

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 8 to 10, inclusive, resubmitted.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

11. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Taoiseach if he has met Presbyterian Church leaders recently. [26559/18]

The Taoiseach: On 22nd January 2018 I met with representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches.

I was accompanied by the Ministers for Justice and Equality; Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Education and Skills; Health; Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This was the second in a series of meetings that I will be holding with dialogue partners. We discussed important social and economic issues facing Irish society including Brexit, education issues and the 8th Amendment of the Constitution as well as International issues.

Churches and faith communities play an important role in Irish life and I think it is very beneficial that Government should engage with them in a structured way.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

12. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach if he has held meetings with Church leaders and faith communities. [26521/18]

The Taoiseach: On 22nd January 2018 I met with representatives of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches.

I was accompanied by the Ministers for Justice and Equality; Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Education and Skills; Health; Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This was the second in a series of meetings that I will be holding with dialogue partners. We discussed important social and economic issues facing Irish society including Brexit, education issues and the 8th Amendment of the Constitution as well as International issues.

On 31 August last, I held a formal meeting under the structured dialogue process with representatives of the Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Eamon Martin.

I was accompanied at this meeting by the then Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enter-

prise and Innovation and by the Ministers for Education and Skills; Health; Transport, Tourism and Sport and Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

A wide ranging discussion took place on a range of important national and international issues including the World Meeting of Families in August 2018 and the possibility of a visit to Ireland by the Pope, education issues, the 8th Amendment of the Constitution, Northern Ireland, overseas development aid, social and justice issues.

Churches and faith communities play an important role in Irish life and I think it is very beneficial that Government should engage with them in a structured way.

I also received a courtesy call from Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, as is traditional around Christmas time and the New Year.

Questions Nos. 13 to 34, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 35 to 46, inclusive, answered orally.

Brexit Issues

47. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will report on his Department's preparations for Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27604/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Brexit will have implications across all aspects of the business of the European Union. While the vote does not give rise to fundamental strategic issues for Defence Forces operations or for Ireland's continuing engagement within the EU in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), it is expected that Brexit will have an impact on future developments in the Defence sphere.

Structures have been put in place in my Department to address the potential challenges arising from Brexit including the assignment of responsibility to a senior official at Assistant Secretary General level for Brexit related matters. The senior official is leading the Department's input to deliberations within the framework established across Government. In addition, the Management Board is acting as a clearing house for Brexit and maintains oversight of all Brexit related matters on an ongoing basis.

In respect of the border, the potential implications in this regard will emerge during the course of the negotiations. It is this Government's stated goal to try to ensure that the current on-island border arrangements are maintained to the greatest extent possible.

Responsibility for the security aspect of border control rests with An Garda Síochána, while the Revenue Commissioners also have responsibilities relating to their particular mandate. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the civil power and the civil authorities. The Defence Forces at all times keep operational plans under constant review and there will continue to be ongoing close liaison between An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces regarding security matters, including through regular coordination and liaison meetings.

My Department, together with the Naval Service and the Air Corps are also working closely with the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA), who are the competent authority on fishery matters.

In addition, the Government Task Force (GTF) on Emergency Planning has been briefed

on potential emergency planning implications/issues that may arise from Brexit. The GTF will continue to monitor any future impacts on emergency planning that may arise as the Brexit negotiations unfold.

Public Service Pay Commission Reports

48. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the report of the Public Service Pay Commission on issues affecting the Defence Forces is on schedule to be published before the end of 2018; and if he has engaged with an association (details supplied) before preparing his Department's submission to the commission. [27736/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In 2017, under my direction, the Department of Defence brought issues of recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces to the attention of the Public Sector Pay Commission. As a direct result of that initiative the Public Service Pay Commission is now beginning an in-depth evidence based examination of those issues.

The Public Service Pay Commission has requested hard data and detailed information from my Department. My Department has been working in close collaboration with Military management with the aim of preparing the material requested.

My Department has forwarded an initial tranche of information to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to Air Corps pilots. Further material in relation to the challenges in the Defence sector will be forwarded to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, for onward submission to the Public Service Pay Commission, in the coming weeks, as the collation of data and information is completed.

I understand that both PDFORRA and RACO were requested to make a submissions by the Commission. I am informed that the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations made their submissions independently.

I do not have responsibility for the Public Service Pay Commission and therefore cannot comment on the timelines for the completion of its work.

The Department of Defence will continue to engage with the Public Service Pay Commission throughout the process and will give due consideration to the findings and recommendations that arises from the work of the Commission.

Defence Forces Resources

49. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps continue to have available to them the equipment, training and personnel to meet all eventualities in which they might be called upon in emergency or other situations; if adequate updating, upgrading and upskilling takes place with regularity in all cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27711/18]

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

The Government is committed to ensuring the upgrade of Defence Forces equipment and capability, within the financial envelope available. As part of budgetary negotiations in 2017, additional capital funding was allocated bringing the capital envelope up to €416m over the 2018-2021 timeframe. This will allow for significant investment in equipment and infrastructure over the coming years as identified and prioritised in the White Paper on Defence. It emphasises the importance attached by this Government to ensuring that the Defence Forces have the capability necessary to deliver all the roles assigned by Government.

In relation to the Army, there is ongoing investment in force protection, transport, communications and information technology, weapons and ammunition. A significant investment is being made in the Army's fleet of MOWAG Armoured Personnel Carriers. A mid-life upgrade programme is underway at a cost of €55m plus VAT which will extend the utility of the fleet and provide greater levels of protection, mobility and firepower. The first nine upgraded vehicles were recently delivered. Additionally, twenty four (24) 4 x 4 Armoured Utility Vehicles have been acquired and it is planned to take delivery later this year of new armoured logistic vehicles. These measures will also enhance force protection.

In relation to the Air Corps, the Government is currently investing over €32m plus VAT in three fixed wing utility aircraft suitably equipped for ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) with delivery to commence in 2019. A tender competition is also in progress to replace the CASA Maritime Patrol aircraft.

Within the Naval Service, examples of the approach include the acquisition of new modern ships under the ship replacement programme. Three Offshore Patrol Vessels have been delivered since 2014 and a fourth ship, to be named, LÉ George Bernard Shaw, is due to be delivered later this year, reflecting an investment of over €250m. While a project has commenced to acquire a new multi role vessel to replace the flagship LÉ Eithne.

The examples given, whilst not exhaustive, demonstrate my commitment to update and upgrade the Defence Forces equipment and capabilities. In this regard, the primary function of training and education of personnel in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the military capabilities necessary to fulfil the roles laid down by Government. There is an ongoing development of capabilities and skills of personnel in the Defence Forces with a planned programme of training of personnel which is underpinned by an analysis of training needed to meet operational output requirements and capability development needs. A long term strategy has been adopted with current planning horizons out to 2021. Considerable training expertise exists within the Defence Forces and this expertise is continually benchmarked against best international practice. Where the capability exists, highly trained and knowledgeable training instructors deliver relevant training in-house. Where appropriate, Defence Forces personnel are also sent on relevant external courses, both within Ireland and internationally.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the necessary resources available to them, including a modern and effective range of equipment and training which is line with best international standards in order to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government. This includes the provision of relevant assistance in response to emergency or other situations that may arise.

Defence Forces Remuneration

50. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on whether the issues of pay and conditions for members of the Defence Forces and the lack of suitable equipment to enable them to carry out their duties are the crucial factors in the difficulty in recruitment and retention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27742/18]

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

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

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for further increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid.

The Defence Forces offer competitive starting salaries and excellent career opportunities for any young person thinking about joining. Following the series of pay increases in the last 12 months, a three star private on completion of training starts on €27,257 (inclusive of military service allowance). This represents an increase of 25% on the starting pay scale of this rank in the last 12 months. This starting pay compares very favourably with other entry level pay rates across the public service.

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

I am not aware of a situation where lack of equipment is impinging on recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces. I am committed to ensuring that the Defence Forces continue to be suitably equipped, in line with EU and international best practice, to fulfil all roles assigned by Government. In this regard future equipment priorities for the Defence Forces are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence, as part of the capability development and equipment planning process.

The Defence Forces have a higher turnover rate than other areas in the public service. This is a feature of military organisations internationally and is not unique to Ireland. There is ongoing recruitment to meet demand and the Defence Forces must compete with other employers in a strong economy. The Defence Forces provides excellent developmental opportunities for those who wish to pursue a military career and continues to attract high quality applicants for available positions.

Question No. 51 answered with Question No. 42.

Permanent Structured Co-operation

52. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the feedback received on the national implementation plan for PESCO projects; and the date on which the plan will be published. [27733/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The establishment of PESCO represents a further development in EU Cooperation in support of international peace and security under Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Participation in PESCO confirms our position as a fully committed EU Member State and enhances our capacity to

influence the future EU agenda on CSDP.

Under PESCO, Member States come together in different groups to develop and make available additional capabilities and enablers for peacekeeping and crisis management operations. Security and Defence is a key priority for the Union in the face of new threats and security challenges which are beyond the capacity of a State acting alone and where member States must work together to address them – e.g. Hybrid, Cyber and trans-national terrorism threats. PESCO provides a mechanism whereby member States can work together to address these challenges. Ireland is participating in two PESCO projects - A Centre of Excellence for EU Military Training Missions and the Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance Systems. Ireland has observer status on a further eight PESCO projects.

The PESCO National Implementation Plan sets out Member States' plans to meet the commitments and criteria as set out in the Annex to the Council Decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation. Ireland, along with all other PESCO Participants, submitted its Draft National Implementation Plan to the PESCO Secretariat last December.

The feedback from the PESCO Secretariat which was generally positive, is currently being reviewed by my Department in consultation with the military authorities. At EU level, the template for PESCO National Implementation Plans and the related information requirements are being refined on the basis of those first drafts and following engagement by the PESCO Secretariat with participating Member States. Further Council Decisions are required in relation to PESCO project priorities, project participants and governance, and the sequencing of the PESCO commitments going forward. Decisions in respect of these matters need to be completed before the National Implementation Plan can be finalised.

Work is under way to finalise the Plan by year end. In relation to publication of the National Implementation Plan, I will consider this when the plan has been finalised. In that regard, it will be necessary to consider the nature of some of the information in the plan which may be classified or commercially sensitive.

Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 42.

Defence Forces Remuneration

54. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the steps being taken to ensure better pay and working conditions for members of the Defence Forces; the further steps being taken to ensure appropriate supports are available to current and former members of the Defence Forces that may be experiencing financial difficulties; if he is satisfied that current recruitment methods are sufficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27749/18]

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

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

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which was considered and accepted

by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, provides for further increases in pay, ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement, with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid.

The Defence Forces offer competitive starting salaries and excellent career opportunities for any young person thinking about joining. Following the series of pay increases in the last 12 months, a three star private on completion of training starts on €27,257 (inclusive of military service allowance). This represents an increase of 25% on the starting pay scale of this rank in the last 12 months. This starting pay compares very favourably with other entry level pay rates across the public service.

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

Recruitment methods are kept under ongoing review and I receive regular briefings on progress against plans from my Officials and the Defence Forces. I have directed that options be developed to provide for re-entry of former members of the Permanent Defence Force to fill gaps in specialist positions. I have also directed that options for greater use of direct entry for specialist posts should also be developed.

The Government recognises the valued public service given by former servicemen and women of the Defence Forces to the State. As such, officials from my Department hold regular meetings with recognised veterans' organisations including the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (O.N.E.), at which issues of concern to their members are discussed. This organisation provides tremendous support to assist former members of the Defence Forces who may have fallen on hard times.

I will be attending the launch of O.N.E's annual Fuchsia fundraising appeal tomorrow (27 June 2018).

Departmental Communications

55. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department has engaged with the Department of Education and Skills with regard to the need to upgrade schools on the Curragh Camp; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27739/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department is not currently engaged in discussions with the Department of Education & Skills in relation to school provision and accommodation requirements for the existing schools in the Curragh Camp. While the planning for and provision of school accommodation is primarily a matter for the Minister for Education and Skills, my Department is open to discussions with that Department in relation to the future planning provision for schools in that area.

Curragh Plains Representative Forum

56. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the establishment of a new lands management team and a new environmental maintenance contract for the Curragh plains; the work ongoing to identify suitable locations for car parking spaces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27740/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The recruitment process for the appointment of a new lands management team will continue in 2018 and as part of this team a new Curragh Maor was recently appointed. This team will oversee all activities on the ground including, but not limited to, littering, sheep branding, patrolling, monitoring users of lands, inspection of property boundaries, illegal encampments and engagement with the public.

In relation to the award of a new environmental maintenance contract for the Curragh, I can advise that it is my Department's intention to commence this procurement process in the coming months.

Preliminary work has been undertaken in identifying suitable locations for the construction of car parking facilities on the Curragh plains. Further detailed work on the design and associated costings will be progressed as part of my Department's infrastructural programme.

Planning Issues

57. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the action that will be taken by the Defence Forces on foot of the recent decision regarding the construction of an incinerator at Ringaskiddy and its possible impact on operations at Haulbowline naval base; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27755/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My officials, with assistance from members of the Defence Forces, routinely assess relevant planning applications, on a case by case basis, for possible impact on Defence Forces operations. When considered necessary, my Department makes a submission to the relevant planning body as part of the planning process.

During the course of public hearings regarding the proposed Waste to Energy Facility at Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, my Department, having consulted with the Air Corps and the Naval Service, made a number of observations on factors that, in its view, should be considered by An Bord Pleanála during the planning process.

It is understood that the issues raised and observations made have been taken into account in An Bord Pleanála's recent decision.

My Department will consider in detail the decision, in consultation with the Naval Service and the Air Corps, including its possible impact on Defence Forces operations at Haulbowline.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 42.

Overseas Missions

59. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if changes are planned to the Defence Forces current overseas missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27758/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As of 30 May 2018, Ireland is contributing 643 personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world. The main overseas missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 376 personnel and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 137 personnel.

The Government recently approved the continued participation of the Defence Forces in UNDOF. Approximately 130 Defence Forces personnel are currently based in Camp Ziouani on the Israeli side of the area of separation. An additional 8 personnel are based in UNDOF Headquarters in Camp Faouar on the Syrian side of the area of separation. In line with the UN's planned redeployment of the mission back to the Syrian side of the area of separation, and incremental return of the UNDOF mission to Camp Faouar has been ongoing since November 2016. The planned Phase III involves a full return of military personnel, including the Irish contingent comprising Force Reserve Company, to Camp Faouar. It is anticipated that Defence Forces personnel will have fully relocated to Camp Faouar by September 2018.

The UNIFIL mission in Lebanon continues to represent Ireland's largest overseas deployment and on 22 May 2018 the Government approved the continued participation of the Defence Forces in UNIFIL for a further 12 month period. Irish troops are currently serving as part of a joint Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL. Since May 2015 the Finnish contingent has included an Estonian Platoon comprising some 36 personnel.

Finland has advised the United Nations that, for operational reasons linked to national commitments, it will end its participation in the Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL on 31 December 2018. In the absence of the Finnish contingent, the Estonian contingent has also advised that it will withdraw from the UNIFIL Battalion. I am currently considering the option to temporarily replace the Finnish contingent by increasing Ireland's contribution to UNIFIL for a 12 period up to November 2019. It is anticipated that a suitable partner country will be sourced to allow Ireland to reduce its contribution to UNIFIL at that time.

At the Government meeting on 27 February 2018, I secured approval for the deployment in 2018 of a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force to serve once again as part of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy naval mission in the Mediterranean. The Naval Service vessel, L.É. Samuel Beckett is currently in the area of operations and will be replaced by L.É. James Joyce in July. The Naval Service will deploy for a period of approximately 30 weeks in total to this mission in 2018.

Other missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) with 20 personnel; the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with five (5) personnel and the NATO-led international security presence (KFOR) in Kosovo with 12 personnel. Ireland also contributes observers and staff to various United Nations and OSCE missions and personnel to staff appointments at UN, EU and OSCE headquarters. There are no planned changes to our continued participation in our major missions at this time.

Defence Forces Deployment

60. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the measures that have been taken to ensure the safety of Irish troops deployed to the Golan Heights. [27732/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): A contingent of the Permanent Defence Force has been deployed to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights since 2013. The 57th Infantry Group comprising approximately 130 personnel, are currently based in Camp Ziouani on the Israeli side of the area of separation. An additional 8 Irish personnel are based in UNDOF Headquarters in Camp Faouar on the Syrian side of the area of separation including the Mission Chief of Staff, Colonel Michael Dawson.

In line with the UN's plan for redeployment of the mission back to the Syrian side of the area of separation, an incremental return of the UNDOF mission to Camp Faouar has been ongoing since November 2016. The planned Phase III involves a full return of military personnel, including the Irish contingent comprising Force Reserve Company, to Camp Faouar. It is anticipated that the relocation of the UNDOF mission to the Syrian side will be completed by September 2018.

I have previously advised that certain conditions would have to be met before a full return of Irish Defence Force personnel to Camp Faouar would be permitted. Significant action, including reconstruction and re-enforcement of Camp Faouar and its facilities and observation posts and restoration of appropriate has been ongoing for some time, with major progress made in recent months. A detailed review of the conditions in UNDOF was recently carried out by senior military personnel. The military authorities have advised that the necessary infrastructural requirements in relation to force protection, accommodation and medical facilities are in place in the Camp. Based on that assessment, I am satisfied that Defence Forces personnel can relocate to Camp Faouar in accordance with the phased implementation of the UN Plan. This would mean the completion of that relocation, probably in September.

The security situation in UNDOF will continue to be monitored closely and any necessary adjustments to ensure the safety and security of personnel will be made as required.

The safety of Irish Defence Forces personnel serving on all overseas missions is always a concern to me, my Government colleagues and to the military authorities. Our ability to protect the health and safety of our personnel is of paramount concern when considering any mission.

While no absolute guarantees can be given with regard to the safety of troops serving in missions, it is the policy and practice to ensure that Defence Forces personnel serving overseas are appropriately trained and equipped with the most modern and effective equipment to carry out their mission, as well as providing the required protection specific to the mission.

Ministerial Advisers Data

61. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Taoiseach the number of media advisers employed in his office between part-time and full-time staff; the Civil Service grade of each media adviser; and the cost over a full year of employing all such advisers. [27465/18]

62. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Taoiseach the name, responsibilities and salaries of all advisers appointed by him since July 2017, in tabular form. [27197/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 61 and 62 together.

Details of the Advisers appointed in my Department since July 2017 are set out in the table below:

Special Advisers to the Taoiseach (appointed since July 2017)	
Name	Salary Level
John Carroll	Assistant Secretary
Clare Mungovan	Principal Officer
Jim D'Arcy	Assistant Principal Officer (Higher)
	Special Advisers to the Government Chief Whip (appointed since July 2017)
Ed Carty	Principal Officer

The Special Advisers working in my office provide briefings and advice on a wide range of policy matters, as well as performing other functions as I may direct from time to time. They also liaise with other Special Advisers in each Government Department so that I remain informed on developments across Government.

The Government Press Secretary acts as a spokesperson for me, as Taoiseach, and the Government and is supported by the Assistant Government Press Secretary in coordinating the media relations of all Government Departments. The Government Press Secretary is paid at Assistant Secretary level while the Assistant Government Press Secretary is paid at Principal Officer level.

The Deputy Government Press Secretary - who is also based in my Department and is paid at Principal Officer level - coordinates communications for all the Independents in Government.

State Bodies Data

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the number of positions on the boards of agencies and commercial State companies under his Department's aegis in tabular form; the quorum required for a board meeting; the number of ministerial appointee vacancies on the board to date; the length of time the ministerial appointee vacancy has been present for each vacancy. [27484/18]

The Taoiseach: The National Economic and Social Council is the only body under the aegis of my Department. There are 28 members of the Council as currently constituted, and there are no vacancies remaining to be filled. No quorum applies to meetings of the Council.

I also appoint members of the National Statistics Board. No vacancies exist on the board and no quorum applies to meetings.

Foireann Roinne

64. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den an Taoisigh an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; agus an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge. [27814/18]

The Taoiseach: Ceapadh Oifigeach Gaeilge i mo Roinnse in 2005 chun tacú le tiomantas na Roinne cultúr a spreagann úsáid na Gaeilge laistigh den Roinn agus sa bplé a bhíonn againn lenár gcuid custaiméirí a fhorbairt agus a choinneáil. Tá an duine sin freagrach freisin as a chinntiú go gcoítear le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla agus go ndéantar Scéimeanna Gaeilge na Roinne a fhorbairt de réir an Achta. Tá an tOifigeach Gaeilge - atá ag leibhéal Oifigeach Cúnta (Ard) - líofa sa Ghaeilge agus ábalta dul i mbun a cuid oibre trí Ghaeilge. Chomh maith le bheith ina Oifigeach Gaeilge, is oifigeach í sa Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta, áit a dhéanann sí anailís ar bheartais fhorbartha inmharthana, lena n-áirítear athrú aeráide.

Departmental Staff Data

65. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach if personnel in his Department have been removed from their positions, have been transferred to other roles or had their employments terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional mis-

conduct or incompetence. [27958/18]

The Taoiseach: No employee in my Department has been removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards, professional misconduct or incompetence.

However, during the period in question, two employees were not retained following completion of their probationary contracts.

Planning Issues

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the recent decision of An Bord Pleanála to approve the development of a commercial incinerator at Ringaskiddy, County Cork has implications for the operations at the naval base in Haulbowline in view of the planning objection lodged by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27385/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): On foot of consultation with both the Naval Service and Air Corps, my Department made a number of observations to the public hearings regarding the proposed Waste to Energy Facility at Ringaskiddy, Co Cork.

It is understood that the issues raised and observations made have been taken into account by An Bord Pleanála. My Department will consider in detail the decision, in consultation with the Naval Service and the Air Corps, and its possible impact on Defence Force operations at Haulbowline.

Foireann Roinne

67. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Taoiseach agus Aire Cosanta an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27804/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Is beag idirghníomhú a bhíonn ag an Roinn le daoine as an bpobal tríd is tríd agus, dá bharr sin, ní bhíonn éileamh mór ar sheirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge. Mar a fhoráiltear ina Scéim Teanga reatha agus roimhe seo, faigheann an Roinn cabhair ó lucht pearsanra atá bunaithe ar bhonn deonach chun cuidiú le Brainsí na Roinne seirbhísí a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge agus chun dul i ngleic le hidirghníomhú le custaiméirí más gá. Sa chomhthéacs sin, ní theastaíonn Oifigeach Gaeilge ar leith ón Roinn seo.

Tá cúigear lucht pearsanra sa ghrúpa faoi láthair atá sásta cuidiú le soláthar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge agus is leor é sin chun freastal ar na riachtanais atá ag teacht chun cinn. Déantar athbhreithniú leanúnach ar an ngrúpa oibrithe deonacha sin.

Departmental Staff Data

68. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if personnel in his Department have been removed from their positions, have been transferred to others role

or had their employments terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27948/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that no civil servants in my Department were removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence.

Defence Forces Recruitment

69. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if it is Defence Forces policy to give presentations in secondary schools with a view to recruitment; the length of time this policy has been in place; the way in which the decision is taken as to which schools to present in; if there is a set presentation outline; if so, if it is publicly available and if parental permission is sought before each presentation takes place. [27961/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Defence Forces regularly receive requests from secondary schools to give information briefs about the variety of careers available in the Defence Forces. It has been a long standing tradition for the Defence Forces to facilitate such requests.

These requests are received and processed by the Community Support Section of the Department of Defence in consultation with the relevant Defence Forces Brigade/Formation. Where the request is appropriate and can be facilitated, members of the Defence Forces prepare and present their own individual presentation based on the request from the school (i.e. duration of the brief, audience etc.).

Parental permission is a matter for the school requesting Defence Forces participation.

Defence Forces Allowances

70. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the 24-hour duty allowance rate for a soldier; when the allowance rate was set; his plans to review the allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27991/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Security Duty allowance was introduced in May 1974, arising from the significant increase in the incidence of duties being undertaken by members of the Defence Forces, particularly duties in aid to the civil power. This is paid in addition to basic pay and military service allowance.

The rate of Security Duty allowance for 24 hours or more is €47.59. The rates were last revised under the Public Service Stability Agreement, 2013-2016, (the Haddington Road Agreement) in 2013, when it was agreed, with the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, that as part of the cost saving measures to be secured under the Agreement, the Saturday and Sunday duty rates would be flat rated.

PDFORRA have made a claim for the restoration of the Saturday and Sunday rates to pre-2013 levels. This claim is being processed through the Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force. The Deputy will appreciate that as discussions under the C&A scheme are confidential to the parties involved it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Questions - Written Answers
Defence Forces Strength

71. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Defence Forces continue to be strengthened in line with established norms and having regard to national and international commitments and responsibilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28038/18]

79. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which he remains satisfied regarding the strength of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps and their ability to respond to all emergencies, natural disasters or otherwise that may arise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28047/18]

80. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength of each branch of the Defence Forces; the extent to which this is in line with normal expectations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28048/18]

81. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the number of women in each branch of the Defence Forces continues to reflect policy in respect of gender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28049/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 71 and 79 to 81, inclusive, together.

As of 30 May 2018, the strength (whole time equivalent) of the Permanent Defence Force was 9,010 personnel (95% of establishment), broken down as follows:

- 7,248 Army Personnel (491 Female)
- 715 Air Corps Personnel (30 Female)
- 1,047 Naval Service Personnel (68 Female)

The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. This is underlined by a commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces. In each of the two general service recruitment campaigns conducted in 2017, approximately 13% of the Applicants were female. The figure for cadet Applicants was approximately 15%.

To date in 2018, female applicants accounted for 14.5% of general service recruitment campaign applicants and 15.9% of cadet applications.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies caused by severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority role. These arrangements have proved effective in all emergencies encountered to date.

There is significant on-going targeted recruitment to ensure that the Permanent Defence Force can continue to deliver all operational outputs required by government both at home and overseas. The recruitment plan proposed by the Defence Forces envisages some 800 new entrants being inducted across all services and competition streams in 2018.

