Part B (Fire Safety) of the Building Regulations 2016	28	0

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Year	Title of Public Consultation	No. of Replies Received	External Costs
2016	Public Consultation - Marine Strategy Framework Directive – Programme of Measures Phase (Article 13)	93	8,447
2016	Public Consultation on Irish Language Scheme 2017-2019	0	737
2016	Public Consultation – A Strategy for the Rented Sector	375	4,882
2016	Call for Submissions: Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019	52	0
2016	Draft Guidelines on Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000	18	0
2016	Consultation on draft Regulations to transpose the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive into Irish law	34	4,905
2016	Call for nominees to an expert commission on domestic public water services	18	0
2017	Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities - Draft Update (Dec. 2017)	63	0
2017	Draft fourth Nitrates Action Programme: Public Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment	15	8,439
2017	Housing Economics Research Programme - Invitation for Research Topic Suggestions	10	0
2017	Public Consultation on Ireland 2040 – Our Plan – Issues and Choices	3303	124,753
2017	Public Consultation on Ireland 2040 – Our Plan: National Planning Framework - Draft	1059	74,666
2017	Public Consultation – A Review of the Rent Predictability Measure	74	0
2017	Public Consultation on Ireland’s Nitrates Action Programme	28	4,882.00
2017	Public Consultation on Review of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness	122	0
2017	Public Consultation on the draft River Basin Management Plans for Ireland 2018-2021	938	6,469
2017	Public Consultation on the proposal to legislate for the prohibition of microbeads in certain products	3030	3,715
2017	Public Consultation on the Review of Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy for Buildings other than Dwellings) 2017	70	0
2017	Public Consultation on the review of the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016	40	0
2017	Public Consultation on the transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU: Environmental Impact Assessment	36	4,880
2018	Public Consultation on the Review of Local Electoral Areas	445	0
2018	Public Consultation - Draft Water Services Guidelines	23	0
2018	Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation - Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Plant, UK	41	88,309
2018	Public Consultation on Water Services Policy Statement	15	0
2018	Public Consultation on the Review of Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy for Dwellings) NZEB 2018 and Part F Ventilation	64	0

### Unfinished Housing Developments Data

584. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of unfinished developments that were exempt from local property tax, LPT, in 2013; the number that are now liable for LPT; if an audit by county of these developments has been

undertaken since 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26485/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Lead policy responsibility in relation to Local Property Tax is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

However, section 10 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provided that the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government may prescribe a list of unfinished housing developments to which an exemption from the local property tax applies. The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities, utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012. The survey was carried out over the course of Summer 2012.

Only developments (and parts of developments) that were deemed by local authorities to be in a “seriously problematic condition”, regardless of whether a developer was on or off site, were included in the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. These Regulations applied to 421 developments, or approximately 5,100 homes, which remain exempt from LPT.

In February 2018, my Department published the 2017 Annual Progress Report on Unfinished Housing Developments, which are regarded as developments not substantially complete in the context of the scope of works envisaged under the relevant planning permission. The report is available on my Department’s website at the following link: [http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/unfinished\\_housing\\_developments\\_-\\_2017\\_annual\\_progress\\_report\\_0.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/unfinished_housing_developments_-_2017_annual_progress_report_0.pdf).

As outlined in that report, the number of unfinished housing developments has reduced by 91% from around 3,000 developments in 2010 to 256 developments in 2017. In addition, the report shows that 74% of Local Authority areas now contain less than 10 unfinished developments, with four local authority areas having no occupied unfinished developments.

The number of developments, and dwellings deemed as ‘unfinished’, was recorded as part of the 2017 National Housing Developments Survey and figures at a county level are available at the following link: [http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/initiative\\_to\\_accelerate\\_taking\\_in\\_charge\\_of\\_residential\\_estates\\_-\\_initial\\_list\\_0.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/initiative_to_accelerate_taking_in_charge_of_residential_estates_-_initial_list_0.pdf).

I expect that the number of developments to be taken in charge will further reduce over time and I will shortly be publishing updated figures, alongside the report on the National Taking in Charge Initiative (NTICI), which will include findings and recommendations from the NTICI process.

### **Mobility Allowance**

585. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has reviewed the housing mobility grant payment limit in view of the rising costs of construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26516/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The terms and conditions governing the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme, including the payment limits, were reviewed in 2013/14 and I have no plans at this point for a further review. My main focus in respect of these grants is to spread their benefits by further increasing the funding available. This is what has been done for 2018, with an increase of some 11% over the 2017 allocation, bringing the overall available funding to €66.25m nationally.

The Mobility Aids Grant Scheme provides grants of up to €6,000 to cover a basic suite of works to address the mobility problems of a member of a household. In the event that the required works exceed that payment limit, assistance may be provided under the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability scheme, which provides grants of up to €30,000 to assist people with a disability to have necessary adaptations, repairs or improvement works carried out.