Three competitions recently closed, namely

- A General Service Recruitment campaign
- 2018 Officer Cadetships competition
- Air Corps Apprentice Aircraft Technician Competition

The applications from these competitions are being progressed. A range of other competitions are ongoing.

I remain committed to ensuring that the Defence Forces retain the capacity to operate effectively across all roles required of them by Government at home and overseas.

Defence Forces Training

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps continue to benefit from training and technology available to other forces in the EU, having particular regard to the need to ensure common security norms throughout the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28039/18]

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

Enhancing the capability and capacity of the Defence Forces to successfully undertake modern complex UN mandated missions, including Common Security & Defence Policy (CSDP) operations, and on supporting interoperability in this regard is a priority for Ireland. As you are aware, the primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the capabilities necessary to fulfil all roles assigned by Government.

The Defence Forces implement a policy of standardisation that is line with EU training and engage with EU educational institutions in order to keep up to date with best international practice and employ all relevant modern training methods. Training in this environment has been very beneficial in equipping our Defence Forces personnel with the skills to operate alongside our European partners.

Continuing to gain access to the latest and best training and equipment, will further enhance Defence Forces capabilities for operations and above all to ensure the security and safety of Defence Forces' when deployed on some of the most challenging UN mandated peace-keeping, peace enforcement and EU Training missions abroad.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be trained to appropriate standards.

Overseas Missions

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which Irish troops continue to serve overseas on EU or UN-related missions; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [28041/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As of 30 May 2018, Ireland is contributing 643 personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world. The main overseas missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 376 personnel and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 137 personnel.

Other missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the EU Common Security and Defence Policy mission, Operation Sophia with 60 personnel; the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) with 20 personnel; the EUFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina with five (5) personnel and the NATO-led international security presence (KFOR) in Kosovo with 12 personnel. Ireland also contributes observers and staff to various United Nations and OSCE missions and personnel to staff appointments at UN, EU and OSCE headquarters.

Ireland has a long and continuous record of contributing to peacekeeping missions. Participation in these missions demonstrates Ireland's strong support for the role of the United Nations in international peacekeeping.

Defence Forces Remuneration

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which pay and conditions throughout the Defence Forces continue to be monitored and improved by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28042/18]

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

Members of the Permanent Defence Force have received the pay increases due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which was considered and accepted by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, provides for further increases in pay, ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement, with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, will also restore payscales to all public servants (including members of the Permanent Defence Force) earning up to €70,000. The restoration of cuts to allowances will also be considered in the context of the Agreement. The first instalment of an increase of 1% on annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018, has been paid to members of the Permanent Defence Force.

While general pay is a matter for central determination pay processes, the Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force provides a mechanism for the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations to resolve matters relating to remuneration and conditions for their members, on Defence sectoral specific issues. All parties have accrued significant benefits from the C&A scheme since its introduction both in terms of reform of the Defence Forces and in terms of allowances and conditions of employment.

The C&A Scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force operates under terms which were agreed by all parties in 1998. Given the changes that have occurred since then in the indus-

trial relations area, I initiated a review of the scheme and appointed an independent chairperson to conduct the review. The chair is due to submit his report to me by the end of August. The findings and recommendations arising will be considered at that stage.

Air Corps

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which an audit has been carried out of training and equipment in the Air Corps, having particular regard to the need to ensure the availability of the most up-to-date standards at all levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28043/18]

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

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence. In relation to the Air Corps, the principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to upgrade the Air Corps fleet of aircraft with the replacement of the existing

five Cessna aircraft with larger and more capable fixed wing utility aircraft suitably equipped for ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance). Following an open tender competition, a contract was placed with Pilatus Aircraft Ltd in December 2017 at a cost of some €32m for the provision of three PC-12 fixed wing utility aircraft suitably equipped for ISTAR tasks which will replace the Cessna fleet.

Planning is also in progress to replace the CASA Maritime Patrol aircraft with larger more suitable aircraft, which will enhance maritime surveillance and provide a greater degree of utility for transport and cargo carrying tasks. The planning process for the replacement of the CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft has commenced and a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the procurement of the aircraft was published in May 2018.

The primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the necessary capabilities. The Defence Forces deliver in-house military training programmes and modules meeting national, EU and international standards. They also engage with external educational institutions and international educational institutions, military and civilian. All training, internal and external, is provided to ensure that the Air Corps, and indeed the Defence Forces as a whole, are in line with best international practice and that they avail of all relevant modern training methods.

I am satisfied that the current provisions, together with the courses of action in the White Paper, will continue to ensure that the Defence Forces are suitably equipped and trained, in line with EU and international best practice, to fulfil all roles assigned by Government.

Naval Service

76. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which he continues to improve and update equipment and training throughout the Naval

Service; the extent to which the Naval Service can now compare on an equal basis in terms of equipment, training and capability in line with the best throughout the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28044/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Special Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capacity of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles both at home and overseas. The White Paper on Defence underpins the ongoing replacement of the Naval Service fleet.

The most significant investment of recent years by the Defence Organisation has been on the procurement of the new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels for the Naval Service. This programme has seen the delivery of three new Naval Service vessels in recent years. The LÉ Samuel Beckett was commissioned in May 2014, LÉ James Joyce was commissioned in September 2015 and LÉ William Butler Yeats was commissioned into service in October 2016.

In June 2016, a contract for an additional sister ship was placed with Babcock International, a British company, bringing investment in the new ships programme to some €250 million since 2010. The fourth ship, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw is scheduled for delivery in mid-2018.

The White Paper also provides for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel (MRV) which will be enabled for helicopter operations and will also have a freight carrying capacity. Planning has commenced on this project and it is intended to hold a public tender competition in due course to cover the supply of the MRV. This, of course, is subject to the availability of funding within the overall Defence capital funding envelope. The cost of the MRV will only be known once the tender competition is concluded.

The acquisition of these modern new vessels, combined with a continuous delivery of training of Naval Service personnel, which is line with national and international best practice, will ensure that the operational capabilities of the Naval Service, as the State's principal seagoing agency, are maintained to the greatest extent possible.

Naval Service Operations

77. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which he remains satisfied regarding the ability of the Naval Service to deal with an emergency that may arise in the context of security or rescue missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28045/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As the State's principal sea-going agency, and in accordance with international and domestic law, the Naval Service, through its patrols, undertakes a variety of functions in the maritime domain in accordance with its role in contributing to maritime security. This encompasses the provision of support to other Government Departments and Agencies such the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners and the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority. The Defence Forces will continue to provide a range of supports to these Bodies in accordance with its roles in aid to the civil power and to the civil authority and as set out in the applicable Memoranda of Understanding and Service Level Agreements.

All Naval Service vessels are multi-tasked in the sense that, in addition to their fishery protection role, they also undertake general surveillance, security, pollution monitoring, and search and rescue in support to the Irish Coast Guard, amongst other duties while on patrol. These

activities assist in detecting and preventing emergency situations throughout Ireland's maritime jurisdiction.

The White Paper on Defence underpins the ongoing replacement of the Naval Service fleet. The most significant investment of recent years by the Defence Organisation has been on the procurement of the new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels for the Naval Service. The Naval Service Vessel Replacement Programme has seen the delivery of three new Naval Service vessels. The LÉ Samuel Beckett was commissioned in May 2014, LÉ James Joyce was commissioned in September 2015 and LÉ William Butler Yeats was commissioned into service in October 2016. A fourth ship, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw is scheduled for delivery later this year.

I am satisfied that the Naval Service are equipped and resourced to deal with an emergency that may arise in the context of security or rescue missions, were they to occur.

Defence Forces Training

78. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which summer training courses continue to be available to members of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28046/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The primary function of training and education in the Permanent Defence Force, the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve is to develop and maintain capabilities necessary to enable personnel to fulfil the roles laid down by Government. The scheduling of training in the Defence Forces, including the Reserve, is underpinned by an analysis of training needed to meet operational output requirements and capability development needs.

For the current year, Subhead A.5 provides for a budget of €2.15 million of which €2.068 million is allocated for a total of 26,000 Paid Training Mandays for members of the Reserve. Of this figure, 25,300 Mandays will provide a minimum of seven (7) days annual paid training for all effective members of the Reserve. This provision also allows for fourteen (14) days paid training for all personnel newly recruited to the Reserve Defence Force (in their first year of induction), and also provides for career and specialist courses for selected members of the Reserve in line with Reserve priorities. This provision is sufficient having regard to the existing strength of the Reserve and the voluntary nature of Reserve training. The remaining 700 Mandays are allocated to provide for Reserve Defence Force Representative Association (RDFRA) business.

While the minimum provision of paid training days is 7, members of the Reserve may avail of additional paid training days, up to a total of 28 days, in the context of career courses, specialist and other additional training.

In order to facilitate the voluntary nature of Reserve Service, training continues to be organised both in and out of normal working hours and at weekends. Reserve training is also organised during academic and traditional holiday periods, in order to maximise attendance of Reserve personnel.

Questions Nos. 79 to 81, inclusive, answered with Question No. 71.

EU Enlargement

82. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Trade the extent to which he continues to pursue and advance the cause of the Western Balkans in the context of EU enlargement, having particular regard to the sensitivities of the region and its geopolitical importance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28040/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland is a strong supporter of EU enlargement. We believe it is a transformative driver for stability and peace, and that it will enhance stability and economic growth in the Western Balkans while also shoring up security on the borders of Europe. It is our strong view that providing the countries of the Western Balkans with a credible membership perspective is essential. Both the Taoiseach and Minister McEntee made this point when attending the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 17 May, during which they were able to productively engage with our EU and Western Balkan counterparts. I had the honour to host my Albanian counterpart in Dublin on the eve of the summit.

The General Affairs Council is meeting today in Luxembourg and is looking at the opening of accession negotiations with both Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Ireland is a strong supporter of opening negotiations, as we feel that while considerable efforts need to be made in certain areas, both countries had made sufficient progress to warrant opening and that such a step was important in order to provide momentum to the enlargement process. We also believe that FYROM deserves praise for the considerable political courage it has shown in reaching the historic agreement with Greece in regard to the name issue.

Concerning Serbia and Montenegro, Ireland shares the view of the EU that the 2025 date given in the Commission's Western Balkans Strategy represents an indicative – and ambitious – perspective to conclude the accession process for Serbia and Montenegro, rather than a deadline or target. We believe that setting an indicative date provides Montenegro and Serbia with a concrete EU perspective that should reinforce the reform process in those countries. We have also been very clear that all benchmarks and criteria must be met before accession can be agreed.

In regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland is a strong supporter of Bosnia's European perspective but we recognise that significant work will have to be done across multiple areas before it can advance on its European path. Progress has been made and we hope that this progress gathers momentum and is supplemented by practical efforts to ensure real reform.

On Kosovo, Ireland was one of the first countries to recognise Kosovo's independence, and we were represented at the celebrations of Kosovo's 10th anniversary of independence in February this year. As a supporter of enlargement, we fully support Kosovo's joining the EU, provided that it meets all the relevant requirements, which include a normalisation of relations with Serbia. It is Ireland's hope that a normalisation of relations with Serbia, resulting in a bilateral agreement that is mutually acceptable to both sides, will lead to Kosovo's eventually joining the EU with the unanimous consent of all Member States. Of course, all of the other requirements for accession would also need to be met in full.

Passport Applications

83. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the criteria for applying for a first-time passport for a child (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27412/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports act, 2008 ("the Act"). This

act provides, among other things, that a person must be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him/her. In order to meet this legal requirement, each person must demonstrate an entitlement to Irish citizenship in his/her application.

Entitlement to Irish citizenship is governed by Irish law and in particular the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, under which and in general, Irish citizenship may be obtained by birth in the island of Ireland to parents meeting specified requirements, by descent, or by naturalisation.

A child born in Ireland prior to 1 January 2005 is automatically an Irish citizen and only the birth certificate of the child is required to prove entitlement to Irish citizen. If the child was born on or after 1 January 2005 entitlement to Irish citizenship is dependent on the citizenship of the parent through whom the child is claiming Irish citizenship. If the parent is an Irish citizen, the passport application should include evidence of the citizenship of the parent, which is the original birth certificate or the Irish passport of that parent.

Diplomatic Representation

84. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to raise with the United States Government the fact that Ireland has been without an ambassador from the United States of America since January 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27600/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The appointment of US Ambassadors to particular countries is a matter solely for the U.S. authorities and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the appointment of a US ambassador to Ireland.

I do understand, however, that the appointment of a new ambassador has been under consideration within the US system for some time now and I look forward to welcoming a new US Ambassador to Ireland in due course.

Pending the nomination of a new US Ambassador, and confirmation of the nominee by the U.S. Senate, we will continue to engage closely with the U.S. Embassy in Dublin, under the leadership of Chargé d’Affaires Reece Smyth, on the whole range of issues pertaining to the Ireland-US relationship.

We have a very strong and positive working relationship with Chargé d’Affaires Smyth and his team and I know that will continue to be the case until, and indeed after, a new ambassador is appointed.

Passport Services

85. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the waiting times for passport applications; the action he is taking to reduce waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27651/18]

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

and the network of Irish Missions worldwide.

The table shows target and actual turnaround times for all of the Passport Services application channels.

Type of Passport Application	Target Turnaround Times	Actual turnaround Times
Online Passport Application	10 working days	10 working days with 50% processed in 5 working days
An Post Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days	15 working days
An Post Passport Express First Time Application, and Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days	30 working days
Northern Ireland and Great Britain Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days	15 working days
Northern Ireland and Great Britain Passport Express First Time Applicants and Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days	34 working days
Missions	30 working days	23 working days
Great Britain Renewals	20 working days	19 working days
Great Britain First time applicants/renewals with lost/stolen passports	30 working days	51 working days

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

The Passport Service is doing everything possible to ensure that passports are processed as quickly as possible. In addition to the intake of TCOs and use of targeted overtime, experienced staff from across the Department have been re-deployed to processing applications and respond to customer queries.

Human Rights

86. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has made representations with the Italian Government following its announcement to instigate a register for Roma persons in Italy; his view on whether this is a breach of human rights of Roma persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27715/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Last week the Italian Prime Minister's Office issued a statement setting out the position of the Italian Government following remarks made by the Italian Interior Minister that he would create a register of Roma people living in Italy.

The Prime Minister's Office statement said that the Italian Government's position was that it would not be compiling such a register. It noted that compiling a record on an ethnic basis

would be unconstitutional. It went on to claim that the Government's goal was to address all "illegal and degrading situations" so as to protect the safety of all citizens.

Ireland is resolutely committed to the principle of non-discrimination as set out in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, signed by Ireland in 1968. I therefore welcome the clarification provided in this case.

UN Security Council

87. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reasoning for the decision of the Irish mission in the United Nations to offer save the date to all of the UN ambassadors for a concert (details supplied) in New York in July 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27777/18]

88. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if there is a promotional video being prepared by his Department outlining the pathway to securing a seat on the UN Security Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27778/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 and 88 together.

The official launch of Ireland's campaign for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council will take place at UN Headquarters in New York on 2 July. The Taoiseach and Tánaiste will attend the evening reception. Such formal launches are commonly part of Security Council election campaigns and something which is expected of candidates. The event on 2 July is being organised by Ireland's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs headquarters.

In order to maximise the impact of the launch event, the Government has accepted an offer by U2 to provide a gift of a number of tickets to the band's concert in New York on Sunday, 1 July, for use by representatives of the UN Member States. The concert will allow Ambassadors of the UN Member States to experience one of Ireland's most well-known cultural exports immediately prior to the campaign launch, building awareness of our candidature. It is not uncommon for countries seeking election to the Security Council to include cultural events as part of their campaign.

In addition to the direct lobbying of Member State representatives by members of the Government, Irish diplomats and others, an important dimension of a Security Council election campaign is how a candidature is communicated. Campaign messaging will focus on Ireland's contribution to the UN since we joined in 1955. It will aim to contextualise Ireland's UN engagement as part of how Ireland sees itself in the world – a global island which wants to share our culture and values.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade team working on our candidature are addressing communication aspects relating to the campaign, including the creation of a campaign identity and promotional materials. A short video is currently in production and it is intended to introduce this at the 2 July launch. This will then be used online and across social media to build awareness of Ireland's candidature. The video will seek to present Ireland as a confident and compassionate member of the UN which seeks to meet our responsibilities internationally. It will outline why the UN is central to Irish foreign policy in the context of our history and values as a nation and, in doing so, will highlight the main areas of Irish contributions to the UN's work.

Questions - Written Answers
Strategic Communications Unit

89. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the former head of the strategic communications unit is now deployed to his Department; if so, the role he will play; the person he will report to; and if will make a statement on the matter. [27779/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are a number of staffing appointments and assignments to be made in my Department, including in the context of fulfilling the ambition of the Global Ireland initiative. Exact roles are not yet defined but I anticipate that the individual to whom the Deputy refers will join the senior team in my Department in the near future.

Foireann Roinne

90. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Tánaiste agus Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27808/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): D'earcaigh mo Roinn oifigeach Gaeilge ar leith in mí Aibreáin 2016, ag an grád d'Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin. Tá Gaeilge líofa ag an oifigeach seo, agus roinntear a chuid ama go cothrom idir dualgais Gaeilge agus dualgais eile.

Human Rights

91. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to a matter (details supplied) in relation to the security forces in Honduras and other issues in that country; and if he will raise the need for prosecutions against those involved in state violence and the release of the remaining political prisoners with his Honduran counterpart. [27909/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I want to thank the Deputy for raising these cases. It seems clear from reports we have received that significant challenges persist regarding Honduran citizens' enjoyment of basic human rights. The situation continues to be a cause of deep concern. I condemn unreservedly violence perpetrated against those seeking to defend their rights or peacefully demonstrate in Honduras, as well as a culture of impunity where that exists. I would also call for those responsible for such violence to be brought to justice. The loss of life and violence and the denial of basic human rights which has occurred since elections took place in Honduras in November 2017 is very worrying. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are the cornerstones of any functioning democracy and those rights must be guaranteed.

I fully support, as I have done previously, the statement made earlier this year by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights calling for the Honduran authorities to "undertake an assessment of the rules of engagement, including the use of force, and for the security forces to use only necessary and proportionate force, in line with international law, in policing demonstrations". The Deputy will be aware that Ireland contributed one long-term

observer and one short-term observer to the EU Election Observer Mission to Honduras last year, facilitated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

I urge the Government of Honduras to take on board and adopt the recommendations made by the EU Mission in their final report, in order to help to restore much-needed public confidence in future electoral processes in the country.

It is my belief that all sides in Honduras must work within the political system to deliver the political reforms necessary to secure the trust of the Honduran people in the country's institutions. In that regard I would encourage all relevant actors in Honduras to engage in the UN-facilitated political dialogue which launched in March.

While Ireland does not have diplomatic representation in Honduras, officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade meet regularly with human rights defenders and civil society organisations active in Honduras. Officials also engage with the European External Action Service through its EU delegation in Tegucigalpa.

We will continue to work actively with the EU and our international partners to promote and protect human rights and civil society in Honduras and I can assure the Deputy that we will continue to follow the situation there closely.

Passport Services

92. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if extra resources will be allocated to the Passport Office to clear the backlog in applications and answer applicants' queries promptly in view of the fact that it is the holiday season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27911/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service is currently in peak season with the vast majority of applications being received between February and August each year. Over 500,000 applications have been received so far this year. Applications received in the first 5 months of this year have increased by over 8% compared with the same time period last year. The Passport Service offers a variety of channels through which citizens can apply for a passport and the choice of channel determines the turnaround period of applications. The quickest and easiest way for an adult to renew a passport is to apply online. Over 50% of the 100,000 applicants who have used this channel this year, have got their passport back within a week and all have the passport issued within the advertised 2 week timeframe. The largest proportion of applications, almost 50%, are still made via the Passport Express channel. Adult and children renewals are given a target turnaround time of 15 working days and this timeframe is being met. First time applicants, and those with lost or stolen passport are taking longer. These applications require additional security measures including robust identity verification and entitlement checking, and as a result, take longer to process. In cases where other family member have submitted renewal applications alongside the first time application, all applications are linked in the system and can only be dealt with once the necessary checks have been completed on the first time application.

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

service channels.

The number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service stood at 322 at the beginning of the year. This compares to 301 FTE staff assigned to the Passport Service at the same point last year. This year, since these figures were released, over 30 additional permanent staff have started with the Passport Service.

The Passport Service is doing everything possible to ensure that passports are processed as quickly as possible. In addition to the intake of TCOs and use of targeted overtime, experienced staff from across the Department have been re-deployed to processing applications and respond to customer queries.

The high number of queries being received from applicants is in line with the increasing volume of applications being received. The Passport Service makes every effort to respond to as many queries as possible. In the week of June 11 the Passport Services dealt with over 9,500 of these queries. 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 Department staff and the assignment of temporary clerical officers to the communications unit.

Many queries received by the communications unit can be answered with information readily available on the Passport Service's website www.DFA.ie/passport. Detailed and regularly updated information on passport services; current average turnaround times and comprehensive guides to the various application processes can be consulted here. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that applicants can track the status of existing applications at any time through the Passport Service's online tracker which can also be found on the Passport Service's website. The Passport Service also has a Customer Care desk in the public offices (Mount Street, Dublin and Cork) where applicants can visit without an appointment to obtain an update on their application.

The continuous implementation of service improvements has been central to my Department's response to increasing application volumes. The Passport Reform Programme is delivering major upgrades to the passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as significant customer service improvements. The online passport application service will continue to make a major contribution to the effective management of high application volumes by allowing existing staff and resources to be more effectively deployed within the Passport Service.

Departmental Staff Data

93. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27952/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour was published in September 2008 in accordance with the Standards in Public Office Act 2001. The Code sets out the standards required of civil servants in the performance of their duties. The Code forms part of the terms of employment of all civil servants, who are expected to apply it at all times. The Code requires civil servants to maintain high standards in service delivery, observe appropriate behaviour at work,

and maintain the highest standards of probity. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade examines all formal complaints made to its HR Unit no matter what category they fall under. A range of measures are available to the Department to respond to these complaints, including informal resolution. The Department chooses the most appropriate course of action based on policy guidance and legal advice when required. In circumstances where a concern arises about the conduct or performance of an individual and where these concerns are found to be upheld appropriate disciplinary action is taken in accordance with the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

The Department has not terminated the contract of any civil servant in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards, professional misconduct or incompetence.

European Council Meetings

94. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the EU colleagues he has spoken to prior to the June 2018 EU Council meeting; and if they support Ireland in relation to the December 2017 agreement. [27688/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Maintaining frequent contact with EU partners has been a priority for Ireland throughout the Article 50 negotiations process. I discuss Brexit collectively with my EU27 counterparts on a monthly basis at the General Affairs Council (Article 50). This month's meeting is taking place today.

Since the last meeting of the European Council in March, I have met with my counterparts from Sweden, Croatia, Cyprus, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany and France. I have also met with a number of UK government ministers. In Luxembourg this week, I am meeting the new Italian and Spanish Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

In addition to my own contacts, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, has in that period met with her Greek, Estonian, Swedish, Norwegian and Portuguese counterparts. The Taoiseach has met with the Prime Ministers of Belgium and Spain, and also met with other EU leaders at the Western Balkans Summit in May. The Taoiseach and I met with both the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker and the EU's Chief Negotiator for the Article 50 negotiations, Michel Barnier, when they visited Ireland last week. I am meeting Mr Barnier again today.

Officials from my Department, and in particular from the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU in Brussels, continue to have very regular, almost daily, engagement with Mr Barnier and his team.

Insurance Costs

95. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance if provisions can be put in place to cap the premiums on insurance for community based groups (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27406/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which

require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of policyholders, including community and voluntary organisations like men's sheds.

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 as a result 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 like men's sheds.

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 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, should achieve the objective of delivering fairer premiums for consumers and businesses, and also beneficially impact men's sheds, and other community, voluntary and charitable organisations across the country.

IBRC Liquidation

96. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of fees invoiced and the amount paid to a person and or a company (details supplied) since the commencement of the liquidation of IBRC; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27986/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the Companies Act all costs, charges and expenses properly incurred in the winding up of a company, including the remuneration of the liquidator are payable out of the assets of the company. For the 59 months since the start of the liquidation in February 2013 to 31st December 2017, the net fees earned by the KPMG special liquidation team were €144.9m (gross fees of €149.9m minus a €5m rebate negotiated by the Department of Finance).

Full details in relation to the work conducted and fees paid are contained in the the fifth progress update report on the Special Liquidation of IBRC which was published on 31st May 2018 and is available on the Department of Finance website: <https://www.finance.gov.ie/updates/ibrc-progress-update-report-year-ended-31-december-2017/>

Contained in the report you will find details on costs and fees of the liquidation to date, information on the various workstreams which are ongoing and also an outline of the tasks which are remaining.

Tax Strategy Group

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the Tax Strategy Group papers will be released; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27380/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) is in place since the early 1990's and chaired by the Department of Finance with membership comprising senior officials and political advisers from a number of Civil Service Departments and Offices.

Papers on various options for tax policy changes are prepared annually by officials. The TSG is not a decision making body and the papers produced are simply a list of options and issues to be considered in the Budgetary process.

In line with the Government's commitment to Budgetary reform including greater engagement with the Oireachtas, the Tax Strategy Group papers are now published in advance of the Budget to facilitate informed discussion.

It is my intention that, as last year, publication of the Papers on my Department's website will take place shortly after the annual meeting of the Tax Strategy Group and I would expect this to happen before the end of July.

Young Farmers Scheme Eligibility

98. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to change the age at which a person is deemed to qualify under the Revenue Commissioners terms as a young farmer; if the upper age of a young farmer for same will be brought in line with the upper age for grants, that is, 40 years of age; if so, when the change will come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27387/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the deputy has stated in his question, there are certain tax reliefs that are available to young farmers. Under Section 667B of the

Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, young farmers who achieve specified educational qualifications are entitled to increased stock relief at a rate of 100%. S. 667B requires that the farmer be under 35 years of age in the year in which they commence their trade of farming.

In addition, a relief from stamp duty is available under Section 81AA of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 in respect of certain transfers of land to young farmers. The farmer must similarly be under 35 years of age on the date of the transfer.

The objective of these reliefs is to encourage the transfer of farm assets to younger and more progressive farmers. The conditions for the paying of grants to farmers is, primarily, a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. I currently have no plans to propose an increase in the upper age limit in the tax code in the manner proposed by the deputy.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

99. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to request insurance companies to insure those homes which were affected by flooding in Inishowen in 2017 (details supplied) without applying exclusions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27398/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am conscious of the difficulties that the absence or withdrawal of flood insurance cover can cause to homeowners and businesses, and that is one of the reasons the Government has been prioritising investment in flood defences over the last number of years.

However, you should be aware that the provision of insurance is a commercial matter for insurance companies, which has to be based on a proper assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This assessment will in many cases include insurers own presumptions based on their private modeling and research. Consequently, neither the Government nor the Central Bank can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products or have the power to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals or businesses. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from doing so.

Government policy in relation to flooding is focused on the development of a sustainable, planned and risk-based approach to dealing with flooding problems. This in turn should lead to the increased availability of flood insurance. To achieve this aim, there is a focus on:

- prioritising spending on flood relief measures by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and relevant local authorities,
- development and implementation of plans by the OPW to implement flood relief schemes, and
- improving channels of communication between the OPW and the insurance industry, in order to reach a better understanding about the provision of flood cover in marginal areas.

The above approach is complemented by a Memorandum of Understanding between the OPW and Insurance Ireland, which provides for the exchange of data in relation to completed flood defence schemes which should provide a basis for the increased provision of flood insurance in areas where works have been completed. In this regard, the Insurance Ireland/OPW working group, which the Department of Finance attends, now meets on a quarterly basis to support the information flow and improve the understanding of issues between both parties.

Finally, you should be aware that a consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman in relation to any dealings with a Financial Services or Insurance provider during which they feel they have been unfairly treated. In addition, individuals who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining flood insurance or believe that they are being treated unfairly may contact Insurance Ireland which operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to insurance.

Tax Appeals Commission

100. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the status of shares in a cooperative (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27404/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that it raised tax assessments for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 against individuals who hold patronage shares that were issued by the entity in question.

However all collection has been deferred while a ‘test case’ in regard to the taxability of such shares is being considered by the Tax Appeals Commission. The Tax Appeals Commission, which is an independent body, heard the particular case on 22 November 2017 but has not yet delivered its decision.

Revenue has confirmed that it will take no further action on the assessed cases until the decision of the Tax Appeals Commission becomes available for consideration.

Tax Reliefs Costs

101. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the rent a room tax relief scheme threshold by €1,000 intervals to €20,000. [27439/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the deputy may be aware, the numbers of those availing of the rent a room relief and the cost to the Exchequer can be found on the cost of tax expenditures report. The report can be located at the following link:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

I am advised by Revenue that it is not possible to estimate the costs for the changes to the rent a room scheme as suggested by the Deputy. In order to do so, Revenue would require knowledge of the number of potential claimants with rental income in excess of this amount. However, tax returns are only filed by those claiming under the current threshold and therefore no information is available to Revenue on the potential number of new claimants.

Tax Reliefs Costs

102. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the home renovation incentive relief rate by 1.5% intervals up to 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27440/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Home Renovation Incentive (HRI)

is a scheme that allows home owners, landlords and local authority tenants to claim tax relief on qualifying works. The works must be completed by a tax-compliant contractor and be subject to 13.5% VAT. The HRI relief is paid in the form of a tax credit at 13.5% of qualifying expenditure, which can be set against Income Tax evenly over two years, provided the claimant has paid enough tax in each of the two years to claim it back. Where the full use of the credit cannot be made in those two years, the credit will be carried forward to later years. This rate of 13.5% is in line with the VAT rate so that it effectively reduces the rate of VAT to zero on qualifying works. HRI can be applied for up to 4 years after the qualifying works have been completed.

The additional costs of increases to the relief in the manner outlined by the Deputy are set out in the table.

-	Cost (€m)	-
Rate of Relief	First Year	Full Year
13.5%	0	0
15.0%	1.3	2.5
16.5%	2.5	5.1
18.0%	3.8	7.6
19.5%	5.1	10.1
20.0%	5.5	11.0

The first year cost of these increases is approximately half of the full year cost due to the requirement to split this credit across a period of at least two years. These costs are based on the maximum amount of HRI credits available to be claimed in 2016.

The Deputy may wish to note that quarterly and annual HRI statistical reports can be found on Revenue's website: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/index.aspx>.

Tax Reliefs Costs

103. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of allowing landlords to offset current year rental losses arising under current Case V taxation rules against other taxable income in the same year. [27443/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Income is classified under a number of categories for taxation purposes and there are distinct rules for each category. As the Deputy notes, rental income from Irish property is taxed under Case V of Schedule D. The rules for Case V provide that landlords can carry forward rental losses for offset against future rental profits, but cannot offset rental losses against other net taxable income in the current year, other than rental profits from other Irish properties. Revenue have informed me that the manner in which losses are recorded on tax returns reflects the current structure of tax legislation, that is, Irish rental losses can only be offset against profits from Irish rental properties. As such, given the data which is available, it is not possible for Revenue to estimate the cost of allowing rental losses to be offset against non-rental profits.

Tax Deduction Systems

104. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of a deduction for pre-letting expenses incurred by a landlord in bringing a property

which has been vacant for a minimum period of one year to the rental market. [27444/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In Budget 2018 I introduced a new deduction for pre-letting expenses of a revenue nature incurred on a property that has been vacant for a period of 12 months or more. I introduced this measure in order to encourage owners of vacant residential property to bring such properties into the rental market.

A cap on allowable expenses of €5,000 per property applies, and the relief is subject to clawback if the property is withdrawn from the rental market within 4 years. The relief is available for qualifying expenses incurred up to the end of 2021. At the time of Budget 2018, this measure was projected to cost €1.5 million in 2018 and €3 million in a full year.

I have been informed by Revenue, that as tax returns for 2018 are not due to be filed until after the year's end, it is not possible at present to comment on the current uptake of the scheme or update the projected cost estimates.

Tax Deduction Systems

105. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of a tax deduction against rental income for an element of the capital cost of a property in the initial years of ownership of a residential rental unit with a corresponding reduction in the base cost of the property on a future disposal for capital gains tax purposes based on 4% of the capital cost per annum for the first five years. [27445/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Report of the Working Group on the Tax and Fiscal Treatment of Rental Accommodation Providers (2017) identified the measure suggested by the deputy as a possible medium-term option. The report does not cost the measure but notes that three factors relevant for the costing would be:

- the reduction in current income tax revenues;
- in the longer term, the claw-back of the deduction as CGT rather than income tax, USC and PRSI; and
- the potential for loss to the Exchequer if the property is not subject to CGT in future.

I am advised by Revenue that to cost the measure, certain further information would need to be available, including the number of eligible landlords and estimates for the relevant element of the capital costs. In the absence of this information it is not possible for Revenue to identify a cost.

Tax Reliefs Costs

106. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of a capital gains tax relief of 4% per annum which would accrue on an annual basis for a property purchased with a tenant in situ and is retained as a rental property for a minimum of five years. [27446/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): To cost the measures requested by the Deputy, certain information would need to be available, including the number of eligible landlords, estimates for the relevant element of the capital costs and the numbers of properties purchased with a tenant in situ. In the absence of this information it is not possible to cost the

proposal.

Living City Initiative

107. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of expanding the living city initiative criteria to all areas. [27447/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Special Regeneration Areas for the Living City Initiative were designated following consultation with the relevant city councils and an independent review by a third party advisor.

Specific qualifying criteria were set down that were required to be taken into account by the city councils when putting forward the proposed Special Regeneration Areas for each city. In particular, it was stated that the Special Regeneration Areas should be inner city areas which are largely comprised of dwellings built before 1915, where there is above average unemployment and which demonstrate clear evidence of neglect, dereliction and under-use. It was also specified that areas which are generally regarded as affluent, have high occupancy rates and which do not require regeneration should not be included.

Officials in my Department reviewed the Living City Initiative in 2016 in consultation with the relevant councils and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. On foot of that review, a number of changes to the scheme were announced in Budget 2017 in order to make the Initiative more attractive and effective.

The principal change extended the residential element of the scheme to landlords, who are now able to claim the relief by way of accelerated capital allowances for the conversion and refurbishment of property, which was built prior to 1915, where such property is to be used for residential purposes.

In addition, the requirement for a pre-1915 building to have been originally constructed for use as a dwelling in order to qualify for the residential element of the Initiative was removed. The floor area restriction for owner-occupiers has also been removed. Furthermore, the minimum amount of capital expenditure required for eligibility for relief, under all elements of the scheme, was also amended and must now only exceed €5,000.

The possibility of extending the Special Regeneration Areas was considered, but it was decided that such a change would dilute the Initiative's potential impact on the originally targeted areas.

Revenue have informed me that in order to cost the Deputy's proposal, they would require information on the number of eligible properties in areas outside of the current Special Regeneration Areas. This information is not available from tax returns or other sources, and as such, Revenue are not able to provide this estimation.

Tax Exemptions

108. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if a VRT exemption will be introduced for mountain rescue vehicles and other vehicles used solely in such rescue activities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27452/18]

128. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to exempt vehicles used for mountain rescue from VRT in budget 2019 in view of the fact that these vehicles are

often financed by voluntary donations and small grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28013/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 and 128 together.

Section 130 of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended by Section 102 of the Finance Act 2010) introduced, from 1 January 2011, a revised classification system for the assessment of VRT which reflects the categories used for classification of vehicles at European level under various EC Directives. Passenger Vehicles (EU Category M) and Commercial Vehicles (EU Category N) are classified based on the specifications of these vehicle types and in particular, the number of seats and their goods carrying capacity. There are no provisions for the classification of vehicles based on their usage.

A vehicle may be registered as an ambulance if it conforms to the definition provided in the 2007/46 Framework Directive (as amended). This states that the vehicle must be: “intended for the transport of sick or injured people and having special equipment for such purpose.” Furthermore, the layout and technical equipment of the patient compartment have to comply with the European requirement (IS EN 1789:2007 +A1: 2010 +A2:2014) on medical vehicles and their equipment. This standard emphasises, amongst other things, the ceiling clearance level of the patient compartment which gives sufficient space for the treatment of the casualty during transport. Under the terms of the Directive these vehicles are assigned an EU SC bodywork code as a special purpose vehicle at EU type-approval stage.

Vehicles such as converted 4x4s and sports utility vehicles cannot meet the required standards as set out above, in particular in relation to the ceiling clearance level and partitions. Revenue therefore regards them as category A which is consistent with their passenger transport design. When deployed operationally, the primary function of these vehicles is to support ground personnel and provide transport facilities for patients to take them from off-road areas to a waiting emergency ambulance. In addition, these 4x4s may not be exclusively used for the carriage of sick or disabled persons, as they may also be used as staff vehicles outside of specific events.

Any attempt to base VRT classification on the use of a vehicle as distinct from its design would be unworkable legislatively and administratively. However, the Programme for a Partnership Government recognises the difficulties facing community and voluntary groups in relation to VRT rates on vehicles and I have asked my officials to examine the matter.

Legislative Reviews

109. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review section 135(3A) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as inserted by section 23 of the Finance Act 2017; if there is evidence that it has reduced tax avoidance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27498/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 135(3A) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 was introduced to counter a specific avoidance scheme identified by Revenue whereby taxpayers were seeking to extract profits from companies in a manner which avoided a charge to income tax. The scheme involved individuals avoiding a liability to income tax where the individual disposed of shares and arranged for the consideration for the disposal to be funded from the assets of the company. The measure introduced ensures that distribution treatment correctly applies to such transactions. The measure has no effect in relation to bona

fide transactions entered into by SMEs.

Subsection (3A) came into effect in respect of arrangements entered into after 2 November 2017. Therefore, the first full year in which the provision has application is 2018. The relevant tax returns in respect of the year 2018 are not due to be filed until 2019. Accordingly, it is not yet possible to comment on the effect which the amendment has had in closing down the relevant avoidance scheme. I am informed by Revenue that they have engaged in extensive consultation with practitioners, as well as the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland in relation to the provision subsequent to its introduction. A detailed guidance note was also issued in relation to the provision in order to provide interpretative guidance on the measure which included practical worked examples in relation to the application of the new subsection.

Tax Exemptions

110. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of increasing the annual exemption limits for persons aged 65 years of age and over by €1,000 for a single persons and €2,000 for a couple; if further increases would be a straight line calculation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27499/18]

118. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase the pension exemption limit for tax purposes from €36,000 in view of the fact that it has not been adjusted for the past four to five years; the estimated cost of an increase for each €1,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27834/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 110 and 118 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the costs for increasing the annual exemption limits for persons aged 65 years and over can be found by consulting the Revenue Ready Reckoner, available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf>.

The cost requested is as follows;

Cost of Increasing Aged 65 and over Income Tax Exemption Limit	First Year	Full Year
By €1000 for single/widow/surviving partner and €2000 for married/civil partner	27m	31m

Amounts other than those shown can be extrapolated using a straight line or pro-rata calculation.

The purpose of the exemption limit is to identify a certain income limit below which a taxpayer aged 65 or over is not required to pay income tax or to submit claims to Revenue for income tax reliefs.

This exemption limit does not equate to the amount of income which would be sheltered by the tax credits available to the individual or couple as both the exemption limit and the tax credits available can vary depending on the personal circumstances of the individual. For example:

- There are separate single and married exemption limits, and increases are also available for individuals with dependent children including incapacitated adult children.

- While all taxpayers have a personal tax credit, a PAYE credit is available only in respect of

qualifying income and is limited for use against that type of income. Additional tax credits are also available, such as those for widows/widowers, for blind individuals, for those caring for incapacitated children or dependant relatives, and for health expenses incurred by the taxpayer.

In my view the current income exemption limits are the most appropriate use of limited resources. I am however conscious of the significant contribution made by taxpayers generally to the rebalancing of the public finances, and of the challenges that individuals continue to face notwithstanding the improving economic conditions.

For this reason Budget 2018, for the fourth year in succession, introduced reductions in the income tax and USC burden with a particular focus on low and middle income earners. It is my intention to continue to make progress on reducing the personal tax burden in future Budgets subject to having the necessary resources.

Financial Services Sector

111. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the status of each of the 30 actions identified in the IFS2020 strategy in tabular form; if they have been implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27677/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In March 2015, the Government launched the 'International Financial Services 2020 Strategy' (IFS2020), which is led by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy TD. One of the main deliverables is to create 10,000 net new jobs across the Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland portfolios in international financial services over five years from 2015 – 2020. To end-2017 the IFS2020 Strategy has created approximately 7,000 net new jobs in the sector placing us on target to create 10,000 by 2020. The IFS sector now employs almost 42,000 people across Ireland with 30% of those employed in the sector located outside Dublin.

The initial Strategy document launched in 2015 sets out five strategic priorities with 30 specific actions as outlined below.

This strategy document is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/IFS2020.pdf>.

The five strategic priorities are:

Strategic Priority 1: Promote Ireland as a location for International Financial Services & world class innovative products & services

Strategic Priority 2: Drive continuous improvement in the operating environment & competitiveness of Ireland's IFS sector

Strategic Priority 3: Drive Research, Innovation & Entrepreneurship in the IFS sector, with a particular focus on financial technology & governance, risk & compliance.

Strategic Priority 4: Develop job-creation opportunities from emerging IFS sub-sectors & new markets

Strategic Priority 5: Data and Benchmarking of Progress

Whereas the 30 specific actions are listed below:

1. Utilise the IDA to promote and market Ireland as a location for IFS

2. Utilise the extensive EI overseas office network and dedicated Financial Services Global Team (FSGT) located in key target international markets to support the expansion and growth of Irish owned entities

3. Provide clear briefing materials and information to equip the Embassy network to support their efforts in promoting Ireland as a location for IFS and producer of innovative products and services.

4. Use our Embassy network and the overseas offices of the enterprise development agencies to ensure that appropriate priority is given to the IFS sector in their ongoing planning and activities

5. Coordinated approach to international promotion of IFS

6. Relevant Departments and Agencies will explore the possibility of appropriate private-sector secondments both in Ireland and overseas to support the objectives of IFS2020 .

7. A representative from the IFS industry will be invited by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to participate in the Export Trade Council .

8. Develop a “banner brand” for the IFS sector to promote Ireland’s IFS sector, including during overseas trade missions and at selected international events .

9. Host a major IFS Summit to highlight emerging trends and opportunities in the sector .

10. Establish an IFS Education and Skills Liaison Group.

11. Deliver training needs and future skills needs assessment for the sector.

12. Enhance the Finuas Network to take account of the broadening of IFS activities in Ireland with a particular focus on Payments and FinTech.

13. Promoting IFS as a career choice.

14. Ensure that the six monthly review of the critical skills list for employment permits continues to reflect the skills shortages experienced by the IFS.

15. Talent Attraction – Single Website Portal .

16. Place making and Regional Development.

17. Marketing the overall opportunity in the SDZ.

18. The Central Bank and Department of Finance will, in accordance with their respective legal roles, review the authorisation service standards reported by the Central Bank in 2015.

19. Continuous development of Double Taxation Treaties.

20. Determine the position with regard to core markets infrastructure with input from the key stakeholders, examining key strategic issues, dependencies and critical emerging issues.

21. Drive continued innovation in the IFS industry by increasing the number of companies

engaged in projects.

22. Drive Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) within existing firms.
23. Enhancing IFS – ICT sectoral collaboration.
24. Identify both domestic and international sources of funding for FinTech companies and develop an engagement process to facilitate introductions to investor ready companies.
25. Partner with existing accelerators to support engagement and up skilling and the mentoring process with participating companies.
26. Set up an indigenous “funds services cluster” and support the group to target key markets, in particular the UK and North America.
27. Create a Payments Forum and develop a Sectoral Strategy for Payments.
28. Analyse the financial services capabilities of the BPO cluster in Ireland through a high level group and recommend actions to develop the international financial services capability
29. Develop a working group that will examine the opportunities afforded by the Capital Markets Union green paper as well as follow on opportunities for strategic positioning and skills enhancement.
30. Relevant Departments and Agencies will work together to research, design and deliver a year-end annual IFS progress report.

IFS2020 is reviewed and updated annually through the development of annual action plans. Three further action plans (2016, 2017 and 2018) have been published since the initial strategy (and actions 2015) document, and in total 159 actions have been identified.

Quarterly progress reports track the progress of measures within the IFS2020 Action Plans and are published on my Department’s website. The latest quarter 1 of 2018 progress report is available at the following link: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/IFS2020-Q1-2018-Progress-Report.pdf>.

A small number of measures were delayed from one quarter to the next, but almost all were completed within the annual period. Measure 20 in the 2015 Strategy - financial market infrastructure - was delayed in 2015, and recast as Measure 28 in the 2016 Action Plan, and completed on time. Measure 27 in the 2016 Action Plan was to fully adopt the ‘Alternative A’ provisions of the Cape Town Convention and was delayed from Q4 2016 to Q2 2017. All other measures for 2015, 2016 and 2017 have been implemented and measures for 2018 remain on track for completion by end-2018.

Legislative Programme

112. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the investment limited partnership (amendment) Bill will be introduced; when the new legislation will become law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27678/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy knows, the Funds Industry has been a successful and significant element of the Irish financial services landscape

for many years. This success has been underpinned by various periodic relevant changes in the legislative landscape that have made Ireland an attractive domicile for promoters in Asia, across Europe, the U.S., and further afield. In addition, we also have a regulatory regime which provide a robust and consistent approach to the supervision that promotes confidence in Ireland as a location for investment funds.

Due to changes in the global private equity market in both structure and relevant European legislation, it has been decided that there is a case to update the Investment Limited Partnership Act 1994. The IFS2020 Action Plan commits to developing amendments to the Investment Limited Partnership Act 1994 so as to make the structure more attractive to fund managers.

Consequently, my Department sought and obtained approval from the Government for the preparation of the necessary “Heads” for legislation in 2017. My officials have developed the Heads and these have been sent to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for their consideration. A drafter has been assigned to work on this workstream and the Bill appears on the Government’s legislative programme for 2018. It is anticipated that the draft legislation will be developed in the second half of this year with the intention for the Bill to be then considered by the Houses of the Oireachtas before the end of the year.

Stability and Growth Pact

113. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount by which Ireland would miss its MTO target in 2019 if the €500 million dedicated to the rainy day fund were to be spent in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27699/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The estimates prepared by the European Commission, in its Spring Forecast, and my Department, in the Stability Programme Update 2018, both project a structural deficit of 0.4 per cent of GDP for next year.

If an additional €500 million were to be spent this would, in the first instance, increase the deficit, and have a corresponding impact on the structural position. On the assumption that all other variables are unchanged the resulting structural deficit would be 0.6 per cent of GDP in 2019.

Ceteris paribus the MTO would, therefore, not be achieved next year.

The Government is committed to establishing the Rainy Day Fund as a fiscal buffer in the event of a major shock to the economy.

As I set out in the 2018 Summer Economic Statement, the increases permitted under the fiscal rules represent money that we would have to borrow. Budgetary policy will be formulated on the basis of what is right for the economy at this stage in the cycle and not by rules that would increase borrowing.

Stability and Growth Pact

114. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the minimum structural effort required under the fiscal rules to move towards the medium term objective in a year with a structural deficit of 0.9%; if Ireland is obliged under the European fiscal rules to move towards its medium term objective of a structural deficit of 0.5%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27700/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A Member State in the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact is legally required to be at, or making sufficient progress towards, its Medium Term budgetary Objective (MTO). Ireland's MTO is a structural deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP.

The European Commission sets the required annual fiscal adjustment based on inter alia the cyclical position of the economy. In 'normal' economic times, a Member State not at its MTO should improve its structural deficit at a rate of 0.6 per cent of GDP per annum. A Member State cannot be required to over-achieve its MTO but is free to do so if it so chooses.

The Commission has projected a structural deficit in Ireland of 0.6 per cent of GDP for 2018. Accordingly, the Commission has proposed a Country Specific Recommendation that Ireland should achieve its MTO next year. My Department has projected a structural deficit of 0.9 per cent of GDP for this year; however, it is the Commission's figures that matter from a legal perspective.

As I set out in the 2018 Summer Economic Statement, budgetary policy will be set so as to reduce borrowing and steadily increase public expenditure underpinned by stable and predictable tax revenue.

Stability and Growth Pact

115. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if a country is not at its MTO, if it is obliged under the fiscal rules to apply a convergence margin; the way in which the convergence margin is calculated; the amount in monetary terms of the convergence margin for 2019 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27701/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under the Stability and Growth Pact, Member States must attain a country-specific Medium Term budgetary Objective (MTO) which is set in structural terms. For Ireland this is currently set as a structural deficit of 0.5 per cent of GDP.

When a Member State is not at its MTO, a convergence margin applies. The process of calculating this convergence margin is detailed in the 2018 Edition of the Vade Mecum on the Stability and Growth Pact. This may be found at https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/economy-finance/vade-mecum-stability-and-growth-pact-2018-edition_en.

The convergence margin is set by the Commission, following its assessment of the Stability Programme. It is calculated on a country-specific basis and is designed to ensure that the MTO is achieved in a suitable manner.

The convergence margin for 2019 is set out in table 3 of the 2018 Summer Economic Statement and reduces the reference rate of potential growth by 0.6 percentage points.

In nominal terms this equates to c.€400 million.

Of course, had there been no convergence margin for 2019 and this money was spent, it would have increased the deficit (both headline and structural).

As I have said, the increases permitted under the fiscal rules represent money that we would have to borrow. Budgetary policy will be formulated on the basis of what is right for the economy at this stage in the cycle and not by rules that would increase borrowing.

Questions - Written Answers
Contract Manufacturing

116. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when his attention was drawn to the potential effects of contract manufacturing on GDP figures in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27776/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Ireland's national accounts data, including GDP, are prepared by the Central Statistics Office which is independent. They are prepared in accordance with EU and international standards currently in place.

Contract manufacturing is a form of outsourcing whereby an Irish-resident firm engages a company abroad to manufacture goods on its behalf (and vice versa). Crucially, for the purposes of calculating GDP in accordance with the standards, the inputs used in the production process, including the valuable intellectual property rights, remain in the ownership of the Irish-based entity and no change of economic ownership is deemed to take place during the production process.

Putting it another way, the foreign-based contract manufacturer supplies a manufacturing service to the Irish-based company and the former never takes ownership of the product. When these goods are finally sold in a third country, a change of economic ownership is deemed to take place and the transaction is recorded as an export from the Irish-based entity for the purposes of GDP estimates. It is important to stress that while this activity inflates Ireland's exports and GDP, it has almost no impact on Irish living standards as it generates little or no domestic activity/employment.

Contract manufacturing has been a feature of the Irish national accounts for over a decade. However, the phenomenon has been especially noticeable since 2015 following the relocation by a small number of firms of their entire balance sheets to Ireland (with the balance sheets mainly consisting of high income-generating assets such as intellectual property). These firms appear to engage in outsourcing by way of contract manufacturing.

My Department has been aware of contract manufacturing for a number of years and in particular since the release of the 2015 national accounts which clearly illustrated the potential effect of contract manufacturing on GDP.

In this context, high frequency indicators such as industrial production have been poor leading indicators for contract manufacturing in recent quarters. As a result, the actual impact of contract manufacturing on the full year GDP figures last year only became apparent when the quarterly national accounts for the fourth quarter of 2017, incorporating preliminary full year GDP estimates for 2017, were released in March 2018. The final figures for 2017 will be contained in the National Income and Expenditure 2017 results expected to be published by the CSO in July.