### **Short-Term Letting**

586. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding plans to regulate the short-term letting sector. [26526/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under Action 18 of the Strategy for the Rental Sector, my Department established a Working Group, involving representatives of all major public stakeholders with a policy interest in short-term lettings, to develop guidance in relation to planning applications, changes of use relating to short-term lettings and to examine the need for new regulatory arrangements.

The proposals under consideration by the Working Group, which has met on six occasions to date, have been aimed at facilitating short-term letting of accommodation within permanent residences, known as home-sharing, while protecting existing stock of residential property in areas of high demand, safeguarding neighbourhood amenity and consumer protection, and generating revenue to address any negative externalities of short-term letting.

The Working Group completed guidance for local authorities on planning applications relating to short-term lettings and my Department issued a circular on the matter last October. The circular is available on my Department's website at the following link: [http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/circular\\_pl10\\_aph3\\_2017.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/circular_pl10_aph3_2017.pdf).

The Group has since been focused on developing proposals for an appropriate comprehensive regulatory approach for short-term tourism-related lettings as well as identifying amendments to relevant legislation as may be necessary to give effect to such a regulatory regime.

The report of the Working Group has now been submitted to my Department and I expect to complete my consideration of it without delay.

### **Approved Housing Bodies**

587. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of his plans to secure the reclassification of approved housing bodies, AHBs, as non-Government sector; the details of all meetings held with the AHB sector; the details of all meetings with the Department of Finance; his plans to reverse the recent EUROSTAT reclassification of the AHB sector; and if it is policy to secure the reclassification without undermining the voluntary and not for profit ethos of the AHB sector. [26527/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As the Deputy will be aware, in April the Minister for Finance published the Draft Stability Programme Update for 2018. This included an analysis of the financial impact of the EUROSTAT decision to reclassify the majority of Tier 3 Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) as part of the local government sector. This was an important first step in the Government's assessment as to the impact of the EUROSTAT decision. The Department of Finance is now undertaking an



analysis of the implications for General Government Expenditure and General Government Debt up to 2021. My Department continues to engage with the Department of Finance in relation to this work.

Following the completion of the initial analysis, which has defined the scope of the financial implications of this decision for the Exchequer, my Department also held discussions with the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform to ensure that AHBs can continue to fulfil their full potential in the delivery of the targets set out in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

My Department is also engaging with the AHB sector and has had constructive discussions with it on the issue. I understand that the sector itself has engaged its own research on the matter and my Department is evaluating that research, as part of its ongoing consideration on the issue. I understand that the AHB representative bodies have indicated that they intend to submit further proposals to my Department concerning possible suggested ways forward, and these will be evaluated as soon as they are submitted. I remain fully committed to continuing to work with the AHB sector to assess the options available to create the necessary conditions to allow this classification decision to be revisited in the future.

As previously noted, the Government continues to see a central role for the voluntary housing sector in contributing to delivery of social housing under Rebuilding Ireland. It is committed to using all mechanisms and schemes, including through the AHB sector, to ensure that we maintain the momentum towards meeting the ambitious 50,000 social housing target under the Action Plan.

### **Housing Data**

588. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the work of the data working group and its plans to produce an agreed methodology for counting new home construction. [26528/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Data Analytics Group was set up in May 2017 to investigate the need for improvements to data across the area of all pillars of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness. To date its efforts have been focussed on Pillars 3 and 5 of Rebuilding Ireland, “Build more homes” and “Utilise existing housing stock”. A key consideration for the group is the provision of timely and detailed data to assess the numbers of new homes becoming available to meet housing demand.

In parallel to the work of the group, my Department initiated a process of discussions with the ESB and the Central Statistics Office to identify if the CSO could provide a more detailed disaggregation of the ESB data set. The Central Statistics Office has particular powers arising from the Statistics Acts and also has a wide breadth of other data sets at its disposal, including but not limited to the results of Census. The CSO can combine data from these various sources to create a new and much more detailed dataset for analysis and reporting.

Arising from this process the Central Statistics Office published a new measure of New Dwelling Completions on June 14th and I welcome the additional clarity that this has brought to this issue and the evidence it provides that Rebuilding Ireland is working to significantly increase the numbers of new homes available for use since its introduction.

The Housing Data Analytics Group will be considering the new CSO report at its next meeting and will continue its consideration of other initiatives in respect of housing statistics more



generally.

### Protected Disclosures

589. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to previous parliamentary questions, if he will make available an unredacted copy of the report submitted by Galway City Council relative to the case of a person (details supplied); if the protected disclosure submitted by the person is being examined by an independent person outside of and unconnected to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26590/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Further to my reply to Question No. 197 of 2 May 2018, my Department's assessment of both the submission made with reference to the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 by the individual concerned and Galway City Council's report in response to that submission, is now concluded.