Foireann Roinne

117. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Airgeadais an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27807/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Is ar mo chomhghleacaí, An tAire Josepha Madigan TD, An tAire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, atá an fhreagracht maidir le

hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 agus Scéimeanna Gaeilge.

Is féidir liom a chur in iúl don Teachta go ndéantar foráil i Scéim Gaeilge na Roinne Airgeadais 2018-2021 Oifigeach Gaeilge a bheith ag mo Roinn. Is é Oifigeach Comhlíonta na Roinne, atá ag leibhéal Príomhoifigeach Cúnta, atá i ról an Oifigh Ghaeilge faoi láthair agus atá freagrach as ábhar a bhaineann le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 sa Roinn. Tá an ról sin sa bhreis ar na dualgais eile atá leagtha ar an Oifigeach Comhlíonta sa Roinn.

Tá forálacha i bhfeidhm ag mo Roinn chun seirbhísí Gaeilge a chur ar fáil don phobal agus leagtar amach go mionsonraithe iad sin i Scéim Teanga na Roinne ar féidir í a fháil ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne nó ag an nasc: <https://www.finance.gov.ie/ga/updates/language-scheme-2018-2021/>

Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil mo Roinn tiomanta do sheirbhísí ar ardchaighdeán i nGaeilge a chur ar fáil dá cuid custaiméirí agus a chinntiú go mbeidh acmhainní cuí teanga sa Roinn chun an méid seirbhísí Gaeilge atá de dhíth a chur ar fáil.

Question No. 118 answered with Question No. 110.

VAT Yield

119. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of VAT paid in relation to concerts performed by foreign resident music artists here in each of the past five years; and the rate of VAT that they pay. [27837/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the information recorded on VAT returns does not separately identify particular products or activities. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the amount of VAT paid in relation to concerts performed by foreign resident music artists.

In general, where a concert takes place in Ireland, the artist's performance fee is subject to Irish VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%. Where an international performer is engaged by a promoter, it is the responsibility of the promoter to account for VAT due on the performance fees. 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 he/she is established.

Where premises providers allow promoters who are not established in the State to hold concerts (on their premises), they must report details of the events to Revenue. Failure to do so can make the premises providers 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 venues.

Mortgage Lending

120. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the requirements on lenders to provide information to consumers when they are offering incentives such as cashback offers in the context of the new requirements introduced by the Central Bank to provide additional transparency and facilitate mortgage switching; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27839/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank advises that Provi-

sion 6.12 of the Consumer Protection Code 2012 states that, where a regulated entity offers an incentive to a personal consumer on an existing mortgage, the regulated entity must provide the personal consumer, on paper or on another durable medium, with the information needed to consider the incentive offered.

This information must:

1. Quantify the implications for the personal consumer of availing of the incentive including an indicative cost comparison of the total cost of the existing mortgage if they do not avail of the incentive and the total cost of the mortgage if they avail of the incentive;
2. Clearly set out the length of time during which the incentive will be available;
3. Clearly set out any assumptions used, which must be reasonable and justifiable;
4. Set out the advantages and disadvantages to the personal consumer of availing of the incentive;
5. Include other key information which the personal consumer should have available to them when considering the incentive; and
6. Include a statement that the personal consumer may wish to seek independent advice prior to availing of the incentive.

On June 20, the Central Bank published a new addendum to the Consumer Protection Code 2012, which will take effect from 1 January 2019. The Bank advises that the addendum extends the transparency requirements set out in Provision 6.12 above to all mortgage holders i.e. for new, existing and switching mortgage holders.

Mortgage Lending

121. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the Central Bank's findings when it reviewed advertisements of incentives by lenders in the context of the new requirements introduced by the Central Bank to provide additional transparency and facilitate mortgage switching; the nature of the breaches it identified; the breakdown and details of the 75% of advertisements that it required to be withdrawn or amended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27840/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank advises that it recently undertook a review of mortgage related advertising, with a focus on cash back incentives, to assess clarity and transparency for consumers.

A risk to consumer protection exists where consumers are not informed of all of the consequences of choosing a mortgage that offers short-term financial relief, including that it may cost the consumer more in mortgage repayments over the life of his/ her mortgage than if he/ she had chosen an alternative product.

Some 183 advertisements were reviewed for compliance with the advertising requirements in the Consumer Protection Code 2012 and the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 142/2016). In some cases, the same advertisement may have appeared across all formats of advertising reviewed.

As a result of the review, the Central Bank instructed lenders to withdraw or amend c.75% of the advertisements included.

In summary, the key findings from the review were:

- Key information and qualifying criteria was not always included in the main body of the

advertisements, or indeed in the small print (e.g. whether a current account with the lender was required in order to qualify);

- The content of some webpages was not accurate and/or up to date; and
- The content of some of the advertisements was unclear (e.g. how the cash back incentive was calculated).

Personal Contract Plans

122. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the status of his engagements to date with the Central Bank and-or the regulator regarding personal contract plans for car finance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27857/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): PCPs – or Personal Contract Plans - are a type of hire purchase financing agreement used for the purchase of motor vehicles. It normally comprises three parts:-

- an up-front deposit payment;
- ongoing monthly payments for an agreed period of time;
- a final balloon payment at the end of the contract term.

Both the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) have certain functions in relation to hire purchase agreements; the Bank has an overall role in relation to the operation of such agreements and the CCPC has a role in relation to the authorisation of ‘credit intermediaries’ through which many such agreements are provided to consumers.

The CCPC and the Central Bank have also recently produced papers on the PCP market in Ireland. These show that PCP finance has grown in recent years and it is becoming an increasingly important source of finance for the purchase of new cars. While the availability of such credit is important for the finance and motor industries, it is also important that the level of information and protections available to consumers in relation to such products continues to be robust. To that end, I have arranged for Mr. Michael Tutty, a former Regulator and Second Secretary in the Department of Finance, to carry out an independent review of the current PCP market and regulatory structure to see if there are any particular consumer protection gaps which may need to be addressed. As part of his work Mr. Tutty will consult the two relevant regulatory bodies and I look forward to receiving his report later this summer.

Motor Insurance Costs

123. **Deputy Frank O’Rourke** asked the Minister for Finance the progress to date on the implementation of the recommendations of the cost of insurance working group in regard to motor insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27912/18]

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 both to 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 includes 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. The next quarterly update report will also be published here next month.

Finally, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While it is accepted that motor insurance premiums are still at a very high level for many people, such statistics indicate at least a greater degree of stability in the market on an overall basis. I am hopeful that this trend in pricing will be maintained and that premiums should continue to fall from the very high levels of mid-2016.

Departmental Staff Data

124. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27951/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Finance is a high performing professional organisation which operates to the highest standards. To ensure the Department achieves priority outcomes the aim is to sustain and foster a culture and related values that exemplify ethical behaviour and effective governance. These shared values drive behaviour and define a culture that support the efforts to deliver a mission in a professional, efficient, fair and balanced manner.

Integrity, objectivity, impartiality, openness, accountability, and respect are the core values to which the Department subscribes and these are aligned with those standards as reflected in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours, the Code of Ethics and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

In November 2017 my Department produced its 4th iteration of the Governance Framework. Effective governance encourages the efficient use of resources, strengthens accountability for the stewardship of those resources, improves management and service delivery, and thereby contributes to improving peoples’ lives. Good governance is integral to all the Department’s

strategic and operational policies and practices which encompass the objectives, plans, relationships, accountabilities, resources, processes and activities for implementing and continually improving governance arrangements throughout the organisation.

All staff of the Department have an important role to play in collectively committing to the good governance of the Department through the requirements of this framework and that of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

All new entrants to the Department are provided with a copy of the Code of Standards and Behaviours and the Dignity at Work policy. The policy on bullying and harassment is also included in the Staff Handbook which is provided to all staff. All of these documents are also available on the Department's internal HR website.

Throughout the year all staff performance and behaviour is managed through the Performance Management and Development System and where appropriate through the Civil Service Management of Underperformance Policy and/or Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

From 2015 to 2018, there have been no dismissals or transfers of staff, from the Department or, to another role for the reasons as set out by the Deputy in his question.

European Investment Bank Loans

125. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of loans drawn down from the European Investment Bank; the date of commencement; the repayment schedule; the interest rate and purposes of each loan in tabular form; and his plans to allocate additional funding for the provision of social housing from the EIB. [27963/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In relation to the current extent of State borrowing from the European Investment Bank (EIB), I am advised by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) that the EIB has lent or contracted to lend directly to Ireland, acting through the NTMA, the amounts shown below:

State Borrowing

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 21/06/2018)	Date of Capital Repayment	Signature Date
Irish Schools Programme	To construct, expand and refurbish public school buildings.	100,000,000	100,000,000	13-Aug-25	06 July 2012
Irish Water Investment Programme	To provide new water mains, water and wastewater treatment facilities and reservoirs, as well as measures to improve water conservation.	100,000,000	100,000,000	21-May-27	29 Oct 2014

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Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 21/06/2018)	Date of Capital Repayment	Signature Date
Irish Schools Programme II	To construct, expand and refurbish public school buildings.	100,000,000	100,000,000	24-Nov-27	19 June 2013
Dublin LUAS Cross City	Construction of a tramway system in Dublin.	150,000,000	150,000,000	04 Jul 29	3 Mar 2014
Irish Water Investment Programme - B	To provide new water mains, water and wastewater treatment facilities and reservoirs, as well as measures to improve water conservation.	100,000,000	100,000,000	25-Sep-28	29 Oct 2014
Irish Flood Prevention Programme	To finance the on-going flood protection and prevention programme in Ireland for the period 2015-2020.	200,000,000	200,000,000	30-Jun-31	17-Dec- 2015
Irish Schools Programme III	To construct, expand and refurbish public school buildings.	200,000,000	200,000,000	03-Nov-31	17 Oct 2016
National Children's Hospital	Construction of the new children's hospital in Dublin.	490,000,000	n/a	n/a	8 Dec 2017
Total		1,440,000,000	950,000,000		

The weighted average interest rate for this funding is 1.535% based on the drawn amounts. We have not provided individual interest rates for the loans as this information is commercially sensitive.

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland

In addition the SBCI has also borrowed from the EIB. The following are the EIB's outstanding loans to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland as indicated in the table below:

SBCI Borrowing

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 22/06/2018)	Date of repayment	Signature Date
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	To improve access to finance for Irish SMEs.	200,000,000	200,000,000	19 Dec 2024	28 Oct 2014

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 22/06/2018)	Date of re-payment	Sig-nature Date
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	To improve access to finance for Irish SMEs.	200,000,000	200,000,000	15 Dec 2025	22 Oct 2015
Total		400,000,000	400,000,000		

The average interest rate applied is 0.147% and the amount of interest paid to date on this is €446,608. (please note that this interest rate applies in entirety to facility 1. No interest rate has been charged on facility 2, due to negative euribor over the period, which is of a greater percentage than the margin charged on the facility; therefore the interest rate charged is nil - the facility agreement has a clause that floors the interest rate at 0% - which means that where euribor interest rates are negative to a greater size than the margin on the facility no interest rate is charged.)

The Housing Finance Agency

The Housing Finance Agency has, in addition, the 2 following loans:

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 22/06/2018)	Signature Date	Date of repayment
HFA – Irish Social Housing	To construct and upgrade social housing and improve energy efficiency.	200,000,000	0	26 Dec 2016	n/a
HFA – Irish Social Housing	Funding was made available to approved housing bodies for the upgrade and delivery of social housing.	150,000,000	130,000,000	18 Dec 2014	26 Jan 2043
Total		350,000,000	130,000,000		

The duration of these HFA loans is 25 years. The weighted average rate is 1.141%.

Local Authorities

The following are two local authority loans:

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 22/06/2018)
Local Authority Framework Loan	To renovate and upgrade Local Authority buildings under urban regeneration strategies.	100,000,000	100,000,000

Loan Facility	Purpose of Loan	Loan Amount	Drawn Amount (as of 22/06/2018)
Local Authority Framework Loan	For investment in water supply and treatment and possibly solid waste; the protection and improvement of the urban environment, including the renovation and upgrading of buildings of community interest, within the context of overall urban renewal strategies; and the development of tourism infrastructure.	90,000,000	90,000,000
Total		190,000,000	190,000,000

** I am also advised by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that Limerick City and County Council and Fingal County Council have entered into financing agreements with the EIB. However, as of 21 June 2018, no funds have been drawn down in respect of these agreements.

To assist the Deputy I have attached a link (below) to the EIB website which lists EIB loans to Ireland over a number of years:

<http://www.eib.org/projects/loan/list/index.htm?from=1959®ion=1§or=&to=2018&country=IE>.

In relation to the question on additional EIB loans for the provision of social housing, the Deputy may wish to refer the question to my colleague Minister Eoghan Murphy TD who has responsibility for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Financial Services Regulation

126. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a specific State regulator for financial auditors here; the way in which the regime compares to that in the United Kingdom; the way in which guarantees are made that auditing standards are being adhered to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27985/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Companies (Auditing and Accounting) Act 2003, established the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA). IAASA was conferred with the majority of its statutory functions and powers under the Act in early 2006. IAASA is under the aegis of my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Under the Companies Act 2014, the Transparency Regulations and the Audit Regulations, IAASA has seven primary functions:

- Supervision of how the Prescribed Accountancy Bodies (PABs) regulate and monitor their members;

- Monitoring of the periodic financial reporting of certain entities whose securities have been admitted to trading on a regulated market in the EU;
- Carrying out certain functions in respect of liquidators;
- Promotion of adherence to high professional standards in the auditing and accountancy profession;
- Acting as a specialist source of advice to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on auditing and accounting matters;
- External quality assurance of the auditors of listed companies, credit institutions and insurance undertakings to ensure a high quality of audit; and
- Adoption and maintenance of the audit framework for Ireland.

Further information on IAASA can be found on its website: <https://www.iaasa.ie/About-IAASA/Our-Role>

The EU completed a significant reform of the rules governing statutory audit with the adoption of two new instruments in April 2014. The resulting EU Directive and EU Regulation on Audits update existing EU law on statutory audits. S.I. 312 of 2016 transposed the EU Audit Directive and gave effect to some provisions of the EU Regulation, was signed into law on 15 June 2016.

The following are the main areas of impact –

- The framework for public oversight was enhanced and the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA) is now the single competent authority with ultimate responsibility for oversight of statutory auditors and audit firms and has direct responsibility for oversight of audits of public interest entities (credit institutions, insurers, and listed entities). The recognised accountancy bodies still retain responsibility for certain oversight tasks such as approval and continuing education of auditors and inspections of non-public interest entity audits.

- The obligations on statutory auditors to be independent when auditing the financial statements of their clients were strengthened and in particular limits placed on the type and amount of non-audit services an auditor may provide.

- New obligations on public interest entities with respect to the appointment of and interaction with their auditors were introduced, most significantly the requirement to change auditor at least every ten years.

- The Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 avails of options not available in secondary legislation which will enhance the system of oversight of audit in Ireland and audit quality. It elevates the provisions of S.I. No. 312 of 2016 into primary legislation to provide a single, comprehensive framework for statutory audit in the Companies Act 2014. It gives IAASA, as the competent authority with ultimate responsibility for oversight, enhanced powers for monitoring and enforcement of the new requirements.

The Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017 passed Committee Stage in the Dáil on 21 February 2018. Dáil Report Stage is expected to take place mid-July. The Bill has yet to pass through the Seanad but it is intended that it be enacted as soon as possible.

The above matters are the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and any further queries on any should be directed to her.

Further to the above legislation governing auditors, there are additional requirements for the auditors of Regulated Financial Service Providers (RFSPs) imposed by the Central Bank of Ireland. These include the Auditor Protocol and a number of reporting requirements, which are detailed below.

The Protocol between the Central Bank of Ireland and the Auditors of Regulated Financial Service Providers:

- The Auditor Protocol was first developed and published in 2011 and applied to those firms which were rated High Impact under the Central Bank's then new regulatory risk model, Probability Risk Impact System ("PRISM"). Institutions are categorised based on the greatest impact on financial stability and the consumer as follows, High Impact, Medium-High Impact, Medium-Low Impact and Low Impact

- Following a review in 2013 the scope of the Auditor Protocol was extended to include all meetings held between external auditors and the Central Bank including meetings held in respect of supervisory tasks relating to medium high and medium low impact firms.

- For High Impact firms it is expected that there will be at least two formal bilateral meetings per year. These meetings will take place at the pre audit stage and the post audit stage.

- For non-High Impact firms the frequency of meetings will be determined by the impact category of the firm under the PRISM engagement model.

- The Central Bank, through its Corporate Governance requirements, places a significant onus on the Audit Committee to monitor the effectiveness and adequacy of the firm's internal control (including around IT systems) and internal audit. It is because of this reliance that the Central Bank believes that trilateral meetings should take place between the Central Bank, the auditor and the Chair of the Audit Committee or, if an Audit Committee is not in place, an appropriate Independent Non-Executive Director, to discuss areas of concern and/or mutual interest regarding the firm. The Trilateral Meeting will, in the normal course of audits, be conducted at the planning stage of the audit process. These meetings should cover all issues that the parties consider may be of interest to the other parties in carrying out their statutory or fiduciary functions.

- Pre Audit Meeting: It is envisaged that this meeting will be held as part of the Trilateral Meeting process but it could also be held as a bilateral meeting if both the Central Bank and the auditor believe that it would be more beneficial to do so.

- Post Audit Meeting: It is envisaged that this meeting will be arranged after the audit report is signed off. However, this meeting may occur before audit sign off if it is deemed more beneficial.

- The Central Bank's Auditor Protocol is available at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/regulation/codes/gns-4-1-7he-auditor-protocol.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

Reporting Obligations to the Central Bank

Client Asset Regulations for Investment Firms 2015 and Investor Money Regulations 2015 for Fund Service Providers

In accordance with the Client Asset Regulations for Investment Firms 2015 and Investor Money Regulations 2015 for Fund Service Providers an investment firm/fund service provider should engage an external auditor to report ("assurance report") at least on an annual basis on the investment firm's/fund service provider's safeguarding of client assets and shall ensure that

the external auditor appointed for this purpose receives full co-operation in a timely matter in relation to the preparation of the assurance report.

Statutory Duty Declaration/Annual Positive Statement

Section 27B of the Central Bank Act 1997 places a duty on auditors to make a written report to the Central Bank, within one month after the date of the auditor's report on the financial service provider's financial statements or within such extended period as the Central Bank allows, stating whether or not circumstances have arisen that require the auditor to report a matter to the Central Bank under a prescribed enactment and if such circumstances have arisen specify those circumstances (the "Statutory Duty Confirmation").

Auditors Reports to those charged with governance including 'Nil' Return

Section 27C of the Central Bank Act 1997 requires that if the auditor of an entity regulated by the Central Bank makes a report to the entity, or those concerned with its management, on any matter that has come to the auditor's notice during the course of the financial statement audit (or while carrying out any work for the entity of a kind specified by the Central Bank), the auditor must provide the Central Bank with a copy of that report. Where no such report is to be sent to the entity section 27C (3) of the Central Bank Act 1997 requires the auditors to inform the Central Bank that such is the case i.e. a 'nil return'.

Reports sent to the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE)

Section 27D of the Central Bank Act 1997 requires that auditors of regulated entities to submit to the Central Bank copies of any reports sent to ODCE. Copies must be submitted at the same time or as soon as practicable after the report is made to ODCE.

Auditor Assurance Reports

Section 27BA of the Central Bank Act 1997 provides that where the Central Bank considers it necessary owing to the nature, scale or complexity of the activities of a regulated financial service provider, it may, by notice in writing to the auditor of the regulated financial service provider, require the auditor to conduct an examination for the purpose of providing to the Central Bank a statement as to the extent to which the regulated financial service provider has complied with obligations imposed by or under such provisions of financial services legislation as are specified in the notice.

Tax Yield

127. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue raised in inheritance tax in each of the years 2015 to 2017. [27988/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that information in relation to yield received from Capital Acquisitions Tax, which includes the amounts from Inheritance Tax for the years requested by the Deputy, can be found on the statistics page of the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/receipts/receipts-capital-acquisitions-tax.aspx>.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that Revenue published an in-depth analysis of capital taxes, including Inheritance Tax earlier this year and the report is available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/capital-taxes-profile.pdf>.

Question No. 128 answered with Question No. 108.

Carbon Tax Collection

129. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he will take to ensure there is no illegal avoidance of carbon tax on solid fuel taking place particularly in view of the fact that the tax take on same reduced by 21% in 2017 compared to 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28020/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Solid Fuel Carbon Tax (SFCT) was commenced in May 2013 and initially applied at a rate of €10 per tonne of carbon dioxide emitted when combusted. In 2014, the SFCT rate was increased to €20 per tonne of carbon dioxide emitted. Current SFCT rates per tonne are €52.67, €36.67, €17.99 and €27.99 respectively for coal, peat briquettes, milled peat and other peat. Approximately 75% of SFCT yield relates to coal. Annual SFCT net receipts are given in the following table.

Year	SFCT net receipts €m
2013	7.3
2014	17.2
2015	23.5
2016	24.4
2017	19.1
2018*	16.5

* As of end May 2018, provisional figure

Revenue has responsibility for administering SFCT and, as it does with all taxes and duties, takes a risk-focused approach in its deployment of resources on compliance activities.

Solid Fuel Carbon Tax (SFCT) is collected by Revenue on a self-assessment basis and compliance with SFCT law is enforced using the full range of compliance interventions and enforcement provisions for self-assessed taxes. Liable fuel suppliers must file a return and pay for each bi-monthly period by the last day of the following month. Where suppliers do not submit returns by the due date Revenue will issue an estimate of the tax due. The estimate is the amount of tax that Revenue will pursue if a supplier does not complete and file their return. If a taxpayer fails to pay the amount due, including any debt for which an estimate has issued, Revenue may refer the debt for enforcement action. This can include sheriff enforcement, civil proceedings through the courts or attachment of third parties. I am advised that, to date, Revenue has undertaken actions, including sheriff enforcement, civil proceedings through the courts or attachment of third parties, to enforce approximately €600,000 of Solid Fuel Carbon Tax.

European Union Single Market constraints preclude the use of any cross-border movement controls in the administration of SFCT. Therefore, Revenue has no authority to stop vehicles and physically inspect loads of solid fuel. Similarly, the transport or possession of solid fuel that originated in Northern Ireland are not, in themselves, Revenue offences and Revenue's officers have no authority to challenge such transportation or possession.

As I, and my predecessor, have pointed out before, because of the price differential with Northern Ireland, the collection of SFCT is heavily reliant on the regulatory regime covering the marketing, sale, distribution and burning of solid fuels in the State. This regulatory regime is operated by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and is enforced by local authorities. This regime, which imposes higher environmental standards on coal in the State than applies in Northern Ireland, enables local authorities to undertake enforcement action to prevent the sale or distribution of coal that does not meet our standards.

I am advised that Revenue met with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to discuss the effectiveness of the regulatory regime for solid fuel and to explore how Revenue could support the Department to improve matters in light of continuing concerns that fuel sourced from Northern Ireland is getting onto the market here. I understand that contacts are ongoing with a view to undertaking a number of joint operations and to explore the scope for follow up action by Revenue in relation to persons found to be in breach of environmental regulations. However, any such operations will be based on a clear understanding of the statutory responsibilities of the agencies involved.

Public Sector Staff Sick Leave

130. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a person who is employed in the public sector and has exceeded the allowed sick leave days for a four-year period due to being involved in a car accident can appeal the decision to block their promotion chances for the next four years due to the sick leave overrun through no fault of his or her own; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27654/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The provisions of the Public Service Sick Leave Scheme (Public Service Management (Sick Leave) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 124 of 2014) apply across the entire public sector and encompass the Education, Health, Justice, Local Government and Civil Service. The Scheme is administered on a sectoral basis with regard to issues such as procedures for managing attendance.

While I cannot comment on individual cases or circumstances, your question appears to refer to the administrative arrangements for sick leave in the Civil Service and these are governed by Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave, available at <https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2018/05.pdf>.

The arrangements in place with regard to promotion and sick leave are set out in paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 of the Circular. These arrangements apply across the civil service.

The sick leave record of an individual is taken into account in the event that a promotion is being considered. The HR Manager may exercise discretion as to whether a sick leave absence can be discounted in certain circumstances for eligibility for promotion. In exercising this discretion the HR manager may take into account the compatibility of the sick leave record with the requirement for regular and effective service at the higher grade and any advice that may have been given on the specific case by the Chief Medical Officer.

HR Managers consider each situation by assessing a range of factors which are set out in paragraph 5.9 of the Circular and are based on the individual circumstances involved.

The Circular is not prescriptive on whether or not sick leave should be discounted based on the cause of the illness. The key focus is on whether, at the time the promotion is sought, an individual is likely to be able to attend work regularly and be effective in their role.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

131. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the anger that exists among community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors in regard to unresolved pension issues; the progress made on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27478/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I would refer the Deputy to my responses to Parliamentary Question No. 262 of 16 January 2018, and Parliamentary Question No. 227 of 27 March 2018.

Capital Expenditure Programme

132. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual Votes to which the €1.5 billion in additional capital expenditure for 2019 as outlined in the summer economic statement has been allocated; the projects for which it has been allocated in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27672/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Capital expenditure allocations by Ministerial Vote Group for the years 2018-2022 were published in Annex 1 of the National Development Plan (NDP). These ceilings were reflected in the 2019 Summer Economic Statement. Capital allocations for individual votes within these Vote Groups for 2019 will be published in Budget 2019.

The €1.5 billion in additional capital expenditure, as detailed in the NDP, is set out in tabular format below.

Capital Envelope (€ million)	2018	2019	Difference
Ministerial Vote Group			
Agriculture, Food & the Marine	248	255	7
Business, Enterprise, & Innovation	555	620	65
Children & Youth Affairs	28	32	4
Communications, Climate Change & Natural Resources	209	256	47
Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	54	75	21
Defence	77	106	29
Education and Skills	745	941	196
Employment Affairs and Social Protection	10	14	4
Finance Group	26	25	-1
Foreign Affairs and Trade Group	13	17	4
Health Group	493	667	174
Housing, Planning & Local Government	1,631	2,033	402
Justice Group	145	241	96
PER Group	174	203	29
Rural and Community Development	88	141	53
Transport, Tourism, & Sport	1,327	1,643	316
Sum Total	5,823	7,269	1,446

Details of the projects to be delivered by the totality of this funding are contained in the NDP, but further details are available from the relevant Departments.

A major capital projects tracker was published in September 2017 on the website of the De-

partment of Public Expenditure and Reform. This tracker is currently being updated following the launch of the NDP and the updated version will be published shortly.

Summer Economic Statement

133. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual Votes to which the €0.3 billion in carryover costs associated with measures introduced in 2018 as outlined in the summer economic statement has been allocated; the initiatives for which it has been allocated to fund in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27673/18]

134. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual Votes to which the €0.4 billion cost for public sector pay increases in 2019 as outlined in the summer economic statement has been allocated, in tabular form; if it provides for the hiring of additional staff in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27674/18]

135. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual Votes to which the €0.4 billion in demographic costs as outlined in the summer economic statement for 2019 will be allocated, in tabular form; if it provides for the hiring of additional staff or the expansion of existing schemes in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27675/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 133 to 135, inclusive, together.

The Summer Economic Statement set out €2.6 billion in pre-committed expenditure for 2019. Of this, €1.1 billion relates to current expenditure on demographics, carryover costs of 2018 expenditure measures and the Public Service Stability Agreement. The remaining €1.5 billion relates to capital expenditure. These current expenditure commitments are set out below.

-	2019
	€bn
PSSA	0.4
Carryover	0.3
Demographics	0.4
Total	1.1

The €0.4 billion outlined in the Summer Economic Statement for public service pay increases relates to the costs associated with the PSSA 2019. Table 6 on page 37 of Expenditure Report 2018 provides €370 million for 2019. This amount does not include provision for the hiring of additional staff and will be disaggregated by Vote as part of the Budget Estimates process for 2019.

Table 7 on page 38 of the Expenditure Report set out the carryover impact of certain expenditure measures introduced in Budget 2018. As set out below these carryover costs amounted to €192 million.

-	Additional Impact in 2019 (€m)
Social Protection	110
Education	42
Justice	40

Total	192
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As these estimates relate to measures being implemented in 2018, they will be impacted by the actual cost and timing of implementation and consequently the estimated costs will be reassessed as part of the 2019 Budget Estimates process. In addition, at this time, it is estimated that there are additional carryover costs arising from other measures of approximately €150 million. This includes an amount in respect Social Welfare Pensions. In January, the Government agreed that the cohort affected by the State Pension Contributory rate band changes made in 2012 would be allowed to avail of the new Total Contributions Approach, with the revised payments to be made from January 2019 and backdated to March this year. The Mid-Year Expenditure Report will review the amounts in respect of carryover costs taking into account expenditure developments at that time.

Allocations for demographic cost pressures take into account the analysis presented in the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service paper ‘Budgetary Impact of Changing Demographics 2017 – 2027.’ The paper examines the changing structure of the Irish population and estimates pure demographic cost pressures across the three main current expenditure areas of Social Protection, Health and Education. For 2019, the total figure allocated in the Ministerial Vote Group ceilings for demographics across Health, Social Protection and Education is €413 million. This cost is net of estimated reductions in Live Register related expenditure of €50 million. As is usual, the savings currently projected arising from expected improvements in the Live Register will be re-estimated during the Budget Estimates process taking account of the employment situation and projections in relation to unemployment at that time.

Demographics	Cost in 2019 (€m)
Social Protection	241
Health	123
Education	49
Net Total	413

Capital Expenditure Programme

136. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the projects making up the €1.5 billion in pre-committed capital expenditure as highlighted in the summer economic statement; if these projects were planned under the Building on Recovery capital plan in each case; if these projects were planned before the publication of the National Development Plan 2018–2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27783/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Capital expenditure allocations by Ministerial Vote Group for the years 2018-2022 were published in Annex 1 of the National Development Plan (NDP). As detailed in Annex 1, capital expenditure will increase by €1.5 billion between 2018 and 2019. These ceilings were reflected in the 2018 Summer Economic Statement.

Details of the projects to be delivered by the totality of funding in 2019 are contained in the NDP, but further details are available from the relevant Departments.

This plan includes many new projects and programmes which were not listed in the last plan published in 2015, for example the M20 Cork to Limerick road, the New Hospital for Cork, BusConnects Programmes for Cork, Dublin and Galway and a major investment programme

across the cultural institutions, to name a few. While some projects may have been signaled previously, they are now set out in the long-term funding framework of the NDP required for their delivery.

A major capital projects tracker was published in September 2017 on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This tracker is currently being updated following the launch of the NDP and the updated version will be published shortly.

Capital Expenditure Programme

137. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of gross voted capital expenditure allocated in 2019 only under the Building on Recovery capital plan; the additional gross voted capital expenditure for 2019 allocated in the summer economic statement 2016 as part of the €5.14 billion package; the additional gross capital expenditure for 2019 allocated in summer economic statement 2017 as part of the €1.5 billion package; the additional gross voted capital expenditure for 2019 allocated under the National Development Plan 2018–2027; the additional gross voted capital expenditure for 2019 allocated in the summer economic statement in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27784/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Details of the Gross Voted Capital Expenditure sought by the Deputy, in tabular form as requested, are as follows:

2019 Gross Voted Capital Allocation, as published in:	€ million
Building on Recovery 2015	4,600
SES 2016	5,915
SES 2017	6,570
NDP 2018-2027	7,269

No additional gross voted capital expenditure for 2019 was allocated in SES 2018. Gross voted capital expenditure will increase by €1.5 billion between 2018 and 2019 as detailed in the NDP.

Capital Expenditure Programme

138. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of the €5.8 billion gross voted capital expenditure allocated for 2018 that has been spent; the projects on which the funds have been spent, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27785/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Net capital issues at the end of May 2018 amounted to €1,427m, which was €280m (16%) behind the profile of €1,707m. It is expected that spending will be on target by the end of the year.

Details of the major capital projects due to be delivered in 2018, and which are funded from this expenditure, are published in the Major Capital Projects Tracker on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website. Further details on individual projects are available from the relevant Departments.

Capital Expenditure Programme

139. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the gross voted capital expenditure allocated in 2016 and 2017; the amount of gross voted capital expenditure spent in 2016 and 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27786/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Details of the Gross Voted Capital Expenditure allocated and spent in 2016 and 2017, in tabular form as sought by the Deputy, are as follows:

€ million	2016	2017
Revised Estimates Volume Allocation	3,967	4,540
Outturn	4,213	4,536*

*Note: the 2017 outturn figure is provisional as appropriation account figures are not yet available.

The primary reason for the variation between the 2016 REV Allocation and the Outturn figure was due to supplementary estimates agreed for Education, Transport, Business and Defence.

Foireann Roinne

140. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27812/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Ag glacadh le cineál na bhfeidhmeanna agus na hoibre, níl leibhéal ard de theagmháil dhíreach ag mo Roinn le, agus ní sholáthríonn sí scéimeanna na seirbhísí go díreach do, daoine ón bpobal i gcoitinne. Soláthraíonn an Roinn seirbhísí go príomha trí Bhéarla, agus cuirtear seirbhísí teoranta ar fáil sa dá theanga. Mar thoradh níl aon ról a aithníodh go bhfuil líofacht sa Ghaeilge mar bhunriachtanas. Coinníonn mo Roinn liosta don fhoireann atá líofacht sa Ghaeilge agus a cabhríonn le seirbhísí a sholáthar más gá.

Tá ócáidí ann nuair a bhíonn raidhse mhór cáipéisí, áit ina mbíonn aistritheoirí seachtracha ag teastáil. Tá na haistritheoirí seachtracha á bhfoinsiú de réir na nósanna imeachta soláthair phoiblí ina bhfuil córas éigeantach tairiscintí iomaíocha ann.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

141. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 8 May 2018, when the OPW and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will complete their review of the areas in which the additional resources in respect of built heritage will be allocated; if the phase two restoration works to a location (details supplied) are being considered for possible funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27869/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Following the

announcement in April this year that a capital funding stream will be available to the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht for National Monuments, the review of spending priorities within the National Monuments estate has begun with a view to determining which Monuments need to be addressed by the OPW and the extent to which funding support can be made available by the Department. This process will be ongoing on a continuing basis as needs evolve and future annual work programmes are determined.

Although the initial phase of this assessment is still ongoing, it has been determined that it will be likely that investment will focus in the first instance on conservation needs as a priority and, in particular, those structures most at risk of either damage or loss of historic fabric, together with certain strategic acquisitions. In this context, the allocation of funds to a phase 2 project at Maynooth, while it has not been specifically considered as yet, would not be considered a high priority and it is considered doubtful that it would be selected to advance.

Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

142. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 141 of 24 April 2018, if there has been progress in relation to an application under the minor flood mitigation works and coastal protection scheme; the studies being undertaken in relation to flooding in the Hazelhatch area of Celbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27872/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised that the Office of Public Works has not received an application from Kildare County Council under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme for the area mentioned in the Deputy's question.

Departmental Staff Data

143. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27956/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In reply to the Deputy's question, I wish to inform him that no personnel in my Department have been removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years on the grounds listed.

In its commitment to providing efficient and well managed services, my Department and the wider Civil Service require personnel to adhere to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour issued by the Standards in Public Office Commission. Similarly, all civil servants shall comply with all policies relating to terms and conditions of employment.

The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in the Civil Service encourages the continuous improvement of business processes and of individuals' skills, behaviour and contributions. Performance Management focuses on the role and effectiveness of line managers in setting goals and reviewing and strengthening the performance of their staff. Cases of underperformance are also highlighted as part of the PMDS process. The Civil Service Management of Underperformance Policy (Circular 24/2016) provides a clear framework to help

managers to identify and deal with issues of underperformance effectively in the Civil Service.

Matters relating to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence may be addressed via the Civil Service Disciplinary Code. The Code sets out arrangements for dealing with disciplinary matters in the Civil Service where concerns arise about the conduct, work performance, and/or attendance of a civil servant. The Code applies to all civil servants other than new entrants serving in a probationary capacity.

Teacher Retirements

144. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be able to retain their current rate of occupational pension benefit on medical grounds if they were to transfer to an occupational retirement pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27393/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The person to whom the Deputy refers was awarded early retirement on grounds of permanent ill health. Once retirement is awarded on this basis and the pension has come into payment, the superannuation scheme does not permit the award to be re-classified or transferred to an alternative retirement option.

The granting of pension benefits to teachers is governed by the teachers superannuation schemes within which is set down specific criteria to be satisfied in order for retirement on medical grounds to be approved. The criteria to be met is that the person has become incapable by reason of infirmity of discharging his/her duties as a teacher and that the infirmity is likely to be permanent. Under the scheme the decision to approve such retirement is grounded in the medical evidence and the recommendation of the Occupational Health Physician tasked by the Department to assess that evidence. Where retirement is approved on medical grounds, benefits are generally augmented through the award of enhanced years of service for calculating those benefits.

A teacher who is awarded pension early on medical grounds may not subsequently engage in teaching. Where however a full recovery is made and the person wishes to return to employment, s/he must, prior to taking up employment, provide fresh medical evidence of this to the Department for review by the Occupational Health Physician. Where it is satisfactorily established that the teacher is no longer unfit to teach, pension in payment would cease.

DEIS Eligibility

145. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) can be classified as DEIS band 1. [27394/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The identification of schools for receipt of additional resources under the DEIS programme is informed by a scientific data based model which assesses levels of disadvantage in individual schools based on the pupil cohort of the school. It is important to note that any adjustment to the DEIS status of a school, including the school referred to by the Deputy, will be based on the DEIS Identification process.

As the Deputy may be aware, an update of the DEIS Identification process is nearing completion. This will take account of updated school data as provided by schools for the current

school year combined with the Pobal HP Index of Deprivation, based on CSO Small Area Population statistics derived from the 2016 National Census. A detailed quality assurance process in respect of this is currently underway and no decisions to extend the DEIS programme will be made until this is complete and the outcome has been considered.

Schools Building Projects Status

146. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the re-tendering process for a schools project campus development (details supplied) in view of the fact that of the contractor is being placed in liquidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27422/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The delivery of the projects referred to by the Deputy has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

KWETB, their design team and officials from my Department's Planning and Building Unit are working closely to ensure that a new contractor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete both schools. An eTender's notice has been forwarded to eTenders for publication seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. The notice will be published later this week. Identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools is also ongoing.

Schools Building Projects Status

147. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the establishment of a Gaelcholáiste (details supplied) will be delayed in view of the fact that the contractor for the campus has been placed in liquidation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27423/18]

214. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 178 of 8 May 2018, if a decision has been made as to the individual school authority responsible for the appointment of a principal for a Gaelcholáiste (details supplied); when the post will be advertised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27866/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take questions Nos. 147 and 214 together.

Maynooth Community College opened in 2014 with an Irish-medium Aonad and it was stated that should the Aonad demonstrate sufficient viability after four years from its date of establishment, a Gaelcholáiste would be established, in a partnership model between Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) and An Foras Pátrúnachta. As part of the Major School Building Projects announcement in November 2015 and in view of the continued support for an independent Gaelcholáiste, it was confirmed that a Gaelcholáiste to serve the North Kildare area will open in 2019, subject to the continued viability of the Irish-medium Aonad at Maynooth Community College.

Department approval is given for the appointment of a school Principal from 1 September of the school year prior to the opening of a new school. Recruitment and appointment of the Principal is dealt with by the individual school authority and in this case, I understand that details of the partnership arrangement for management of the new Gaelcholáiste by KWETB and

An Foras Pátrúnachta are currently being worked through.

In relation to the Maynooth Education Campus, this project has been devolved to KWETB. The ETB, its design team and my Department are working together to ensure that a new contractor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete the school buildings for Maynooth Community College and Maynooth post-primary schools. An eTenders notice was published last week seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. Identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools is also on-going.

KWETB is continuing to examine the options for accommodation for the Gaelcholáiste referred to by the Deputy which will involve consideration of the timing and availability of appropriate infrastructure in the area.

Schools Site Acquisitions

148. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for a permanent building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27424/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is in the process of acquiring a site to accommodate the school to which the Deputy refers.

There are some outstanding clarifications required with regard to the site before matters can be progressed and, with a view to progressing the site acquisition, my Department has been in contact with the vendor requesting an update on these.

School Accommodation Provision

149. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an assessment of an application by a school (details supplied) for funding for a new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27425/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme has recently been approved for the provision of four new classrooms at the school in question.

The delivery of the project has been devolved to the school authority and it is now a matter for them to advance the project.

School Accommodation Provision

150. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for funding for an extension or a new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27426/18]

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

My Department's current priority within the limited funding available is the provision of essential classroom accommodation in areas where significant demographic need has been established to ensure that each child will have access to a physical school place. Enrolment is remaining at existing levels at the school in question. My Department recently discussed the school's application with the principal and explained that it was open to the school to submit an application for an additional mainstream classroom should the school's enrolment grow to a point that would warrant the appointment of an additional teacher.

Teacher Retirements

151. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals that have taken early retirement or retired due to ill health in each of the years 2013 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27468/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Information on retirement of primary teachers in each of the years 2013-2017 is contained in Table 1 attached. The information sets out the total number of teachers who retired each year and the number of principal teachers and of those principals the number who retired before normal retirement due to permanent ill-health and those who availed of Cost Neutral Early Retirement.

Corresponding information in relation to teacher retirements from Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools is set out in Table 2 attached.

Information distinguishing teaching principals from other category of principal teachers is not recorded as part of the retirement of teachers.

Cost Neutral Early Retirement is a facility available from age 50 for public servants including teachers who have un-interrupted service which commenced before April 2004, (age 55 in other cases) where they wish to retire before reaching normal retirement age. Pension benefits are immediately payable, however, the benefits are actuarially reduced to reflect the early payment of the lump sum gratuity and the longer period over which pension will be payable.

Retirement on medical grounds may be awarded early where the person satisfies the medical criteria of the superannuation scheme that s/he has while in service, has become incapable through illness of performing his/her duties and the illness is likely to be permanent.

TABLE 1 - Primary School Teacher Retirements 2013-2017

Year	Overall Number of Teacher Retirements	Number of Principal Teacher Retirements	Number of Principals who retired under Cost Neutral Early Retirement	Number of Principals who retired on medical grounds
2013	465	124	5	3
2014	794	241	12	3
2015	654	188	12	10
2016	538	157	5	4
2017*	609	181	11	8

TABLE 2 - Secondary/Community and Comprehensive School Teacher Retirements 2013-2017

Year	Overall Number of Teacher Retirements	Number of Principal Teacher Retirements	Number of Principals who retired under Cost Neutral Early Retirement	Number of Principals who retired on medical grounds
2013	376	37	0	2
2014	629	63	6	3
2015	375	34	2	1
2016	376	33	4	2
2017*	395	23	2	1

*2017 figures are provisional.

Schools Site Acquisitions

152. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site for a school (details supplied) was purchased at the site on the southern end of the Ballycullen Road, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27479/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department has agreed to acquire a site located at Ballycullen Road (East), Oldcourt, subject to planning permission.

The landowner has recently applied for planning permission for development on his lands including outline planning permission for school accommodation (ref SD18A/0204).

Schools Building Projects Status

153. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27486/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Planning for a new building for the school to which the Deputy refers is progressing. The school's design team has been authorised to conduct the pre-qualification process in order to draw up shortlists of contractors for the project. In the meantime, work is ongoing on concluding the conveyancing for the site. All parties continue the work to ensure the acquisition completes at the earliest possible date. It is not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Schools Establishment

154. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 310 of 12 June 2018, the date he expects a school (details supplied) to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27497/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I have announced new plans aimed at accelerating the provision of multi-denomina-

tional and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment to reach 400 such schools by 2030.

I would point out that the previous model of patronage divestment yielded only a very limited number of schools for transfer to multi-denominational patrons (10 since 2013). I believe that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system.

While these new structures are being introduced, my Department will continue to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including Westport. In this regard, my Department has been working closely with Educate Together to progress the establishment of a new multi-denominational school in Westport.

Institutes of Technology

155. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost for each one point reduction in the academic staff to student ratio for institutes of technology. [27506/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current staff:student ratio in Institutes of Technology is 17:1. This is calculated based on the 2016/17 enrolment figures. This is based on the ratio of full time students to core teaching staff.

A one point reduction would require an estimated additional 280 FTE academic staff – estimated cost €17m.

Third Level Staff Data

156. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost for each one point reduction in the academic staff to student ratio for universities. [27507/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current staff:student ratio in Universities is 25:1. This is calculated based on the 2016/17 enrolment figures. This is based on the ratio of full time students to core teaching staff.

A one point reduction would require an estimated additional 190 FTE academic staff – estimated cost €11m per annum.

Third Level Funding

157. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing core funding to publicly funded third-level institutions by 1%. [27508/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has allocated €1.058b in recurrent core funding to publicly funded third level institutions in 2018 therefore the estimated cost of increasing the core funding by 1% is approximately €10.5m. It should also be noted that in addition my department has also provided over €400m in Student Support funding in 2018. The estimated cost of increasing this by 1% is €4 million.

I wish to advise the Deputy that since publication of the Cassells Report I have prioritised additional investment in higher education in Budget 2017 and Budget 2018. As a result, the Department of Education and Skills is investing €100m more in higher education in 2018 compared to 2016. I will look to build on this investment in 2019 and beyond.

This additional funding will allow for targeted initiatives in higher education including skills programmes, performance and innovation funding, technological university development and apprenticeship costs in the sector. It will also allow for places to be provided for 2,100 additional students in 2018.

Furthermore as part of Budget 2018, the Government raised the National Training Fund levy by 0.1% in 2018 to 0.8%. It is proposed to further increase it by 0.1% in both 2019 and 2020 subject to a review of the Fund which has been undertaken by my Department officials. The increase in funding from the National Training Fund is a key strategic element of the overall funding increase for higher and further education.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

158. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the rate of the student grant by percentage rates (details supplied). [27509/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Every 5% increase in the student maintenance grant would cost circa €8.7m. Therefore, the estimated cost of increasing the student maintenance grant rates by 5%, 10%, 15%, 20% or 25% would cost in the region of €8.7m, €17.3m, €26m, €34.7m or €43.4m respectively.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

159. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of funding available to part-time third level students in academic years (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27510/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The main support to students attending higher education is the Student Grant Scheme. Under the Student Grant Scheme, eligible candidates may receive funding, provided they are attending an approved course at an approved institution and meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those which relate to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment (progression) and means.

Under the scheme, students must be attending approved full-time courses. Part-time courses are not eligible for support.

No specific funding was made available to part-time third level students in the academic years to which the Deputy refers. However, the Deputy will be aware of the recent announcement regarding the new 1916 Bursary Fund. This Fund will support 600 students over the course of the next three years. These Bursaries differ from existing bursaries in a number of respects, in that they are targeted at non-traditional entry and can support undergraduate study on either a full-time or part-time basis. This new fund is on top of the additional €1m which was allocated to the Student Assistance Fund in 2017, for the support of part-time students who are lone parents or members of the other access target groups.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

160. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of restoring maintenance grants for postgraduate students to pre-2012 levels. [27511/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I secured additional funding of €7m in Budgets 2017 and 2018 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. This benefitted circa 1,000 post graduate students who met the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant for the academic year 2017/18 and reversed the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

If postgraduate supports were returned to the pre-2012 level and numbers, it is estimated that additional funding of €44.1m would be required on top of the additional €7m secured in recent budgets.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

161. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the special rate maintenance grant by amounts (details supplied). [27512/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The estimated cost of increasing the special rate maintenance grant by €10, €20, €30, €40 per week would be in the region of €7.9m, €15.7m, €23.5m and €31.4m respectively.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

162. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reversing changes to the distance criteria in the student grant. [27513/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The cost of reversing the change to the distance criterion from the existing 45kms to 24kms, is estimated to be in the region of €26m.

The above costing assumes that a change to the distance criterion would result in a similar percentage of students qualifying for the higher non-adjacent grant support, as existed pre Budget 2011.

Education and Training Boards Funding

163. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the allocation to provide training places for adults with literacy problems and learning difficulties. [27514/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The SOLAS allocation to Education and Training Boards for 2018 for adult literacy and basic skills provision is €32,755,074. A breakdown of this figure is available in the attached spreadsheet.

There is a separate allocation of €45,736,130 for the Specialist Training Provider programme, that includes provision for learners with intellectual disabilities.

2018 Initial Allocation	€
TOTAL ADULT LITERACY	26,000,170
TOTAL ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)	2,341,231
TOTAL FAMILY LITERACY	311,909
TOTAL INTENSIVE TUITION IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ITABE)	1,569,483
TOTAL SKILLS FOR WORK (WORK-PLACE BASIC EDUCATION FUND)	2,532,281
TOTAL	32,755,074

Third Level Costs

164. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of providing 100 higher education places for students of returning emigrants or those that came through the direct provision service. [27515/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The estimated average cost of providing higher education provision is between €10k and €12k per student per annum therefore total cost for 100 places is between €1m and €1.2m.

However, I wish to advise the Deputy that in order to qualify for funding towards tuition fees, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

Where undergraduate students do not qualify for free fees they are required to pay fees to their higher education institution at either an 'EU rate' or a higher 'Non-EU rate'.

My Department responded previously to concerns about the impact of the free fees eligibility criteria on individuals who have had, for occupational or economic reasons, to move abroad, requiring them to take their children out of the Irish education system in the process.

To this end, in March 2014 my Department requested that the Higher Education Authority (HEA) advise the higher education sector that full-time undergraduate students who:

- Hold EU/EEA/Swiss nationality but do not meet the residency clause of the Free Fees Initiative; and
- have completed five academic years of study (at either primary or post-primary level) in an EU/EEA/Swiss State; and
- commence their first undergraduate course of study in an approved institution here from the following academic year onwards,

should be charged the EU rate of fee rather than the higher non-EU rate by their higher education institution.

This approach was implemented for new students from the commencement of the 2014/15 academic year.

Student Assistance Fund

165. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to increase the student assistance fund by 20%. [27516/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The SAF is designed to support students in third-level institutions who are experiencing exceptional financial need. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances.

The fund was recently extended to part-time students following the allocation of an additional €1m in Budget 2017.

The Current allocation for SAF amounts to €9.1m therefore an increase of 20% would be estimated at €10.92m, an increase of €1.82m from current allocation.

Fund for Students with Disabilities

166. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the support scheme for students with disabilities by 20%. [27517/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) provides financial support to higher education institutions to ensure that they are adequately resourced to cater for the needs of students with disabilities.

The Fund provides grants towards the individual needs assessment, provision of services, purchase of equipment and provision of academic supports for students with disabilities. The scheme applies to students who have serious sensory, physical and/or communicative disabilities, including dyslexia.

The current allocation for FSD amounts to €9.6m therefore an increase of 20% would be estimated at €11.52m, an increase of €1.92m from current allocation.

Apprenticeship Programmes

167. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to remove apprenticeship fees. [27518/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): An Annual Student Contribution is levied on all students attending Institutes of Technology (IoTs). Previously this Annual Student Contribution was paid by FÁS/SOLAS with apprentices themselves paying the part of the contribution relating to examination fees. As part of Budget 2014, SOLAS ceased making payments to IoTs and apprentices pay the full pro rata Annual Student Contribution.

The amount charged to apprentices is calculated on a pro rata basis of the time which they spend in IoTs during the academic year. This cost would typically be one third of the Annual Student Contribution paid by students attending for the full academic year, currently €3,000 and would amount to approximately €1,000 per student per period spent in the Institutes of Technology.