As I informed the individual concerned in writing on 18 May 2018, the legal advice of the Office of the Attorney General in relation to my Department's assessment is being sought with a view to informing the appropriate next steps.

My Department will be in contact with the individual concerned once the outcome of that process is complete.

### Home Loan Scheme

590. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Rebuilding Ireland home loan applications received by each local authority; the number of these which have been approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26596/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As with the previous local authority home loan offerings, loan applications under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan are made directly to the local authority in whose area the property proposed for purchase is situated. My Department therefore does not directly collect information on the number of enquiries to local authorities regarding the loan or the number of loan applications received by local authorities.

As is currently the case, my Department will continue to publish information on the overall number and value of (i) local authority loan approvals and (ii) local authority loan drawdowns. Information up to Q3 2017 is available on the Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity>, and this information will be updated on a quarterly basis as additional data is compiled.

The Housing Agency provides a central support service which assesses valid loan applications that are made to the local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities as to whether loans should be offered to applicants. I have asked the Agency to centrally compile figures of the numbers of applications that it has assessed.

The most recent figures, as at the end of May, indicate that the Agency had received a total of 1,499 applications for assessment from local authorities, 1,150 of which were deemed to be valid. Of these valid applications, 876 have been assessed and 52% of the valid applications

that have been assessed by the Agency have been recommended for approval.

Each local authority must have in place a credit committee which makes the final decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the regulations and having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

### House Purchase Schemes

591. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a tenant to a local authority or a tenant referred to a housing association by a local authority can avail of a Rebuilding Ireland home loan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26597/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is designed to enable credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range. The scheme is targeted at first-time buyers who have access to an adequate deposit and have the capacity to repay a mortgage, but who are unable to access a mortgage sufficient for them to purchase their first home. The low rate of fixed interest associated with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan provides first-time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not otherwise be able to afford at a higher interest rate.

Single applicants for the loan must not be earning greater than €50,000 gross per annum. The combined income of joint applicants must not be greater than €75,000 per annum. There are no set minimum income limits; however, applicants do need to have sufficient borrowing and repayment capacity and must be capable of repaying the mortgage in accordance with the statutory credit policy underpinning the loan. These income limits are unchanged from the previous local authority loan offerings.

Full details of the loan's eligibility criteria and other information is available from the dedicated Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan website: <http://rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie/>.

Any person who meets the eligibility criteria may apply for a loan, regardless of whether or not they are on the local authority housing list or qualify for social housing support.

### House Purchase Schemes

592. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when persons who are legally divorced or separated and have legally discharged their interest in the family home are applying for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme, the terms of the financial gain provisions that currently prevent applicants from applying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26601/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme enables credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range, where they cannot obtain sufficient mortgage finance from a commercial lender.

As with the previous local authority loan offerings, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is available to first-time buyers only. There is no change to this regard. This is set out in the regulations governing the Scheme so as to ensure the effective targeting of limited resources.

Applicants who are separated or divorced may be treated as first-time buyers, in accordance with the regulations, if they meet certain conditions, including:

- they are separated or divorced under a court order or by a separation agreement;
- the property being purchased is the first property since leaving the family home;
- they have left the family home and retain no interest in it; or
- the other party has remained in the family home.

In meeting the conditions as set out above, in particular that the other party has remained in the family home and that the potential applicant has relinquished any rights they had over that property, no financial gain should have been made by the potential applicant in exchange for relinquishing their rights to the property in this manner. Were the individual to have made a financial gain in releasing their rights to the property, such as being bought out by the other party who remains resident in it, they would be deemed to have been compensated for their interest in the property, and therefore not be eligible as a first-time buyer.

The loans are provided by the Local Authorities and the applications are assessed by the Housing Agency on their behalf. Each local authority must have in place a credit committee which makes the final decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the regulations and having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

### **Residential Tenancies Board Staff**

593. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of requests received from the Residential Tenancies Board for permission to employ additional staff in 2017 and to date in 2018; the number approved, pending or refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26646/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Demand for the RTB's services has increased significantly due to the increasing size of the rental sector and also because of the changing regulatory structure. Furthermore, a number of additional functions have been added to the remit of the RTB since 2017, including:

- implementation of new Rent Predictability Measures, such as the introduction of Rent Pressure Zones and associated on-going analysis,
- increased engagement with the Approved Housing Body (AHB) Sector,
- integration of Rent Tribunal functions into the RTB,
- introduction of free Mediation Services,
- development of a voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme,
- establishment of a one-stop shop,
- establishment of one-person Tribunals,
- increased education/awareness and research role, and
- consideration and analysis in respect of a Deposit Protection Scheme.

Legislative changes are currently being drafted which will make it an offence to implement

rent increases that contravene the limit of a 4% increase in rent per annum in Rent Pressure Zones and the RTB will be given the necessary powers and resources to protect tenants from illegal rent increases. The RTB, in consultation with my Department, is currently in the process of developing a new workforce plan, which will outline future staff resource requirements, taking into account the plans to expand the RTB's role.

The table sets out staffing requests made by the RTB since 2017.

Year	Additional Resources Sought	Additional Resources Sanctioned
2017	Sanction requested for 10.5 additional posts.	10.5 additional posts sanctioned
2018 (to 15 June)	Sanction requested for 1 additional post.	1 additional post sanctioned

### House Purchase Schemes

594. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of an application by a person (details supplied) under the Rebuilding Ireland initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26657/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is provided by local authorities in accordance with the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans) Regulations 2018, which broadly set out the eligibility criteria to avail of the loans as well as the obligations of the local authorities and duties of borrowers in respect of the Scheme. In accordance with the regulations as Minister, I have issued a statutory credit policy which obliges each local authority to establish a credit committee to assess and decide on applications and an appeals mechanism for those who are not satisfied with a decision of the credit committee.

To support local authorities in operating the Scheme the Housing Agency provides a central assessment service to the authorities and makes recommendations to them in respect of each application submitted to it. The final decision on loan approval is a matter for each local authority and its credit committee to make on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on all housing loan applications must be made in accordance with the Regulations and the statutory credit policy, having regard to the recommendation of the Housing Agency, in order to ensure consistency of treatment for all applicants.

Under legislation, a local authority is independent in the performance of its functions and as Minister, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any individual case with which a housing authority is or may be concerned. I am therefore not in a position to comment on or deal with an individual case.

The person concerned should therefore contact the local authority to which they applied for the loan for an update in relation to their application.

### Social and Affordable Housing Data

595. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average cost of social housing units delivered in 2017 by schemes (details supplied) in tabular form. [26669/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The data requested is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible. This exercise will involve the examination of an extremely voluminous amount of

data and it may not be possible to furnish the material within the timeframe set out in Standing Order 42 A (1)(b). However, My Department will endeavour to provide the information to you as soon as possible.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant**

596. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the capital allocation for 2018 for schemes (details supplied) in tabular form. [26670/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under the Disabled Persons Grants Scheme (DPG's), my Department provides funding to local authorities for adaptations and extensions to the existing social housing stock to meet the needs of local authority tenants. The scheme applies to adaptations that are necessary to address the needs of older people or people with a disability who may require stair-lifts; grab-rails; showers; wet-rooms and ramps etc. It also provides funding for extensions such as the installation of a downstairs bedroom or bathroom.

The scheme is demand-led and allows local authorities to prioritise works based on need. Exchequer funding meets 90% of the cost of such works, with the local authority providing the remaining 10%.

The scheme also provides funding for Improvement Works in Lieu of Social Housing (IWIL's) in order to improve or extend privately owned accommodation where the applicant is already approved for social housing. This allows people to remain in private housing while their housing need is met without increasing the strain on current social housing stock and also reduces the numbers of persons who might otherwise find themselves homeless.

In order to ensure that there were no delays for priority and urgent cases, all local authorities were advised that they may undertake works of up to 65% of their 2017 allocation in advance of the notification of their 2018 allocation. This allowed them to plan and progress works under the scheme and allows for the full utilisation of the 2018 allocation throughout the year.

Local authorities have submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this scheme in 2018. These proposals have now been evaluated and funding allocations will be confirmed to the local authorities shortly.

### **Legislative Measures**

597. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the building control Bill will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26691/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Stronger compliance with building standards and the broader building control reform agenda are critical priorities for the Government, and a commitment has been given to placing the Construction Industry Register Ireland, or CIRI, on a statutory footing. CIRI was established on a voluntary basis in 2014 and over 800 building and contracting entities are currently included on the register.

At the end of May 2017, the Government approved the draft heads of a Bill to place the CIRI on a statutory footing and the Bill was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee's report



was received on 14 December 2017 and its recommendations are being considered. In parallel, the drafting of the Bill is being progressed but I am not in a position at this stage to give a precise indication of the timeline for the Bill's publication.

The main objective of the legislation is to develop and promote a culture of competence, good practice and compliance with Building Regulations within the builder community of the construction sector. The establishment of a robust, mandatory, statutory register of builders and specialist contractors is an essential consumer protection measure giving those who engage a registered builder the assurance that they are dealing with a competent and compliant operator. In addition, it will complement the reforms which have been made through the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and contribute to the development of an enhanced culture of competence and compliance in the construction sector.