The cost of not charging the Annual Student Contribution is estimated to be €4.2 million in 2018, although there are no plans to abolish the Annual Student Contribution for apprentices.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses Fees

168. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to remove post leaving certificate course fees. [27519/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The only centrally determined payment for the Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme is the €200 PLC participant contribution. This amount is not payable by persons with a medical card, as well as a number of other categories, which means that approximately 60% of PLC participants do not pay the contribution. The estimated cost to remove the PLC participant contribution is in the region of €2.4 million.

It should be noted that PLC colleges are also permitted to charge PLC participants for the following and these charges are set locally -

- Books, uniforms/clothing or other equipment which become the personal property of the participant
- Student Services
- Registration charges by professional bodies
- Examination fees

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

169. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reducing the student contribution charge by amounts (details supplied). [27520/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Based on the number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2016/17, and taking into account overall expected increases in student numbers, it is estimated that the net cost to my Department of reducing the Student Contribution is as follows:

Reduce by (per student) €	Estimated Net cost to Department €
€250	€17m
€500	€34m
€1,000	€67.5m
€2,000	€135m
€3,000	€202.5m

It should be noted that the figures presented incorporate the resulting reduction to my Department's Student Grant Scheme budget.

While the student contribution now stands at €3,000, it is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the student contribution charge since 2014/15. The exchequer pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance.

Tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost. In addition, higher education institutions have provisions in place to allow students to pay the contribution in two moieties.

Legislative Measures

170. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to implement the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 in full. [27521/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A number of sections of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 have been commenced, including those establishing the National Council for Special Education and those promoting an inclusive approach to the education of children.

A number of sections of the EPSEN Act have yet to be commenced.

Legal advice provided to my Department indicates that the EPSEN Act, as it is currently constituted, may not be implemented on a phased, or age cohort, basis.

A total current estimate of the cost to implement the EPSEN Act in full has not recently been conducted.

The Government is committed to helping every child, particularly those with special educational needs, to fulfill their potential.

In 2018, my Department will invest over €1.75 billion in this area - 1/5 of my Department's budget and up 42% since 2011, at which point €1.24 billion was invested. This increased investment has allowed the Government to increase the number of:

- SNAs by 42%, from 10,575 in 2011 to 15,000 by the end of 2018.
- Special classes by 138% to over 1,300 at present, compared to 548 special classes in 2011.
- Special education teachers by 38% from 9,630 in 2011 to over 13,300 at present in 2018.

Under the Programme for a Partnership Government, I have committed to consulting with stakeholders on how best to progress aspects of the Act on a non-statutory basis.

A range of consultations with Education Partners and Stakeholders took place in relation to the development of the new model for allocating special education teachers over the course of 2017. The new model was introduced for all schools from September 2017.

Further consultations are taking place with education partners and stakeholders in the context of the undertaking of a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme. The new model substantially improves access to teaching support for children who have special educational needs without the need for diagnosis. It was introduced on a non-statutory basis, however it constitutes a better and fairer way of supporting children as it provides for supports on a needs basis as opposed to only for those with an assessment.

At present, all schools are encouraged to use Education Plans. My Department's Inspectorate's advice is that the majority of schools are now using some form of individual education planning for children with special needs. In line with Circular 30/2014, schools are also required to put in place Personal Pupil Plan including a care plan for all pupils availing of SNA support.

Guidelines for schools on educational planning and monitoring of outcomes and the manner in which they should conduct educational planning, through the Student Support File, are contained in the Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, available at <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with->

Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf.

Providing power to designate a school place for a person with special educational needs, is currently being considered in the context of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016.

While awaiting the full implementation of the EPSEN Act, the NCSE has published a number of policy advice papers which make recommendations aimed at developing a better or more effective alternative to the current resource allocation model, and which aims to move the system towards ultimate implementation of the EPSEN Act.

These reports include the NCSE policy advice on Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools, published in 2013, the Report of the Working Group on a Proposed New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources for pupils with Special Educational Needs, published in 2014 and more recently the Report on the Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme.

The new model for allocating additional teaching supports to students with special educational needs has been implemented from September 2017. Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and Circular 0014/2017 for post primary schools which were published on 7th March 2017 sets out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The revised allocation model replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools also provides guidance on the organisation, deployment and use of their special education teachers. One of the benefits of this new approach is that schools will have greater flexibility as to how they will deploy their resources.

The Comprehensive Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme which was published by the NCSE on 30 May 2018 set out to ensure that the Scheme is achieving the best outcomes possible for children with special educational needs. Of the 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.

It is therefore intended to bring into effect many of the good ideas contained in the EPSEN Act, on a non-statutory basis initially, through policy developments across a range of areas, in conjunction with NCSE policy advice.

Speech and Language Therapy

171. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the detail of the new pilot scheme for in-school speech and language therapists; the number of schools involved; the demographic of the schools; the number of therapists employed under the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27522/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recently announced that a demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services will be introduced for the 2018/19 school year.

The project will be managed and co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education.

The model has been developed by the Departments of Education, Children and Youth Affairs, Health, and the Health Service Executive, and is part of the Government's overall aim to help every child to fulfil their full potential.

The purpose of the project is to test a model of tailored therapeutic supports that allows for early intervention in terms of providing speech and language and occupational therapy within 'educational settings'. This innovative pilot will complement existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services.

76 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post primary, and special schools will take part in the project.

This will include:

- Schools with significant levels of educational disadvantage.
- A mixture of urban, large, and small schools.
- Schools with high levels of support needs as identified under the new special education teaching allocation model.
- Mainstream schools which have special classes
- Special schools with significant levels of therapy support needs.

Pre-school settings associated with primary schools participating in the project are being included in order to provide for therapy interventions to be made at the earliest possible time and to create linkages between pre-school and primary school provision. 75 pre-schools will also participate giving 151 settings.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare and West Wicklow and the schools selected will therefore be from this region.

As part of the programme, 19 speech and language therapists and 12 Occupational Therapists are being recruited by the HSE to work with the 151 schools and pre-schools. The NCSE will also recruit 2 National Co-ordinators to manage the project.

The project aims to develop a more cohesive, collaborative approach to delivering supports to children in our schools by allowing therapists and educational professionals to work together in schools.

Capitation Grants

172. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point increase in capitation grant for primary schools. [27525/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The estimated full year cost of increasing the rate of capitation by 1% in primary schools is circa €1m.

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.

Capitation Grants

173. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point increase in capitation grant for post-primary schools. [27526/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The estimated full year cost of increasing the rate of capitation by 1% in post-primary schools is circa €1m.

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.

School Transport Expenditure

174. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore school transport to the same level of funding per capita as 2008. [27527/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

Changes to the School Transport Scheme introduced in Budget 2011, derived from recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the Scheme and encompassed a number of elements such as:-

- national application of the distance rule of 3.2 kilometres at primary level;
- the cessation of the Closed/Central School Rule at primary level;
- the cessation of catchment boundary area to determine eligibility at post primary level and;
- an increase from seven to 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality to retain or establish a school transport service and the introduction of charges at primary level.

Given that school transport is a demand led service it is difficult to cost school transport services on the basis of restoring the Scheme to the criteria that existed pre 2011. However, in general the unit cost for transporting mainstream children is some €1,000 per annum, while the unit cost for transporting children with special educational needs is €7,000 or €9,000 when the provision of escorts are included.

The terms of the School Transport Schemes are applied equitably on a national basis.

Modern Language Teaching

175. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the allocation made to the modern languages in primary schools programme in the last year of its existence. [27528/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) was introduced in September 1998. It involved the introduction of Italian, Spanish, German and French for 5th and 6th classes. The MLPSI was a pilot scheme across 550 schools with an annual budget of approximately €2.5m.

A 2008 Report by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment recommended against a further expansion of the MLPSI, citing issues of curriculum overload and difficulties relating to the replicability of the model across the system. The ultimate decision to end the MLPSI was taken in the context of a very challenging budgetary environment where difficult decisions had to be taken.

Consideration will be given to the issue of language learning at primary level in the context of the review of the time and structure of the primary curriculum currently being carried out by the NCCA. The priority at primary level is to provide high-quality language learning in our two languages, Irish and English. A new Primary Language Curriculum, incorporating Irish and English, was introduced in classes from Junior Infants to 2nd class from September 2016. This curriculum aims to ensure that students acquire transferrable language skills which will assist them in learning Irish and English and additional languages at second level. Work is currently underway in developing the Primary Language Curriculum for third to sixth class, with a draft curriculum being available on the NCCA's website.

Last December, my Department published Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for For-

eign Languages in Education 2017-2026. As part of the Strategy, content language integrated learning (CLIL) will be progressively introduced for Irish in English medium schools. Additionally, the presence of heritage languages in our primary schools will be acknowledged in the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum.

Schools Healthy Living Strategies

176. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the annual cost of the active schools flag initiative. [27529/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Active School Flag (ASF) is a Department initiative where schools are recognised for striving to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community.

My Department allocated €175,000 for the initiative in both 2016 and 2017. The budget allocation for 2018 is currently being considered.

In addition to this, Healthy Ireland, which is a Department of Health initiative, granted €213,290 to ASF for the period September 2017 to March 2018. An application for increased support for the ASF from the 2018 Healthy Ireland Fund has been submitted and is currently under consideration.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

177. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point reduction in the pupil teacher ratio at primary level. [27530/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

Budget 2018 includes a further one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level. This measure will further assist all schools at the upper end of their individual respective bands. This budget measure delivers on a commitment made in the Confidence and Supply Agreement and Programme for Government to reduce primary schools class size.

These changes will come into effect in September 2018 for the 2018/19 school year.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €16.5m per annum.

Schools Administration

178. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated

cost of providing one release day per week for teaching principals for schools by numbers attending (details supplied). [27531/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria for the appointment of an administrative principal to a school, which are enrolment related, are set out in Appendix B of Circular 0010/2018. The enrolment required for administrative principal in ordinary schools, and gaelscoileanna and schools in the Gaeltacht is 176 pupils, or 113 if operating a specialist autism unit.

Schools that do not meet these criteria have teaching principals. Recently published Circular 40/2018 is available on the Department's website and outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

I recently announced an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

The Teacher Allocation section of my Department are currently processing these applications and schools are being notified as the cluster posts are approved.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

Enabling teaching principals to have one release day per week would cost approximately €12 million per annum.

School Staff

179. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to reverse staffing cuts to small schools with less than 86 pupils to 2011 and 2012 levels. [27533/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

Budget 2018 provides for an additional 1280 teaching posts in the 2018/19 school year. This includes a one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

These changes will come into effect in September 2018 for the 2018/19 school year.

The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to primary schools is published annually on the website of the Department of Education and Skills. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

Following a review of the staffing allocation for Small Primary Schools, Budget 2017 announced two adjustments in relation to one teacher schools. Where the school is the sole primary school on an island the school will be able to appoint a second teacher. In relation to single teacher schools generally with an enrolment of 15 or more pupils the school can apply to the staffing appeal board for a second post where the single teacher has children across 6 or more class groups. The detailed arrangements have been set out in the staffing schedule circular for the 2017/18 school year.

The cost of restoring the 2011/12 staffing schedule for small schools would be approximately €5m.

DEIS Scheme

180. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore the rural co-ordinator service under the home school liaison service. [27534/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware the DEIS Rural Coordination Service was discontinued with effect from 31 August 2011. At that time there were 46 Rural Coordinator Posts at a cost of €2,714,000.

The impact of socio-economic factors on educational outcomes can be different between urban and rural settings and we need to take account of that. Evidence strongly suggests that disadvantage associated with rural poverty does not have the same impact on educational achievement as is the case in the urban context. While urban and rural disadvantage share many characteristics, such as poverty, unemployment and poor housing conditions, as such disadvantage in a rural context does not have the same impact on educational performance. The Performance Report from the National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics (NAERM), 2014 highlighted the gap that exists between DEIS urban Band 1 schools and pupils in other schools in both reading and maths. Performance in rural DEIS schools is about the same as the national average, while performance in DEIS Band 2 primary schools has improved substantially according to the 2014 National Assessments. Assessments of reading and mathematics performance in DEIS rural primary schools show that students in these schools in some cases perform better than rural non-DEIS schools and at the same level as their counterparts in urban non-DEIS schools.

My Department's objective in implementing DEIS Plan 2017 is to have the maximum possible impact on providing opportunities for students most at risk of disadvantage. To achieve this, additional resources must be targeted as closely as possible at those students with the greatest need in terms of concentrated levels of disadvantage. Accordingly, DEIS Plan 2017 does not include a measure to restore the rural coordinator service.

The Deputy may wish to note that Rural DEIS primary schools continue to be supported through the DEIS programme with a range of additional supports, including grant aid in the form of a DEIS grant, enhanced book grant, access to the DEASP School Meals Programme and priority access for teachers to a range of professional development programmes as well as

the Incredible Years and Friends programmes.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

181. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of providing 100 additional English teachers as additional language posts. [27536/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The level of extra teaching support provided in respect of language support to schools is determined by the numbers of eligible pupils enrolled and the associated levels of those pupils' language proficiency.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation which was introduced from the 2017/18 school year provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile and also encompasses the Language Support (EAL) allocation that schools were allocated in previous years.

Under the new allocation model, schools have been provided with a total allocation for special education needs support based on their school profile.

The provision of a profiled allocation is designed to give a fairer allocation for each school which recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support including language support but which provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the actual level of need in each school.

Under the new allocation model, schools are frontloaded with resources, based on each school's profile, to provide supports immediately to those pupils who need it without delay.

By using a broad range of attainment and socio-economic criteria, it is expected that generally, a school's profile will remain relatively constant from year to year. Each year, some students with additional teaching needs will leave and others will enrol, broadly balancing the school profile.

Further additional temporary Language Support is also provided, as necessary, to schools that have high concentrations of pupils that require language (EAL) support. At primary level, these allocations are made on the basis of appeals by schools to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board and at post-primary level to the Post Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

The cost of providing an additional 100 EAL teachers would be in the region of €6m per annum.

DEIS Scheme

182. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of extending the delivering equality of opportunity in schools, DEIS, programme by 20% in addition to the new schools announced. [27537/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, following the publication of the DEIS Review Report and DEIS Plan 2017 in February 2017, 79 new schools were included in DEIS for the first time and a further 30 schools were upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1 status. These schools have been receiving supports since September last year. My Department currently invests over €125m annually to fund the various supports available to the 902 DEIS schools.

The purpose of the overall suite of supports available to schools participating in the DEIS programme is to improve educational outcomes for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances. A list of the supports available to DEIS Schools is available on my Department's website at the following link;

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Supporting-Information/Supports-to-DEIS-Schools.html>.

I wish to advise the Deputy that it is not possible to accurately estimate the cost of extending the DEIS Programme by 20%. The cost of the addition of any further schools to the programme is dependent on a number of variables, such as the rate of disadvantage of the school and number of pupils enrolled. This in turn determines the levels of supports the school receives for example whether they are entitled to a lower class size etc.

School Guidance Counsellors

183. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of restoring guidance counsellors to one per 500 pupils ex-quota at post-primary schools. [27538/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that was withdrawn in Budget 2012, will be restored to schools from September 2018.

All of these 500 posts are allocated separately and transparently on the normal staffing schedule of posts for schools. These posts have been ring-fenced so they can only be used for guidance activities and to meet the guidance needs of the school.

The estimated cost of one guidance counsellor per 500 pupils would require in the region of 250 posts in addition to the 500 posts which have been restored in Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 at an estimated cost of €15.75 million per annum.

Schools Building Projects Status

184. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development and location for a school (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to the demand for school places in this area and the urgent need for information for parents and schoolchildren in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27541/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the school to which he refers is included in my Department's 6 year construction programme.

Officials in my Department continue to liaise with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable location for the school in question and have identified a preferred site option within the relevant school planning areas. Negotiations with the landowner in respect of this proposed acquisition are currently ongoing.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally, I am not in a position to provide further details at this time but the school patron is being kept apprised of developments in respect of the site acquisition process.

School Staff

185. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27596/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Recently published Circular 40/2018 is available on the Department's website and outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

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

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

Circular 63/2017 was issued by my Department in September 2017 which sets out a leadership and management framework for posts in recognised primary schools. Flexibility in identifying and prioritising the evolving leadership and management needs of the school, and in assigning and re-assigning post holders to specific roles and responsibilities to meet the evolving needs of a school, is an essential feature of this school leadership model.

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

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

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

I recently announced an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

The Teacher Allocation section of my Department are currently processing these applications and schools are being notified as the cluster posts are approved.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

Schools Building Projects

186. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to the site on the Hazelhatch Road, Celbridge currently owned by the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board, KWETB, for the purposes of a new build for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27608/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, work is ongoing to identify the causes of flooding on the site to which he refers, with a view to identifying appropriate remediation measures and the feasibility of these measures. This process is ongoing. In the meantime, my Department has identified a suitable site for the new school and is progressing acquisition of this site.

Schools Site Acquisitions

187. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the acquisition process of a site at Donacomper, Lucan Road for the purposes of a new build for a school (details supplied) which has been earmarked as an alternative site for the purposes of a new build; the timeline for the necessary planning submission for a new build at this site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27609/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is in the process of acquiring a site to accommodate the school to which the Deputy refers.

There are some outstanding clarifications required with regard to the site before matters can be progressed and, with a view to progressing the site acquisition, my Department has been in contact with the vendor requesting an update on these.

My Department is aware of the necessity to provide a new building for the school and, subject to no issues arising, will be appointing a design team to progress the project to architectural planning as soon as it is possible to do so.

School Accommodation Provision

188. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter regarding a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27611/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that in 2017 my Department approved the provision of three special education teaching rooms at the school referred to. These have yet to be delivered.

In addition, my Department recently received an application for the provision of additional mainstream classroom accommodation. I wish to advise that my Department has approved the

provision of temporary accommodation, to meet an immediate mainstream classroom requirement. This decision was advised to the school authorities.

Capitation Grants

189. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if sufficient funding will be provided for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27616/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools, including the school referred to by the Deputy, having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

My Department recognises the importance of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 signals a gradual ramping up in capital expenditure in the schools sector over the coming years. In that context, and as part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department would intend to put the Minor Works Grant on an annual footing and to provide greater certainty to schools on the timing of payment.

Schools Building Projects Status

190. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new school building for a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; when construction will commence; and if all issues regarding the purchase of the site are now completed. [27617/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at Stage 2b – Detailed Design.

This project was authorised to commence the Pre-Qualification of Contractors in May 2018. The pre-qualification and shortlisting of suitable contractors normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete. When pre-qualification is complete the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

The project is currently profiled to commence construction in Q3 2019. However, my Department has advised the school that if they are in a position to commence construction earlier in 2019, my Department is agreeable to facilitating same.

Regarding the site, legal representatives for both parties are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. All parties continue the work to ensure the acquisition completes at the earliest possible date and at this point it is still not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Schools Building Projects Status

191. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the growing need for a new secondary school (details supplied) in County Kildare; if his Department concluded a review of the educational needs of the population in the area and its future needs. [27618/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

While the announcement did not include a new post-primary school in the South Kildare school planning areas, additional capacity in the region of 1,700 school places will be provided when projects at the following four schools in this area are completed:

St. Conleth's Community College, Newbridge;

Athy Community College, Athy;

Cross and Passion Secondary School, Kilcullen; and

St Paul's Secondary School, Monasterevin.

A building project for the Patrician College Newbridge is also included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

However, in line with the ongoing review of school planning areas generally, I can confirm that my Department is currently reviewing provision at post-primary level across the school planning areas in South Kildare.

School Transport Provision

192. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a larger size bus will be put in place in a specific location (details supplied) to accommodate the number of

pupils. [27635/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

The purpose of my Department's School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Seats for concessionary applicants are allocated after all eligible children have been accommodated on school transport services. This exercise normally takes place after the closing date for receipt of payments. Where seats are limited a random selection process is used.

Routes will not be extended or altered, additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for children travelling on a concessionary basis; no additional State cost will be incurred.

Arising from commitments in the Programme for Government, a review of the Concessionary Charges and Rules element of the School Transport Scheme was undertaken.

The review was published in December 2016 and made recommendations on both the charges and the rules element of concessionary school transport.

The report also recommended that the number of concessionary places should be reduced in line with the rules introduced in 2012 on a phased basis. Previous plans to advance this option were put on hold, pending the completion of the review.

However upon consideration of the review and following discussions with the Cross Party Working Group which I established to feed into the review, I decided that there should be no planned programme of downsizing in the coming year except in line with normal operational decisions within the current scheme.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Schools Building Projects Status

193. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the new site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27637/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers was announced as part of my Department's Six Year Capital Programme in 2015.

Officials in my Department are working closely with officials from Wexford County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable perma-

nent location for Wexford Educate Together NS.

A preferred site is currently been investigated by my Department in conjunction with officials from Wexford County Council.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am not in a position to provide further details at this time but I can assure the Deputy that the school patron will be informed of the proposed location for the school as soon as it is possible to do so.

Capitation Grants

194. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore the full capitation grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27658/18]

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.

Schools Building Projects Status

195. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the amalgamation of the national schools in Cahir, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27659/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the amalgamation process involving the Cahir schools will be finalised with the delivery of the major school building project.

In that regard, the major building project is currently in Architectural Planning. The school were approved to proceed to Stage 2b-Detailed Design in April 2018 and the Design Team are currently working on the Stage 2b report. Planning Permission has been received and the Disability Access Certificate and Fire Safety Certificate have been granted. 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

196. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the work being carried out at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27660/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

The Stage 2b submission has been approved by the Department and the school and Design Team are currently engaged in the prequalification process to select a shortlist of contractors for tender stage. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete.

Once the prequalification process is complete my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management with a view to progressing the project to tender stage.

Schools Building Projects Status

197. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to open an Educate Together post-primary school in east County Cork. [27661/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 600 pupil post-primary school for the Ballincollig school planning area to be established in 2021. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. It is important to note that approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools.

While the announcement did not include a new post-primary school for East County Cork, I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

198. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the procedures followed when a school is compelled by him to establish an autism unit; the funding provided for the school to establish such a unit; the specialist expertise the school is resourced to procure; the training provided to existing staff to ensure that the autism unit is competent and effective

in the delivery of specialist education to pupils as opposed to just an autism unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27662/18]

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.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

The NCSE policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that Students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

The greater proportion of children with Autism attend mainstream classes, but some students may find it difficult to manage full-time placement there and will require the environment of an ASD special class for some or all of their time in school and for a minority of children with Special Educational Needs including Autism, placements in a Special School may be required.

Special classes for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have a minimum of two SNAs for every class of 6 children. Schools are encouraged to appropriately qualified teachers to these special classes.

The Special Educational Support Service (SESS) provides continuous professional development for teachers including those who are deployed to Special Classes.

Other resources which are provided to schools to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism include the following:

- The National Educational Psychological Service
- Assistive technology.
- Access to the Special School transport scheme.
- Access to special equipment and furniture where required.
- Enhanced capitation grants at primary level
- Adapted school buildings.
- Access to the extended school year scheme. (July Provision)

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, and where special class provision is required, it is planned and established to meet that need. The NCSE continues to establish additional special classes to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism as required.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of such classes by over 130% from 548 in 2011 to 1,304 across the country now. This network includes 1,048 ASD special classes, of which 130 are ASD early intervention classes, 641 primary ASD classes and 277 post-primary ASD classes in mainstream schools. In addition there are currently 124 Special schools of which 20 cater exclusively for children with Autism.

Schools may apply to the NCSE to open a special class where a need has been identified in their area i.e. a number of students have professional reports indicating they require the support of a special class.

The NCSE through the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), may also approach a school directly where they are aware that a special class is or will be required in the near future. Before approaching a particular school to request the establishment of a special class, SENOs take into account both present and future potential need within the area and must be satisfied that the class is sustainable and appropriately located.

In the case of all new schools, it is general practice to include a Special Needs Unit (SNU) in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required. Typically, a two classroom SNU is provided in new primary schools and a two or four classroom unit is provided in new post-primary schools.

In the case of existing schools, where a school is not in a position to accommodate a special class within its existing accommodation, it is open to the school to submit an application to the Department for capital funding to (i) re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class or (ii) to construct additional accommodation.

My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place to ensure that all children who require special class placements can access such placements in schools within their communities.

My Department has acknowledged that in recent years the establishment of special class provision in some schools and communities has been challenging.

As part of the process of planning for future provision, a number of measures have been included in the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 to provide certain powers to the NCSE to designate a school placement for a child in circumstances where a child is experiencing difficulties in securing enrolment.

The Bill also proposes powers for the Minister, in certain circumstances, to require a school to open a special class for children with special educational needs. This amendment will give the Minister the power to compel a school to open a special class or classes where the National Council for Special Education has identified a need for such provision within an area.

These proposed measures would further enhance the ability of my Department and the NCSE to plan for special class provision and to address issues in provision that may arise from time in time at local levels.

Guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools contain information on setting up and organising special classes, including information on resources which may be provided to schools to establish special classes are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

199. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projected numbers of students studying physical education at leaving certificate level from September 2018; and his plans to add additional schools to the short list of those schools implementing the subject. [27663/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The specification for Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) will provide learners with an opportunity to study physical education for the Leaving Certificate examination, providing an additional optional Leaving Certificate subject. The new examinable subject will be introduced in September 2018 into a cohort of 64 post-primary schools as part of phase 1 of its introduction.

To date, my Department has received confirmation that 1,571 students will study Leaving Certificate Physical Education in these 64 schools from September 2018. These schools are being supported in implementation by my Department's Professional Development Service for Teachers.

It is my Department's intention to offer LCPE to all interested schools from September 2020. An open call will be made for expressions of interest from schools in 2019.

School Staff

200. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction the appointment of a third teacher for the second class in a school (details supplied) in order that there can be three classes of 24 pupils rather than two classes of 36 pupils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27664/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

The school referred to by the Deputy had an enrolment of 344 on 30th September 2017. This provides for a mainstream staffing of Administrative Principal and 13 classroom teachers for the 2018/19 school year. The school will also have 4 Special Education Teachers.