### **Housing Assistance Payment**

598. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the location at which a housing assistance payment, HAP, applicant can redeem the full cost of borrowings they have had to make in order to pay the rent while the HAP application is being processed; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a HAP application can take 12 to 15 weeks to be processed and is not backdated and consequently the applicant will have to borrow money to pay the rent in the interim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26693/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is deemed to be a social housing support under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. As a long term housing support, an assessment of housing need must be completed in order for a household to qualify for HAP. Any household with an identified housing need is eligible for HAP. The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 provide that subject to conditions, a housing authority shall deal with such an application within a period of 12 weeks. Local authorities will prioritise housing needs assessments for those in greatest need and average waiting times are significantly shorter than the statutory maximum in many areas.

Under the HAP scheme, eligible households source their own accommodation in the private rented sector. My Department does not hold details on the processing times for HAP applications or payments. The earliest date a HAP payment will issue to a landlord is the date a complete and valid HAP application has been received by the local authority. Limerick City and County Council provide a highly effective transactional shared service on behalf of all HAP local authorities. This HAP Shared Services Centre (SSC) manages all HAP related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord. Once a HAP application has been received and confirmed as valid by the relevant local authority, it is then processed by the HAP SSC. On average, HAP applications are processed by the HAP Shared Service Centre within 1 working day of receipt. Any rental payment arising for a given month will then be made to a landlord on the last Wednesday of that month.

More than 37,000 households are currently in receipt of HAP support. My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of the HAP scheme and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.



### **Housing Data**

599. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of homes brought into use in 2016 and 2017 under the repair and lease and the buy and renew schemes, in tabular form; the expenditure in each year for each scheme; the number of homes acquired via the Housing Agency in 2017 and to date in 2018; and the cost of these houses in each of these years. [26696/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The data requested is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

### **Housing Data**

600. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Part V units delivered in each local authority area in 2017, in tabular form; and the average cost of those units in each area. [26697/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The data requested is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

### **Housing Issues**

601. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the measures which can be taken with regard to a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26700/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The taking-in-charge of housing developments is a matter for the relevant local authority under section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

In April 2016, my Department launched a National Taking-in-Charge Initiative (NTICI) to encourage local authorities to trial new approaches and working methods in supporting and accelerating overall national and local action on the taking-in-charge process of housing estates, including estates with developer-provided water services infrastructure (DPI). However, the NTICI was not intended as an ongoing funding support to the taking-in-charge process but rather an exercise in developing new approaches to analysing the level of estates not yet taken in charge and the steps to be taken in expediting applications on hand.

The findings and recommendations from the NTICI process will be included in a report on the initiative that I intend to publish shortly. The publication of the NTICI report will be of value to local authorities and other stakeholders in applying the lessons from the pilot authorities, in a more general roll-out of a streamlined approach to taking-in-charge.

The National Development Plan (NDP) also includes provision of €31 million for resolving developer-provided infrastructure for the period 2018-2021. This is clear evidence of the Government's commitment to transitioning from a pilot phase under NTICI to a programme phase, commencing with an Estimates provision of €3m in 2018 and on which I intend to announce further details in the coming months.

It is therefore a matter for Kerry County Council, as the authority that granted planning permission for the development in question, to consider what steps it intends to take in relation to the taking-in-charge or otherwise of the development in conjunction with the residents, in the light of its experience with the NTICI and its identification of appropriate funding to resolve any issues in relation to the development. This may include the proceeds from enforcing bonds and securities, its own sources or the measures outlined in the NDP.

### **Seaweed Harvesting Licences**

**602. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding the licensing and mechanical harvesting of seaweed and kelp in Bantry Bay; if a licence (details supplied) will be revoked in view of the judgment as reported which confirms he has the power to revoke the licence for Bantry Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26764/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The licence in question was approved in principle by the then Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2011 and the legal papers giving effect to that decision were completed in 2014 by the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. As leave to apply for reliefs by way of Judicial Review on certain matters related to the licence has been granted by the High Court, I am not in a position to comment on the matter in detail. However, I can confirm that there has been no judgment regarding Condition 12.2 of the licence. Accordingly, as I have previously stated, I have no plans to suspend or revoke the licence in advance of the outcome of the Judicial Review.

### **Housing Policy**

**603. Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the cost rental pilot project has gone out to tender; when construction is due to begin; the number of units due to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26782/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Government is determined to make cost rental a major part of the Irish housing system, similar to the role that it plays in many European countries. Under the cost rental approach, rents are set at levels to recover construction costs and to facilitate the management and administration of developments, with only a minimal amount of retained earnings included.

The pilot project is currently being progressed by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, at Enniskerry Road, in conjunction with the Housing Agency and Approved Housing Bodies (AHB), using land owned by the Housing Agency. Delivering 50 cost rental units as part of a 150-home development, this pilot is providing very valuable learning to inform the wider roll-out of the cost rental model.

The development of local authority sites for cost rental homes must comply with the Government's Capital Works Management Framework and procurement rules, the objectives of which are to ensure greater cost certainty, better value for money, and financial accountability.

Planning permission for the Enniskerry Road project is in place, and I expect that the development will go out to tender in the coming weeks, with a site start later this year.

## Housing Estates

604. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the public body responsible for road safety in private housing estates that the local council has not taken in charge, such as in a situation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26795/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Roads and thoroughfares in private housing estates which have not been taken in charge are not public roads within the meaning of the Roads Act 1993. Notwithstanding this, local authorities have statutory powers in relation to their roads and planning functions which enable the taking in charge of housing estates, once completed, and a valid application for taking in charge has been received from the developer or residents. They also have extensive enforcement powers to ensure that the conditions attaching to planning permissions are complied with.

The taking-in-charge of residential estates is therefore a matter for the relevant local authority and is provided for under section 180 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and procedures for this are initiated under section 11 of the Roads Act 1993. A planning authority, where requested by the developer and/or by the majority of the owners of the houses involved, may take a development in charge, including the provision of roads, open spaces, car parks, and sewers.

My Department, by way of circular letter PD 1/2008, dated 26 February 2008, issued updated policy guidance to planning authorities on Taking in Charge of Residential Developments/Management Arrangements. A copy of the circular is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C16779%2Cen.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C16779%2Cen.pdf).

This circular advised each planning authority to develop or update, as appropriate, its policy on taking-in-charge, based on the following principles (among others):

- Certain core facilities/infrastructure to be taken in charge on request - public roads and footpaths, unallocated surface parking areas, public lighting, public water supply, foul and storm water drainage and public open spaces; and
- The procedures for taking-in-charge to begin promptly, on foot of a request by the majority of the residents in the development or by the developer, as appropriate. Protocols, including time frames, must be set out by planning authorities to respond to requests for taking-in-charge.

Local authorities also perform many important road safety functions, and if residents have concerns in relation to the safety of roads and public thoroughfares in a particular housing development, these should be referred to the designated road safety officer within the relevant local authority for consideration in the context of the enforcement and taking-in-charge functions of that authority.

## Pyrite Issues

605. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a redress scheme will be announced for homeowners with homes affected by mica in principle; if a ring-fenced promissory tranche of funding will be allocated as part of budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26862/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government**

**(Deputy Damien English):** I want at the outset to acknowledge the difficult situations that can arise for home owners when building defects emerge after completion of their homes. These difficult situations can have a serious impact on the lives of those concerned.

The Expert Panel on concrete blocks was established by my Department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

The panel had the following terms of reference:

(i) To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;

(ii) To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;

(iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and

(iv) To submit a report within six months.

On 13 June 2017, the report of the Expert Panel was published and included eight recommendations which my Department are actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders.

The Department is prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Technical Committee, established to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol, held its inaugural meeting on 11 September 2017 and has held several further meetings since. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders. The draft standard, which was published on 6 June 2018 for public consultation is available at: [www.nsainep.ie/Home/Details/11454](http://www.nsainep.ie/Home/Details/11454), and will run for a period of six weeks.

Last year I visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties. On 18 December 2017, I again visited Donegal and met with key stakeholders to provide an update on the progress to date. I made a similar visit to Mayo on 26 January 2018.

Once the public consultation process has been finalised and the standardised protocol is in place, I will be in a position to provide a further update on progress at that time.

In addition, I am currently considering what further actions may be required to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the problems that have emerged in the two counties.

### **Legislative Measures**

606. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding the commercial rates Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26923/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Commercial rates form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. However, the legislative basis for the levying of rates consists of over 20 separate pieces of legislation, some dating back to the 19th century.

My Department developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates into a single enactment and, in this regard, the Government last year approved the drafting of a commercial rates Bill. The Bill is currently with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for drafting, with a view to its introduction as soon as possible.

### **Commemorative Events**

607. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the next meeting of the all-party consultation group on commemorations will meet in view of the fact that the group has not met for over a year. [26188/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I intend to convene a meeting of the all-party group within the next few weeks.

### **Architectural Heritage**

608. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason no funding or communication has been allocated for major repair works to a structure (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26270/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The Structures at Risk Fund (SRF) supports conservation works to historic structures, in both private and public ownership, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. The Fund encourages the conservation, regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and helps to secure protected structures which might otherwise be lost. The allocation for the 2018 scheme is €1.3 m.

The 2018 Structures at Risk Fund was announced in November 2017 and open for applications until 31 January 2018. The SRF is generally administered by local authorities, who put forward projects to my Department for funding. These are assessed by an expert panel based on the significance of the structure, urgency of works, quality of method statement and efficacy of works proposed.