The staffing schedule includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

The school submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its May 2018 meeting under the Exceptional Accommodation Difficulties criteria. The appeal was refused by the Appeals Board on the basis that the grounds of the appeal did not warrant the allocation of an additional post under Circular 0010/2018. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

The configuration of classes and the deployment of classroom teachers are done at local school level. My Department's guidance to schools is that the number of pupils in any class is kept as low as possible taking all relevant contextual factors into account (e.g. classroom accommodation, fluctuating enrolment etc.). School authorities are also requested, where possible, to use their autonomy under the staffing schedule to implement smaller class sizes for junior classes. Given that the staffing schedule operates to a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 26 pupils, if a school has a large class it generally also has a small class.

Schools Building Projects Status

201. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 96 of 31 May 2018, the number of times his Department has been in contact with the school (details supplied) to date in 2018; the details of the correspondence or discussions with the school to resolve the outstanding issues in relation to the provision of a new building for the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27693/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware projects for the schools referred to are included in my Department's 6 year Capital Programme.

In light of site issues arising my Department is in contact with the Patron for the schools in question. In this regard, a response is awaited by my Department in respect of its most recent written communication with the Patron, issued towards the end of May.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

202. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will be provided with a full-time special needs assistant in September 2018. [27764/18]

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

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

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the NCSE take accounts of the pupils' needs and considers 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 child I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Schools Building Projects Status

203. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school (details supplied); when a design team for the new school will be appointed; the timeframe for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27767/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Design Team for the major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy was appointed in 2014. The project is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

The school and its design team was authorised to commence the prequalification process to select a shortlist of contractors for tender stage on 18th June 2018. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete.

Once the prequalification process is complete my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management with a view to progressing the project to tender stage.

Schools Building Projects

204. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the difficulty experienced by a school (details supplied) in Dublin 4 in trying to obtain information concerning its new permanent building; the impediments which surround the progress of the project; if his attention has been further drawn to the lack of accurate communication between his Department and the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27771/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school building project to provide the permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy has commenced architectural planning under the Department's "Rapid" - Design and Build Programme. The school has been informed of its permanent location.

A planning permission to provide temporary accommodation for the school on the permanent site is currently under third party appeal to An Bord Pleanála. The school has been informed that until the temporary accommodation can be provided it will remain at its current temporary location from the start of the 2018/19 school year.

The design process for the permanent accommodation is being progressed in preparation for

the planning application which will be the next key milestone in the progression of the project.

Department officials recently contacted the school Principal to advise on the status of the planning permission for the temporary accommodation and also to request contact details for the school over the summer months.

The Schools Board of Management will be invited to view the plans for the new school in advance of the planning application being submitted to the local authority.

Since the start of this year, Department officials have also been meeting on a monthly basis with the schools Patron Body. My Department has through its communications with the schools Patron Body endeavored to keep the schools management informed of all developments.

School Accommodation Provision

205. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if tender documents have been issued in relation to prefabs for a school (details supplied); the community consultation that was undertaken in advance of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27772/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Tender documents have issued in respect of the temporary accommodation for the school to which the Deputy refers.

A decision to grant planning permission for the temporary accommodation was made by Dublin City Council on the 26th January 2018. The Department through its Project Manager for this project engaged with third parties who had expressed observations to the Dublin City Council Planning Authority and arranged meetings as requested.

The decision to grant planning permission was subsequently appealed by a number of third parties to An Bord Pleanála. The decision of An Bord Pleanála is currently awaited.

School Accommodation Provision

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) will receive funding in order to accommodate the increasing enrolment numbers at the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27787/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that, in March 2017, my Department approved in principle the provision of temporary accommodation to provide additional mainstream classroom facilities for 2017 and 2018.

Site works and associated costs were approved in July 2017 and the first prefab was installed. Subsequently the school sought significant additional costs associated with this project, not previously approved or considered. My Department requested clarification in respect of the additional costs - this remains outstanding.

Significant site costs and associated works have been indicated in respect of the installation of the temporary accommodation required for 2018.

My Department has contacted the school authorities on a number of occasions, including detailed written communication, to advise on the clarification required regarding the significant costs associated with the installation of the temporary accommodation, for both 2017 and 2018.

Once this clarification is received my Department will be in a position to consider the matter further.

Schools Building Projects Status

207. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school building project (details supplied) in County Cork; and when construction will commence. [27789/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department's Capital Programme.

The project for this school has been identified for delivery as part of a programme for the appointment of a Programme Manager. My Department expects to be in further contact with the school authority shortly on the matter.

Schools Building Projects Status

208. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the completion of schools and educational facilities (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27792/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The liquidation of Carillion Construction affected five school buildings, including the school specifically referred to by the Deputy, and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells. These projects form the Schools Bundle 5 Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme.

Following the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd, a tender process to identify a replacement contractor for the completion of the buildings has been carried out. I was pleased that I was able yesterday to welcome confirmation from DIF and the project lenders regarding the appointment of a replacement works contractor. This provides a clear pathway forward for the completion of all the schools in Schools Bundle 5 PPP Project.

In this respect, arrangements are being put in place for the appointment of a replacement contractor to facilitate the completion of the three most advanced schools by the end of August and to undertake survey and preliminary work at the other three buildings in the programme, including the school referred to by the Deputy. This preparatory work is intended to facilitate the remaining construction work being completed by the end of December.

These arrangements, which follow a retendering process, provide for a contractor to be mobilised in the coming days and for work to recommence on site in the coming weeks. I would like to thank DIF and the Project Funders for their co-operation through this process and to acknowledge, in particular, the work of the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) in representing the interests of the State and the school communities.

Contingency planning remains in place for all six facilities. Students and staff of the school referred to by the Deputy will continue to be accommodated in their existing buildings until the new buildings are completed. The relevant ETB, supported by the Department of Education and Skills, is also putting in place additional temporary accommodation arrangements to cater for its increased enrolments.

Foireann Roinne

209. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27805/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Níl aon oifigeach Gaeilge tiomanta san Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna ag an bpointe seo. Is iad na príomhghráid sa Roinn atá gafa le seirbhísí a sheachadadh ar phobal na Gaeilge ná na gráid a bhaineann le cigireacht na scoileanna agus le soláthar na seirbhísí síceolaíochta oideachais a chuireann An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais ar fáil do scoileanna i gceantair Ghaeltachta agus do Ghaelscoileanna. Tá 24 síceolaí oideachais sa tSeirbhís faoi láthair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus a chuireann a gcuid seirbhísí proifisiúnta ar fáil trí Ghaeilge. Tá 51 cigire i Rannán Chigireacht na Scoileanna ag an mbunleibhéal agus tá 48 díobh seo freagrach as scoileanna ina múintear an siollabas trí Ghaeilge. Tá 11 de na cigirí seo freagrach as scoileanna Gaeltachta mar go bhfuil na scoileanna sin mar chuid den cheantar acu. Ag an mbunleibhéal is speisialtóirí in ábhar-réimsí na cigirí den chuid is mó. Cuireann foireann na cigireachta iar-bhunleibhéal a cuid seirbhísí ar fáil chomh maith do scoileanna ina múintear an curaclam trí Ghaeilge.

Ó bunaíodh an Gaeltacht um Oideachas Gaeltachta san Roinn in 2017, tá seirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge ar fáil san Roinn chun tacú le scoileanna Gaeltachta agus chun an Pholasáí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-2022 a chur i bhfeidhm.

Faoi láthair tá dóthain de bhaill foirne proifisiúnta ann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge chun seirbhísí proifisiúnta a sheachadadh do na scoileanna i gceist. I dteannta sin tá líon oifigigh riaracháin atá ábalta plé le fiosrucháin trí mheán na Gaeilge.

School Staff

210. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals in primary schools by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27829/18]

211. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the burden of work placed on teaching principal teachers in primary schools across the country; his views on whether further supports are necessary for these principals in order to avoid burnout; and his plans to address their challenges. [27830/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 and 211 together.

1,765 out of 3,114 primary schools have a teaching principal in the 2017/18 school year with just over 24% of the primary pupil population enrolled in schools that have teaching principals.

The Irish education system has certain characteristics that have influenced the evolution of the Principal's role. The distribution of the population necessitates a relatively large number of small primary schools. In the case of Principals in smaller schools, while management and administrative duties are smaller in scale than those of larger schools, they must be undertaken in addition to their full-time teaching duties.

The enrolment required for administrative principal in ordinary schools, Gaelscoileanna and schools in the Gaeltacht is 176 pupils, or 113 if operating a specialist autism unit.

Schools that have less than this enrolment have teaching principals. Recently published Circular 40/2018 is available on the Department's website, which outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund almost 4,600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I recently announced an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

The following table sets out a breakdown of the number of teaching principals in primary schools by county as requested.

Teaching Principals by county in 2017/18 school year

The Principals in these schools are in schools with less than 176 pupils:

COUNTY	Number of teaching Principals 2017/18
CARLOW	19
CAVAN	57
CLARE	88
CORK	184
DONEGAL	140
DUBLIN	48
GALWAY.	155
KERRY	101
KILDARE	31
KILKENNY	46
LAOIS	42
LEITRIM	29
LIMERICK	83
LONGFORD	24
LOUTH	21
MAYO	138
MEATH	52
MONAGHAN	43
OFFALY	39
ROSCOMMON	79
SLIGO	49
TIPPERARY	113
WATERFORD	40
WESTMEATH	47
WEXFORD	59
WICKLOW	38
Total	1765

Schools Building Projects

212. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site inspection has been carried out at a location (details supplied) by the design team for the project to evaluate the extent of work required to complete the project following the liquidation of a company; when the retendering for the project will commence; when it is hoped to have new contractors on-site to complete the project; if there is a new hoped for completion date for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27864/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The delivery of the projects referred to by the Deputy has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB).

KWETB, its design team and officials from my Department's Planning and Building Unit are working closely to ensure that a new contractor is appointed as quickly as possible to complete both schools. An eTender's notice has been forwarded to eTenders for publication seeking expressions of interest from contractors wishing to be considered for the completion of the project. The notice will be published later this week. Identification of all outstanding works necessary to complete both schools is also ongoing.

School Patronage

213. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in sanctioning an application by a school (details supplied) to become co-educational; when a decision will be conveyed to the school board of management; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27865/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has received an application from the Patron, of the school in question, for a change in status.

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

Question No. 214 answered with Question No. 147.

Schools Building Projects Status

215. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 177 of 8 May 2018, the full extent of the works envisaged for a school (details supplied); if a design team has been appointed for the project; if not, when one will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27867/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the project brief for the school in question has been finalised and furnished to the Patron who I understand has provided details directly to the school. The project will include the construction of additional classrooms and ancillary accommodation.

My Department will be in further contact with the school authority relating to the commencement of the architectural planning process which will include the appointment of a design team.

Student Accommodation

216. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding affordable student housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27877/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Student Accommodation Strategy (NSAS) was published in July of 2017 and was delivered as part of the Government's housing strategy Rebuilding Ireland. The National Student Accommodation Strategy is an important element of the overall housing strategy, in ensuring that increased levels of student accommodation are available to meet the needs of our growing student cohort.

As of the end of May this year 2,990 bed spaces have been completed since the launch of Rebuilding Ireland. Countrywide, there are 7,017 bedspaces being built, 2,354 of which will be available for the coming academic year, with over 2,800 the following year.

The potential pipeline of accommodation is also encouraging. 7,017 bed spaces have been granted planning permission. We should therefore meet, if not exceed, the Rebuilding Ireland targets of 7,000 purpose built bed spaces by the end of 2019 and 21,000 bed spaces by 2024.

My Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government are working with The Union of Students Ireland to support the #HomesforStudy campaign which promotes the provision of 'digs' accommodation for students as an alternative to both purpose built student accommodation and the general rental market, and have provided funding to the USI for this purpose. The 2018 #HomesforStudy campaign was launched today the 25th of June.

Student Grant Scheme

217. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding adjacency rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27879/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The student maintenance grant is a contribution towards the living costs of a student. It is not intended to cover the full costs of attending college. The student grant scheme does however, provide for different levels of maintenance support, depending on means. Grants are also provided at adjacent and non-adjacent rates. The higher non-adjacent rates are intended to provide additional support to those students who may be living away from home.

Budget 2011 provided for a number of student grant measures which came into effect for the 2011/12 academic year, including the change in the assessment of the qualifying distance criterion for the non-adjacent rate of grant from 24 kilometres to 45 kilometres.

The 24km distance criterion was originally set in 1968 and had not been updated in more than 40 years. Since then, significant improvements have taken place in the road and rail network and it is considered that the revised distance criteria is more consistent with the type of distances that students may legitimately be expected to commute to college.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

School Curriculum

218. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the list of schools that will be implementing computer science at leaving certificate level in 2020 will be announced; and if new applications will be accepted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27915/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The specification for the new Leaving Certificate Computer Science (LCCS) subject was approved by the Council of the NCCA and the Minister in December 2017. Following a public call to schools, the Steering Group established to oversee implementation of LCCS selected and approved 40 schools that will introduce the subject in September 2018 as part of the phase 1 roll-out. The first examination of the LCCS will take place in June 2020.

It is my Department's intention to offer Leaving Certificate Computer Science to all interested schools from September 2020. An open call will be made for expressions of interest from

schools in 2019.

School Curriculum

219. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the list of schools that will begin implementing physical education at leaving certificate level in 2020 will be published. [27916/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The specification for Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) will provide learners with an opportunity to study physical education for the Leaving Certificate examination, providing an additional optional Leaving Certificate subject. The new examinable subject will be introduced in September 2018 into a cohort of 64 post-primary schools participating in the phase 1 implementation of this new subject.

It is my Department's intention to offer LCPE to all interested schools from September 2020. An open call will be made for expressions of interest from schools in 2019.

School Curriculum

220. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the list of schools that will implement politics and society at leaving certificate level in 2020 will be announced; if new applications will be accepted; and if new schools have been admitted to provide the subject since it was first commenced in September 2017. [27917/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A new specification for Leaving Certificate Politics and Society was introduced in September 2016 to a selected Phase 1 cohort of 41 schools who were selected from almost 120, following an open invitation to introduce this as an optional Leaving Certificate subject. The first examination in Leaving Certificate Politics and Society took place on 20 June, 2018.

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.

Phase 2 (availability to all interested schools) has commenced with all schools having been asked to express their interest in providing Politics and Society as an option for their students from September 2018. The decision to offer optional subjects rests with individual schools. Over 55 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.

Departmental Staff Data

221. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27949/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Officials at my Department are recruited by way of competitive competitions conducted by the Public Appointment Service (PAS).

On appointment at the Department officials are presented with a copy of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour which outlines the standards required of Civil Servants in the discharge of their duties. For ease of reference for the Deputy I have attached a link to a copy of the Code.

In the past four years no staff members at my Department have been transferred or dismissed for professional misconduct or incompetence.

[Civil Service Code of Standards].

Schools Building Projects Status

222. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the commencement of building for a school (details supplied) when he expects planning permission to be applied for and the school to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27964/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school building project for the school referred to by the Deputy will provide a 16-classroom school on the site. The original brief for the school was for 8 classrooms but was increased due to greater enrolments. The need to replace the Design Team arose from a fees uplift request for each member of the design team which greatly exceeded the 50% upper limit increase allowed under the EU Procurement Directive.

The appointment of a Replacement Design Team (all disciplines - Replacement Architect, Mechanical and Electrical Engineer, Civil and Structural Engineer and Quantity Surveyor) is completed.

The new Design Team was instructed to commence Stage 2A – Developed Sketch Scheme in March 2018 and is working on the submission for review by the Department’s professional and technical team. An updated topographical survey is required mapping the changes due to recent LUAS works adjoining the site.

Provided no issues arise and following approval of the Stage 2A submission by the Department, the Design Team can then be instructed to progress to Stage 2B – Detailed Design Stage, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Certificate, Disability Access Certificate and the preparation of Tender Documents.

The Department is committed to advancing the building project for the permanent school building as quickly as possible.

National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy

223. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress on each action outlined in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 that fall under his Department’s remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27976/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality published the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy in June of last year. My department participated in the development of the strategy and is a member of the Steering Group which was established to oversee the implementation of the new strategy. Membership of the Steering Group includes all relevant Government Departments, Agencies and NGOs.

The strategy takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of Travellers and Roma in Ireland in practical and tangible ways. There are 149 actions in the strategy covering the themes of Cultural Identity, Education, Employment and Traveller Economy, Children and Youth, Health, Gender Equality, Anti-discrimination and Equality, Public Services, Accommodation and Traveller and Roma Communities. My department and agencies attached to my department have input into 31 of the 149 actions, six of which are completed and the remaining twenty five are on track.

In accordance with Government policy, provision for Travellers has been mainstreamed with previously segregated provision now funded as part of the mainstream system. Access to and participation in all education sectors are seen as major barriers for Travellers and Roma. To improve these and to retain Travellers and Roma in the education system a pilot project is being developed by Tusla, the State body with a statutory remit in relation to school attendance, participation and retention. The pilot initiative will target the participation and retention of Traveller and Roma children in education. My department is working in collaboration with Tusla, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Justice and Equality along with Traveller and Roma representative groups to improve the educational outcomes for this cohort.

Schools Building Projects Status

224. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a school (details supplied) for a new build replacement school has been received; the status of the application; when it is expected that approval for construction will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28014/18]

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.

The project is currently at project identification stage. My Department intends to contact the school to discuss the next steps shortly. These steps will include the completion of an Educational Work Sheet, by the school, the assignation of an appropriate Long Term Projected Enrolment and the preparation of an associated overall Schedule of Accommodation. Thereafter a technical site visit will be scheduled.

Speech and Language Therapy

225. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the pilot speech and language units to be set up in schools by his Department in conjunction with the HSE will provide such a unit in the Connemara Gaeltacht for children that come from the Gaeltacht area and operate through the Irish language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28015/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recently announced that

a demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services will be introduced for the 2018/19 school year.

The project will be managed and co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education.

The model has been developed by the Departments of Education, Children and Youth Affairs, Health, and the Health Service Executive, and is part of the Government's overall aim to help every child to fulfil their full potential.

The purpose of the project is to test a model of tailored therapeutic supports that allows for early intervention in terms of providing speech and language and occupational therapy within 'educational settings'. This innovative pilot will complement existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare and West Wicklow.

This region has been selected to ensure that the pre-school and in-school therapy model can be tested in both urban and rural locations and with a suitable mix of various types of schools and pre-schools.

The schools selected will therefore be from this region, which means that, unfortunately, schools from the Connemara Gaeltacht region cannot be included.

I can advise, however, that a number of schools from the CHO 7 region which teach through the medium of Irish will be included.

76 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post primary, and special schools will take part in the project.

This will include:

- Schools with significant levels of educational disadvantage.
- A mixture of urban, large, and small schools.
- Schools with high levels of support needs as identified under the new special education teaching allocation model.
- Mainstream schools which have special classes
- Special schools with significant levels of therapy support needs.
- Schools of various types including Irish medium schools.

Of the 76 schools which will participate, 3 of these schools are Irish medium schools, and 1 school teaches through the mediums of both English and Irish.

Pre-school settings associated with primary schools participating in the project are being included in order to provide for therapy interventions to be made at the earliest possible time and to create linkages between pre-school and primary school provision.

The project aims to develop a more cohesive, collaborative approach to delivering supports to children by allowing therapists and educational professionals to work together in schools.

Questions - Written Answers
Schools Building Projects

226. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the location identified for a school (details supplied); if he has consulted with local schools to date in this regard; and the status of the development. [28074/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 8 classroom primary school to be established in 2019 for the area referred to by the Deputy. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools. The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

The existing capacity in local primary schools in the area to which the Deputy refers is currently being explored on the basis of issues raised by local school principals. My Department will arrange to consult with the local principals in this regard.

Schools Building Projects

227. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the expected patron for a proposed primary school (details supplied) will be announced; the date he expects the school will open; and if his Department has begun the process of identifying a permanent location for the school. [28075/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 8 classroom primary school to be established in 2019 for the area referred to by the Deputy.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department's assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on my Department's website.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice

about their preferred model of patronage for their child's education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies. The Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) is currently live for the post-primary schools to be established in 2019. The Patronage Process for the primary schools to be established in 2019 will commence later this year.

The locations for all of the new schools will be determined as part of the site acquisition process. In line with the policy on the use of state assets (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circulars 11/15 and 17/16), my Department will be seeking to maximize the use of sites already in my ownership and of available properties in the ownership of other State bodies, where these are considered suitable.

In addition as part of my Department's ongoing engagement with Local Authorities in respect of statutory planning processes and under the MoU on school site acquisitions, my Department will be examining all potential suitable site options, including appropriately zoned sites, to serve the relevant areas.

Taking into account all of the above, decisions will then be made as part of the site acquisition process in relation to appropriate sites for all the schools announced and will be confirmed at a later date.

Naturalisation Applications

228. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a decision will be made regarding an application for naturalisation by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27372/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy was refused for reasons provided to the person concerned in a letter issued on 26 February 2018 advising of the decision. There is no record of a new application for a certificate of naturalisation having been submitted to date. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The fact that a person may have had an application refused does not preclude or disqualify them from submitting a fresh application in the future. Indeed, the letter advising an applicant of a negative decision also informs them that they may re-apply for the grant of a certificate of naturalisation at any time. The letter advises that, when considering making such a re-application, they should give due regard to the reasons for the refusal which were contained in the submission attached to the refusal letter and that any further application will be considered taking into account all statutory and administrative conditions applicable at the time of application.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically

established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Family Reunification

229. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure for a person (details supplied) to live here with their family; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27483/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that Syrian nationals are required to obtain a visa in order to travel to Ireland. The person concerned should apply for a Join Family visa if the purpose of their journey is to reside in Ireland with their Irish citizen spouse and child.

The INIS website (www.inis.gov.ie) contains comprehensive guidelines to assist the applicant with the application process. It should, however, be noted that the information contained on the website is intended to provide guidance only and does not limit the discretion of the Visa Officer in dealing with individual applications. The onus rests at all times with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer that any visa sought should be granted.

Join Family applications, where the sponsor is an Irish national, will typically be dealt with within 6 months of receipt of all the required documentation, as set out in the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification. This is a business target which reflects the detailed assessment that is required to be carried out in relation to applications for family reunification. It does not constitute a legal obligation and applications may take longer due to the individual circumstances or complexity of the application.

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

Immigration Controls

230. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria required and the process of application for a stamp 4 immigration permission. [27504/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that Stamp 4 indicates permission to stay in Ireland for a specified period, subject to conditions. Full details of the criteria and application process are available on the INIS website - www.inis.gov.ie.

Stamp 4 is reckonable as residence when applying for citizenship by naturalisation. Holders of a Stamp 4 permission may:

- Take up employment and are not required to hold an Employment Permit (although they

cannot be employed in the general labour market if they were granted permission under the Investor or Entrepreneur Programmes);

- Work in a profession, subject to conditions of the relevant professional or other bodies;
- Establish and operate a business;
- Access state funds and services as determined by Government departments or agencies.

If an individual wishes to stay in Ireland past the expiry date of their immigration permission, they must apply to renew their permission and registration before they expire.

There are a range of circumstances when a Stamp 4 may issue and the process will differ depending on the type of case. They may be given a Stamp 4 if they have had permission to work in Ireland:

- with a valid Critical Skills employment permit for two years
- with a valid employment permit for five years
- as a researcher (with a valid Hosting Agreement) after two years legal residence in the State on Stamp 1.

They may also be given Stamp 4 if granted permission:

- to join an Irish spouse, partner or de facto partner
- to join an EU/EEA or Swiss family member based on EU Treaty Rights
- to join a family member who has immigration permission based on Stamp 4EUFAM (EU Treaty Rights)
- to join a family member who is a recognised refugee or has been granted subsidiary protection
- to remain with a child who is an Irish citizen
- under the Investor and Entrepreneur Programme (including spouse/partner and family)
- for Long Term Residence
- as a convention or programme refugee, or based on subsidiary protection.

Direct Provision System

231. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the humaneness or otherwise of the system of direct provision here in which vulnerable refugees are kept for years in cramped and inadequate accommodation, deprived of cooking facilities and provided €21.60 per week to live on in view of his condemnation of the US policy of separating children from their parents at the US border and condemnation of inhumane policies towards vulnerable refugees. [27551/18]

245. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to replace the system of direct provision with a humane system for persons seeking asylum here (details supplied). [27571/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 and 245 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, the Direct Provision system encompasses the range of State services including accommodation, food, health and education directly provided to international protection applicants through all the relevant Government Departments and Agencies. It is a whole-of-government support system for those seeking international protection in Ireland, although the term is more often used to describe the Accommodation Centres provided by the Reception and Integration Agency of my Department. Notwithstanding the criticisms levelled at the system, particularly in terms of length of stay, it has proven effective in ensuring that those who come to our country seeking international protection receive food and shelter and have immediate access to our state services. Over 60,000 people have been provided with shelter since its inception.

It is not possible to predict how many people may arrive in any given year seeking international protection. However, the system ensures that all applicants can be offered immediate shelter, full board accommodation and a range of services, such as health and education while their applications are being processed. Not every person who seeks international protection chooses to accept this offer, and some choose to live independently or with friends in communities across the country, as they are entirely free to do.

If the system was simply disbanded, as some have been calling for, without a viable alternative, the risks of consigning vulnerable people, who know neither our country, its systems nor our language, to poverty, exploitation and homelessness are multiplied. The Government cannot countenance that. I have not heard a viable alternative put forward as to how a person, who has unestablished needs and turns up here unexpectedly, can be immediately provided with shelter and an acceptable level of care.

In the absence of an alternative, any commitment to abolish a system that offers instant shelter and support would pose a serious risk to the wellbeing of protection applicants and undermine our international obligations.