A total of 128 applications were received from 30 local authorities and 76 projects were approved, including three projects in the local authority area referred to by the Deputy. Due to the volume of applications received this year, and the high standard of applications generally, it was not possible to fund every eligible project.

Local authorities were informed by letter of 5 April 2018 of the successful and unsuccessful projects. All local authorities then contacted applicants to inform them of the outcome of their application.

I understand that the applicants mentioned by the Deputy were contacted by their local authority and apprised of the outcome of their application. I also understand that the applicants have been in informal contact with my Department and initial feedback on their application has been provided to them. They were advised by my officials to contact the Architectural Con-



servation Officer in the local authority for more detailed feedback and advice, and this has also been provided. There has been no further correspondence that my Department is aware of in relation to this application.

The best advice for owners, in relation to individual historic structures, is generally to remain in contact with the Architectural Conservation Officer in their local authority, who is well placed to provide advice and assistance in relation to the grant schemes.

### **Museum Projects**

609. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding schemes available for museums for annual running costs and once off grant aid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26334/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department operates a Regional Museum Exhibitions Scheme in 2018, applications for which closed on Friday 15th June. This Scheme is designed to assist local, regional and specialised museums contribute to the fabric and meaning of the Decade of Commemorations through an exhibition programme for locals and visitors alike. This will allow local and specific interpretations of historical events and their legacy and of the multiple identities and traditions which are part of the Irish historical experience. Maximum grants under this Scheme are €15,000 and the Scheme has an allocation of €150,000 for 2018.

My Department also operates a Scheme of funding support for small self-contained projects which seek to enhance, celebrate or commemorate the artistic, cultural, musical, film or heritage of the Island of Ireland on a North/South basis. The Co-operation with Northern Ireland Scheme 2018 is now closed for applications and replies to applicants should issue over the coming weeks. Maximum grants under this Scheme are €15,000 and the Scheme has an allocation of €175,000 for 2018.

My Department also has a scheme to support greater regional and local access to material held in the National Collections. The Scheme is designed to fund the transport, cost of insurance and exhibiting costs for pieces from the National Collections to appropriate institutions around the country, subject to lending criteria. The 2018 allocation is €25,000 for this scheme and letters to applicants will issue shortly.

These schemes are in addition to the Capital Support Schemes and funding for Arts and Culture organisations, details of which may be found on my Department's website at [www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/projects-and-programmes/capital-support-schemes-and-funding-for-arts-and-culture-organisations/](http://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/projects-and-programmes/capital-support-schemes-and-funding-for-arts-and-culture-organisations/).

For general assistance, museums should contact the Heritage Officer in their relevant local authority in the first instance.

### **Wildlife Conservation**

610. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures in place to protect the five species of endangered turtles that live off the west coast in view of claims that they are being actively hunted and captured as domestic pets. [26355/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department is responsible for the implementation of the legislative framework around the protec-



tion and conservation of species and habitats in Ireland, including the Wildlife Acts and the EU Habitats Directive.

There are no turtle species permanently resident in the seas off the west coast of Ireland. While 5 species of endangered turtles have been recorded in Irish waters, only one of these, the leatherback turtle can survive in the cooler temperate waters around Ireland. Consequently, it is the only species of turtle which Ireland reports on under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive.

During the summer months, small numbers of leatherback turtles forage in Irish waters before returning to tropical regions to breed. This species is protected globally by a range of international instruments, including the EU Habitats Directive and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and nationally by the Wildlife Acts. While the global conservation status of leatherback turtles is critically endangered, in Ireland it is classified as a species of least concern, meaning that there is no evidence of a population decline in Irish waters.

My Department has no evidence that leatherback turtles, which can reach over 2 meters in length, are being actively hunted or captured around Ireland. Likewise, my Department has not received any reports of leatherback turtles being kept as domestic pets.

Further information on leatherback turtles is available at <https://species.biodiversityireland.ie/profile.php?taxonId=128443&taxonName=leather>.

### Departmental Expenditure

611. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount paid per project to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2016 to date by year, amount and project name; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26386/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Total expenditure of €178,981 was made by my Department to the company referred to in the Question. Details of this expenditure is set out in tabular form over the period requested.

#### 2016

Year	Project	€
2016	Advertisements for NPWS staff vacancies	10,228
2016	Advertising events, opening hours, etc., in National Parks	652
2016	Advertising regarding SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) designations	53,487
2016	Advertising Irish Raised Bog Restoration project	7,537
2016	Advertising hedgerows notice	4,043
2016	Advertising regarding NPWS zoo inspections	1,047
2016	Total	76,994

#### 2017

Year	Project	€
2017	Advertisement of public consultations under Section 482 tax relief	2,596
2017	Advertisements for NPWS staff vacancies	9,280
2017	Advertising events, opening hours, etc., in National Parks	2,690

Year	Project	€
2017	Advertising regarding airstrips in Gaeltacht area	2,233
2017	Advertising regarding predator control in Shannon area	334
2017	Advertising regarding curlew nest protection	2,115
2017	Advertising regarding SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) designations	43,813
2017	Advertising regarding Agri-Environment Scheme	240
2017	Advertising regarding National Biodiversity Action Plan	6,873
2017	Advertising hedgerows notice	4,313
2017	Advertising hunting licences notice	1,218
2017	Total	75,705

## 2018

Year	Project	€
2018	Advertisements for NPWS staff vacancies	2,403
2018	Advertising events, opening hours, etc., in National Parks	584
2018	Advertising regarding SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) designations	19,357
2018	Advertising NPWS staff transfer to new premises in North King St.	1,916
2018	Advertising regarding SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) designations	2,022
2018	Total	26,282

### Public Consultation Process

612. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of public consultations held by her Department or by a State agency under the remit of her Department; the number of replies received per consultation; and the cost of each consultation in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [26457/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In light of the volume of information requested by the Deputy, arrangements are being made for this information to be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy, in accordance with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.

### Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

613. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a payment from the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26478/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. With respect to 36 raised bog natural heritage area sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;
- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period up to 14 January 2014;

- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

The applicant was paid for Year 1 of the scheme (2014) in September 2014. I am advised that a report on an inspection of the plot of bog relevant to the application has recently been completed. My Department has since been in contact with the applicant and further information has been requested. On receipt of this information, the Department will then be in a position to process the application further.

### **Cultural Policy**

614. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of funding for a location (details supplied); and the timeline for the work to be completed. [26685/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Last year, my Department awarded a significant capital grant to the project referred to by the Deputy for the enhancement and refurbishment of this cultural venue. This grant was awarded under the Arts and Culture Capital scheme 2016-2018.

Officials in my Department are in active correspondence with the project developers in relation to the progress on the project. As with all capital grants from my Department, the allocation is managed under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the project promoter. The SLA sets out a number of conditions around the management of the project including the period of time for drawdown of grant.

### **Irish Language**

615. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the action she has taken to support and preserve spoken Irish; the further steps she is taking to ensure spoken Irish is recorded and preserved for the benefit of future generations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26768/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh) (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 represents the foundation stone of the Government's policy on the Irish language. In that context, by way of supporting the maintenance and development of the Irish language as a community and household language in the Gaeltacht, the implementation of the Strategy is recognised as a key priority in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The Strategy outlines an integrated approach to the Irish language, in which 9 areas of action are specified, including education, the Gaeltacht, the family, public services, the media, technology and the economy. The relevant actions under the Strategy are being implemented by the various stakeholders, including relevant Government Departments.

My Department is currently finalising an action plan for the period 2018-2022 which will contain specified strategic priorities for the next five years along with a timeline for their implementation. It is intended that this action plan will be published shortly.

In terms of directly ensuring that spoken Irish is recorded and preserved for the benefit of future generations, the Department has funded a number of projects in recent years which are relevant to this area, namely:

## **Logainm.ie - Sound Archive of the Placenames Branch**

Logainm.ie is a comprehensive management system for data, archival records and placenames research conducted by the State. It is a public resource for Irish people at home and abroad, and for all those who appreciate the rich heritage of Irish placenames. The sound archive consists of the placenames recordings of my Department's Placenames Branch. It contains more than 1,200 hours of recordings made mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. The recordings were made in 24 counties and placenames were collected from more than 4,000 people during that period.

The audio material and its catalogue were digitised in 2009. As a result of that work, the audio and catalogue material are now available online for the staff of the Placenames Branch and for other researchers. In addition, the Logainm website has associated sound files which allow users to listen to the pronunciation of each placename in Irish and English.

## **Dúchas.ie**

The Dúchas project, co-funded by my Department, with support from the National Lottery and University College Dublin, is the result of a partnership, beginning in 2012, between the National Folklore Collection in UCD, one of the largest folklore collections in the world, UCD Digital Library and Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge, the Irish-medium teaching and research unit in DCU. The objective of the project is to digitize the National Folklore Collection and make it available to the public online. To date, almost 500,000 manuscript pages of folklore compiled by schoolchildren in the 1930s have been digitized and published on the ducharas.ie website.

Last year, over 11,000 digitised photographs from the The Photographic Collection, were added to the site. The aim of the current phase of the project is to continue the development, digitisation and editorial work, focusing on the Main Manuscript Collection. The collection also has over 12,000 hours of audio recordings and 1,000 hours of video recordings in its archives, many of them in the Irish language. Most of the sound recordings are on tape but other formats are also included and it is envisaged that many of these will be digitised to ensure their ongoing preservation.