As the Deputy will be aware, the system has already been subject to a complete review in 2014. Mr. Justice Bryan McMahon chaired a Working Group comprised of advocates and officials and made 173 recommendations for reform of the protection process including direct provision. The report was accepted by Government and three separate itemised progress reports on these recommendations were published on my Department's website, resulting in change being achieved across 98% of the recommendations.

The improvements to living conditions for applicants for international protection have been significant over recent years. These include the implementation of self or communal catering arrangements in a number of accommodation centres. As a result of this initiative, over 1,500 residents are now able to prepare meals of their own choosing. In addition, there have been improvements to a number of outdoor playgrounds and football pitches to provide for 'all-weather' facilities and the introduction of teenagers rooms in centres to provide social areas for this age group. Friends of the Centre groups have also been established in each centre. This initiative aims to bring residents, community and voluntary groups together with a view to increasing integration opportunities and providing for the development of greater community linkages with the residents and the centre.

Following on from the McMahon Report, a Standards Advisory Group was set up in 2017. The work of this group is to build on the recommendations of McMahon and to develop a set of standards for accommodation provided for those people seeking the protection of the State. The Standards will meet the minimum standards set out in the Recast Reception Conditions

Directive and EASO Guidance on Reception Conditions: Operational Standards and Indicators and will also take account of national developments in the provision of services to those in the protection process. They will take due cognisance of the responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by policies and plans as defined by the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The group is comprised of members from a range of organisations supporting refugees as well as staff from a number of government Departments and will deliver a Working Document in September 2018, following widespread consultation.

Of course, individual problems and issues can and do arise when any individual interacts with a service provided by the state but, in such circumstances, where complaints are made and applicants are not happy with how matters are resolved, international protection applicants now have full access to the services of the Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Children.

Following on from the improvements made arising from the recommendations in the McMahon Report, the Government has looked to further consolidate those improvements and build upon them. In particular, the decision to opt into the (recast) Reception Conditions Directive represents another major reform of the process. I am satisfied to report that the opt-in process has proceeded quickly and, on Tuesday 22 May 2018, the decision of the EU Commission confirming Ireland's opt in to the EU (Recast) Reception Directive was adopted. The decision was published in the Official Journal the following day. The opt-in process is continuing and will be concluded shortly. This will allow the European Commission to conduct its assessment of the management and conditions pertaining to our Direct Provision system and present their findings in the future.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government is committed to the on-going reform in relation to Direct Provision or any other aspect of our asylum system that may be required in order that we have a system in Ireland that reaches or exceeds the standards required by the Reception Conditions Directive and that will compare favourably with the best systems of our EU partners.

Deportation Orders Re-examination

232. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a deportation order for a person (details supplied) will be rescinded to allow them remain here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27374/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 23 April 2009.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, I must also consider all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or *non refoulement* as it is referred to) is fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership

of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

I have met the family involved and am aware of the circumstances of the case. As I have already stated in the Dáil, when the court proceedings conclude I will use my powers as Minister to consider this case fully, including from a humanitarian point of view.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal

233. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason a claim by a person (details supplied) lodged with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal in 2012 has not been resolved; and when the case will be resolved. [27390/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal administers the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted. Under the terms of the Scheme, the Tribunal is entirely independent in the matter of individual decisions on applications for compensation under the Scheme. The Deputy will appreciate that in these circumstances I cannot comment on individual cases.

If the applicant contacts the Tribunal directly with further details, they will be able to provide an update.

Immigration Policy

234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to be followed to update residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27405/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that registration and renewal of immigration permissions for Dublin City and County is carried out at its Burgh Quay Offices. To ensure customers do not have to queue for services, an online appointment booking system has been put in place.

Appointments are released Monday – Friday at 10am for dates 7 weeks in the future. A small number of near-term appointments are also released each afternoon at 2:30pm. INIS advises applicants to book an appointment up to ten weeks before their permission expires. Applicants who have not secured an appointment before the expiry of their permission should check the website at 2:30pm daily to secure an early appointment.

It is recognised that genuine emergency situations can arise and in that regard INIS has in place procedures to deal with these on a case-by-case basis. Enquiries in this regard should be addressed to *burghquayregoffice@justice.ie*.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the 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 the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Prison Suicides

235. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the protocol in regard to prisoners on suicide watch; the frequency with which they are checked; and the possessions they are permitted to keep in their cell and so on. [27410/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that strategies and plans are in place in all institutions for the prevention of suicide and self-harm. Special arrangements are in place for prisoners who have been identified as being at risk, whereby they are placed on special observation and checked every 15 minutes.

All prisoners on committal to prison receive a comprehensive health assessment which includes a risk assessment for mental health issues. Management interventions are in place to ensure the prisoner's safety, including recommendations on accommodation within the prison, observation levels to be conducted on the prisoner, and any other specific measures that may be appropriate. In such cases, further assessments may be undertaken by the National Forensic Mental Health Service, and through a multi-agency approach to managing the prisoner's needs. Where appropriate, prisoners are kept under review by both the local healthcare team and the in-reach mental health specialists, and are reviewed at a weekly multi-agency meeting. Prison Officers also receive training in mental health awareness.

There are multi-disciplinary Suicide and Harm Prevention Groups in each prison that review, report and make recommendations on instances of self-harm and death in the prisoner population. These local groups meet on a quarterly basis or as needs dictate.

At national level, a Steering Group on Suicide and Harm Prevention in the Prisoner Population, chaired by the Director General, meets four times a year. The terms of reference of the Group include the promotion of best practice in preventing and, where necessary, responding to self-harm and death in the prisoner population.

The Samaritans' Prison Listener Scheme is also available to prisoners. This scheme involves the training of selected prisoners to offer emotional support to other prisoners. The Samaritans' volunteers regularly deliver training to support prison listeners and to liaise with prison officers on the management and support of the programme. Counselling is also available to prisoners and staff who are affected by suicide.

I can advise the Deputy that a prison Governor may require a prisoner's clothing, including underwear, to be removed before the prisoner is accommodated in a Safety Observation Cell where the Governor considers that items or parts on the prisoner's clothing may be used by the prisoner to harm themselves, or others, or to cause significant damage to property. No prisoner is left without suitable clothing. Prisoners who, for the prevention in so far as possible of incidents of self harm, have had their clothing removed are provided with appropriate clothing in the interests of his or her safety and dignity.

Prison Service Staff

236. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason a person (details supplied) was removed from the payroll; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27411/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to inform the

Deputy that officials in the Prison Service have advised me that the Officer concerned was absent from rostered duty on the 25th, 26th and 27th of May 2018. I am further advised that this was an unauthorised absence and as such the Officer was not entitled to be paid pursuant to the provisions of the Civil Service Regulations Acts and was removed from payroll for that period. Following the Officer's return to work, he was restored to the payroll.

Work Permits Eligibility

237. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a stamp 4 visa; and when a decision will issue on the case. [27462/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that his question primarily concerns the issue of eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permit purposes, which is a policy matter for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. My Department has no function in the matter.

However, 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.

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.

Work Permits Eligibility

238. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the recent decision with regard to an application (details supplied); if an exception can be made to allow the applicant 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. [27482/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that his question primarily concerns the issue of eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permit purposes, which is a policy matter for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. My Department has no function in the matter.

However, 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.

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.

Commencement of Legislation

239. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when all parts of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27487/18]

240. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when section 95 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27488/18]

241. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 which have not yet been commenced; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27490/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 239 to 241, inclusive, together.

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 has not yet been commenced. Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits. To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared

draft legislative proposals that will amend the Adoptive Leave Act and will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, co-habiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.

Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 provide for parentage through donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR). The issue of the recognition of parentage for same-sex couples and their children is dealt with under Part 2 of the Act. The Minister for Health has responsibility for commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of the Act.

Other provisions of the Act which relate to DAHR have not yet been commenced as they are linked to Parts 2 and 3. The commencement of the provisions of the Act which are related to Parts 2 and 3 will be co-ordinated with the commencement of those Parts by the Minister for Health.

In this regard, the Deputy will be aware that the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill is undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health. That Bill will provide for the establishment of an Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority which will, among other things, undertake certain functions under Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.

Part 9 of the Act provides for a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004. Section 95 deals with the re-registration of the birth of a donor-conceived child on foot of a court order. 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 by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and my Department is liaising with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to scheduling the commencement of these sections.

Leave to Remain

242. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a stamp 4 application (detail supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27496/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that his question primarily concerns the issue of eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permit purposes, which is a policy matter for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. My Department has no function in the matter.

However, 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.

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.

Private Security Authority

243. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 86 of 25 January 2018, if the matter will be re-examined in view of the fact that application forms are not available online and a person (details supplied) was not provided with a form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27552/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Private Security Authority, established under the Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended), is the statutory body with responsibility for the licensing and regulation of the private security industry in the State. The Authority is an independent body under the aegis of my Department and I have no involvement in its day to day operations.

As indicated in my reply to your previous question, I am informed by the Private Security Authority that it is in the process of moving from a paper based application system to online services. While an online renewal application for applicants is available in English, an Irish language equivalent is not.

As advised previously also, the Authority has informed me that An Coimisinéir Teanga has advised it that there is no statutory obligation on the Authority to provide an online renewal service in Irish. The Authority is, however, obliged to put in place a system which allows the Authority deal with the members of the public who wish to make their licence application through Irish. To satisfy this obligation, I am advised that the Authority provides an application form in Irish to facilitate any such licence applicants.

I understand that the Authority provided the individual in question with an Irish version of the application form following the expiry of their last licence. The Authority informs me that the completed application form has not been received to date and they have sent the Irish version of this application form again to allow the person in question apply for a licence renewal. On receipt of the completed application form the Authority will process the application.

Immigration Status

244. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27553/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that an acknowledgement to the request referred to by the Deputy was issued on 18 May 2018.

This request is currently under consideration and INIS expects to be in a position to write to the person concerned in due course.

All such requests are dealt with in chronological order and due to the large volume received, it is not possible to give a specific timeframe for a decision on this particular request.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the

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

Question No. 245 answered with Question No. 231.

Visa Applications

246. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the options available for a person (detail supplied) to extend their stay here following a working holiday visa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27582/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to is here on a Working Holiday Authorisation and has permission to remain until 15 July 2018.

In relation to the Working Holiday Authorisation, I wish to draw your attention to its Terms and Conditions as published on www.dfa.ie which states that '...Permission to those entering Ireland on the basis of a Working Holiday Authorisation shall be valid for a maximum of twenty four (24) months from the date of entry into Ireland...' and that '... Extensions to the period of validity of such permission shall not be granted. Participants must leave Ireland on the expiration of their permission, which can not be extended nor renewed.'

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

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a new application for family reunification has been received in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27656/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the spouse of the person referred to is the subject of a valid Deportation Order made on 20 June 2002.

Representations were received, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, including all representations made around family reunification, the Deportation Order was affirmed on 9 November 2017.

As previously stated, having checked records in INIS, there are no outstanding Family Reunification applications in respect of the person concerned.

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.

EU Directives

248. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the engagement that has taken place between him, his Department and the implementation group with civil society organisations and-or NGOs in relation to the detail of Ireland's opt-in to the EU reception conditions directive; the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27671/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government responded to the views of members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, members of the Justice McMahon Group and from NGOs and civil society organisations by deciding to opt-into the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU). The views of all relevant stakeholders were therefore well-known.

To facilitate the practical arrangements for the opt-in and the compliance process led by the European Commission, the Government established a cross-Departmental Implementation Group. This Group was available to meet with stakeholders throughout the process. An information session on the process and on the interim arrangements for access to the labour market introduced from 9 February 2018 was hosted by my Department officials on 23 January 2018. All NGOs identified as working in this area were invited to attend. Members of the Implementation Group from other Government Departments and services were also in attendance and available to respond to any questions raised.

Residency Permits

249. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if permissions to reside here will be renewed on a temporary basis for Venezuelan nationals based on their most recent passport even if they are out of date for less than two years and in cases in which the applicant can prove that they have applied to renew their passport, in view of the chaotic situation in that country which means that many passports cannot be renewed at this time even though valid applications for same have been made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27694/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that it considers the renewal of an immigration permission of a person who does not hold a valid passport, if that person can give a satisfactory explanation of any circumstances that may prevent them from producing a valid passport, subject of course to all other aspects being in order. Each case is considered on its individual circumstances.

I am further advised that in practice such a person may be granted a temporary immigration permission for up to six months, subject to them providing evidence that they have applied to their National Authorities for a renewal of their passport.

Garda Vetting

250. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are procedures in place under the Garda vetting rules whereby a person with a previous record for offences is not required to be disclosed due to the long period of time when those offences occurred or if they continue permanently on the record and in situations in which the person involved was an adult and the offences were committed in the period 2011 to 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27737/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the primary purpose of Garda vetting for employment purposes is to support protection for children and vulnerable adults. It is carried out by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant laws. Neither I nor my Department has any role in the processing of vetting applications.

The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 sets out the arrangements in law whereby certain past convictions may not be disclosed and may be regarded as spent. This Act made a series of amendments to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 in respect of the arrangements for the disclosure or otherwise of past convictions in the context of the vetting process.

These provisions are applied by the National Vetting Bureau in the context of processing all vetting applications.

Generally speaking, the Act provides that in certain circumstances and in respect of certain offences a person is not obliged to disclose convictions which are over seven years old. I would emphasise that these arrangements are subject to specified limitations and these are detailed in the 2016 Act.

Deportation Orders Re-examination

251. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 228 of 19 June 2018 (details supplied), if representations sent on the person's behalf on 12 and 19 June 2018 have been received in the relevant section of his Department in view of the fact they were representations submitted in reply to his Department's letter of 30 May 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27781/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been received and acknowledged on behalf of the person concerned.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

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

INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders Re-examination

252. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider altering his response to an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27791/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 23 April 2009.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, the Minister of the day must also consider all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or non refoulement as it is referred to) is fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

I have met the family involved and am aware of the circumstances of the case. As I have already stated in the Dáil, when the court proceedings conclude I will use my powers as Minister to consider this case fully, including from a humanitarian point of view.

Foireann Roinne

253. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27811/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Tá post lánaimseartha amháin ag mo Roinn, post Aistritheora, a bhfuil sé riachtanach go mbeadh an sealbhóir dátheangach go feidhmiúil sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla. Tá an post sin coibhéiseach le grád an Phríomhoifigigh Chúnta. Cuidíonn an tAistritheoir, a mbaineann a phríomhról le Rialacha Cúirte a aistriú go Gaeilge, leis an Roinn maidir le cúrsaí Gaeilge i gcoitinne, chomh maith. Déanann sé formhór a chuid oibre trí Ghaeilge.

Ina theannta sin, tá cohórt de 45 oifigeach sa Roinn atá ar fáil chun seirbhísí a sholáthar (is é sin, ceisteanna agus fiosruithe a fhreagairt) as Gaeilge. Déanann mo Roinn oiliúint agus tacaíocht a thairiscint do na hoifigigh go léir ar mian leo a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fhorbairt.

Naturalisation Applications

254. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the 42 day rule, that is, being out of the country for more than 42 days, in place for those applying for naturalisation; the rationale for the rule; if this rule is underpinned in legislation; if this rule is made clear to those seeking to apply for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27832/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. I can only make a determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation after an application for naturalisation has been received.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The Act provides that I can as Minister, in my absolute discretion, grant an application for naturalisation if satisfied that the statutory conditions set out in the Act, which include residency conditions, are met.

The statutory residence conditions are that, regardless of how long an applicant may have resided in the State, the applicant must have a period of 1 year's continuous residence in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the 8 years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence amounting to 4 years (in the case of an application based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the Act reduces this further period to 2 years during the preceding 4 years).

While the Act clearly stipulates the statutory periods of residence required in the State, and that the final year be continuous residence, it has long been recognised that many people may travel abroad for a holiday, or may have some unexpected or unavoidable reason to travel abroad. In this regard it is considered that a reasonable and generous period of up to 6 weeks be allowed to provide for absences from the State for normal holidays and other short term and temporary nature absences, such as for business meetings or a family wedding or bereavement or medical emergency while abroad, and that such short term nature absence from the State would not impact on the statutory residence requirement. I as Minister may allow some further discretion where there are wholly exceptional or unavoidable circumstances.

In the notes attached to the application form it is made clear to applicants that arrangements for assessment of residence are on the basis that the person is physically resident in the State for the required period of time and that where there are significant absences from the State the application may be refused.

Every application for naturalisation is considered on its own merits having regard to the statutory conditions set out in the Act.

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.

Leave to Remain

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

[27858/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the persons concerned have requested permission to remain in the State. These applications are currently under consideration and it is anticipated that decisions on these cases will issue 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.

Court Accommodation Provision

256. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 204 of 8 May 2018, when the promised review of the future delivery of court services in the District Court area of Kilcock is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27868/18]

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

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that it is still currently concentrating on the development or refurbishment of courthouses at a number of provincial city/county town venues. As part of a major Public Private Partnership initiative, new courthouses have been delivered at Drogheda, Letterkenny, Wexford, Limerick, Waterford and Cork since June 2017 with a further courthouse in Mullingar to be delivered in the coming months.

The Courts Service has further advised that on completion of this major programme of work there are 5 provincial city/county town venues still in need of major investment in court facilities, these being Tralee, Galway, Wicklow, Portlaoise and Roscommon. The Courts Service has confirmed that collectively these cities and towns will be the next priority for investment in courthouse facilities outside of the capital under the Courts Service provincial capital building programme. The Courts Service is also considering the development of Courts facilities in other smaller locations.

As the Deputy is aware, Kilcock Courthouse was closed in July 2016 on health and safety grounds and District Court sittings were transferred to Naas. The Courts Service has informed me that it plans to review the future delivery of court services in the District Court area of Kilcock in the near future and that this will include a local consultation process but no date has yet been fixed for the commencement of this review.

Departmental Properties

257. **Deputy Peadar Kirby** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the use of land at a location (details supplied). [27913/18]

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.

At present, there is a small Community Service site operational at Thornton Hall. The work concentrates on operational horticultural projects with the produce being distributed to Charitable Organisations.

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.

Garda Information and Communications Technology

258. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if members of An Garda Síochána have remote access to the PULSE system for example on laptops or desktops from home and so on; if members of An Garda Síochána have access to the PULSE system on work issued mobile devices; the Garda Síochána data and information resources and or systems that members have remote access to outside of their work stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27920/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Significant investment is being made by the Government in Garda ICT. Some €342 million, including €217 million in additional funding under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting-edge technologies in the fight against crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda equipment and resources, including remote and/or mobile access to Garda ICT systems are a matter for the Garda Commissioner. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the current position is that Garda members above the rank of Superintendent are provided with remote access to ICT Systems by way of secure virtual desktop infrastructure. This facility is also extended to Inspectors in an acting

Superintendent capacity and to Civilian Directors/Managers.

I am informed that members below this rank or grade are only provided with this remote facility to ICT services after consideration of a business case in that regard.

More generally, I can confirm that An Garda Síochána is currently developing a mobile strategy for operational uses as part of the Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Garda mobility strategy aims to provide front-line members with greater connectivity to back-office systems, harnessing the power of mobile technology.

I am further informed that it is intended that mobile devices will enable Garda members and staff to be more efficient and effective by having mobile access to relevant core policing applications, a wide-range of up-to-date information and the ability to input and update information in real time. It is also intended to facilitate greater quality of data input, accountability, transparency and governance. This project is currently being piloted in Limerick Division.

Garda Strength

259. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí stationed at Clondalkin, Lucan, Ronanstown, Ballyfermot and Rathcoole; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27923/18]

260. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of community gardaí stationed at Clondalkin, Lucan, Ronanstown, Ballyfermot and Rathcoole; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27924/18]

261. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda Reserves stationed at Clondalkin, Lucan, Ronanstown, Ballyfermot and Rathcoole; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27925/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 259 to 261, inclusive, together.

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.

The Garda stations referred to form part of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (D.M.R) West Division. I am informed by the Commissioner that the number of Gardaí assigned to that Division on 31 May 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available, was 671, of whom 68 are community Gardaí. There are also 26 Garda Reserves and 55 Garda civilian staff attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000

Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am 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 of whom 194 were assigned to the D.M.R. West Division including 39 from the recent attestation which took place on the 15 June. 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. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, 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 2018.

In addition, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Division, including the D.M.R. West Division.

In relation to the number of “Community Gardaí” it is important to recognise that community policing is not a specialist role in An Garda Síochána; rather it is the case that all Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. The official categorisation as a “Community Garda” simply refers to those who are exclusively assigned to building relationships with local communities including through the giving of talks to schools, community groups and others. It is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available to him or her having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs.

I am assured by the Commissioner that the Garda National Model of Community Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs. Overall the Model advocates a partnership based, pro-active, community-orientated style of policing. It is focused on crime prevention, problem-solving and law enforcement, with a view to building trust and enhancing the quality of life of the entire community. Clear objectives are set, such as high visibility in the community, ease of contact by members of the public, and enhanced support for crime prevention strategies.

As part of the Community Policing Model An Garda Síochána work in partnership with local communities, to prevent and deter crime through initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch, Community Alert, Text Alert and the Garda Schools Programme as well as through more formal structures such as Joint Policing Committees.

The Community Policing Model also places a strong emphasis on Crime Prevention and within each Garda Division, where there are specialist Crime Prevention Officers (CPOs), who are trained to encourage, promote and advise on crime prevention within communities.

In addition, the National Community Policing Office, attached to the Garda Community En-

agement Bureau, captures best practice in community policing initiatives and disseminates these practices through its communication network.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out in the following table the number of Gardaí, Garda Reserves and Community Gardaí assigned to Clondalkin, Lucan, Ronanstown, Ballyfermot and Rathcoole Garda Stations as of 31 May 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

Number of Garda, Community Garda and Garda Reserves as of 31 May 2018

Stations	Total number of Gardaí - each Garda has a role in community policing	No. who are exclusively engaged in Community Gardaí	Reserve Gardaí
Clondalkin	96	8	2
Lucan	69	8	10
Ronanstown	92	11	3
Ballyfermot	82	6	2
Rathcoole	14	1	0

Anti-Social Behaviour

262. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of anti-social behaviour prosecutions issued in the Dublin metropolitan west division in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27926/18]

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

Departmental Staff Data

263. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if personnel in his Department have been removed from their positions, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27955/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): All employees are assessed under the performance management system and newly appointed employees must complete a one year probationary period.

I can inform the Deputy that five staff have had their employment terminated in my Department in the past four years, one established officer and four officers who were on probation, in relation to attendance and performance issues.

Traffic Management

264. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in the roll-out of red light running cameras in Dublin city other than at the junction

of Benburb Street and Blackhall Place; the timeline for progress; the proposed locations for a further roll-out; and the number of different types of vehicles found breaking the traffic signals in the past year for which figures are available. [27971/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by An Garda Síochána that responsibility for the matters raised in the Deputy's question is jointly held by Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority. The role of An Garda Síochána in relation to these matters is to perform its statutory function in prosecuting offenders identified by the device installed at the location referenced by the Deputy.

I am further advised by the Garda authorities that the cameras, which were installed at the location to which the Deputy refers, were installed as part of a pilot project under the auspices of Dublin City Council, and that the pilot period has now ended. An Garda Síochána is not aware of current plans by any local authority to introduce such devices at any other locations.

I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the statistics sought by the Deputy and I will be in contact with the Deputy directly on receipt of this report.

National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy

265. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress on each action outlined in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27974/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) Steering Group has been tasked with the development and oversight of the implementation of the actions contained in the strategy. Since the launch of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy in June 2017, the NTRIS Steering Group has met four times - on 2 August 2017, 18 October 2017, 13 December 2017 and 28 March 2018. The next meeting is planned for 4 July 2018. To date, work has begun on about 130 of the 149 Actions included in the Strategy. The Steering Group will continue to monitor progress on these Actions and to focus on actions where progress has not yet commenced.

Three sub-committees have been set up to report back to the Steering Group on specific issues:

- The sub-committee on the issue of data collection on ethnic grounds has met three times. Departments have been asked to indicate whether or not they are collecting ethnic data and, if so, the categories of such data being collected. Responses are still awaited from some Departments.

- The sub-committee to deal with the issue of the retention of Traveller and Roma children in education has met four times. At the meeting on 8 March 2018 it was agreed that a pilot project would be undertaken in each of the TUSLA Education Welfare Services regions – South/South East – Wexford, West/North West – Galway, North Dublin/North Leinster – North County Dublin and South Dublin/Kildare/West Wicklow – Tallaght, Clondalkin. Each area will have the additional resource of an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), Home School Liaison Coordinator (HSCL) and 2 Traveller/Roma Education Workers. The team will work together with parents, children and young people, schools, Traveller and Roma communities and service providers to improve Traveller and Roma children's attendance, participation and retention in education.

- The third sub-committee was set up to deal with the problem of feuding in the Traveller Community, and has met three times. A proposal from the Traveller Mediation Service for addressing this issue through an expanded mediation service is currently being examined.

In addition to this information, I have asked my officials to forward a detailed tabular report on progress on all of the actions in the NTRIS to the Deputy.

Garda Transport Data

266. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked Garda cars and vans allocated to the Kildare Garda division as of 31 December 2016 and 2017 and 8 June 2018 respectively. [27989/18]

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 understand that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the table below outlines the number of marked and unmarked Garda cars and vans allocated to the Kildare Garda Division for the dates requested by the Deputy.

Year	Cars			Vans		
	Marked	Unmarked	Total	Marked	Unmarked	Total
2016	23	17	40	8	3	11
2017	23	19	42	9	3	12
2018 (as at 15 June)	21	18	39	10	3	13

Firearms Seizures

267. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of firearms recovered in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by rifles, handguns, shotguns and other firearms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28064/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A report from the Garda Commissioner has been sought in relation to the number of firearms, by type, recovered in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018

I will write to the Deputy with a full reply when the information sought has been received.

Work Permits Eligibility

268. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans in relation to allowing persons seeking asylum here the right to meaningful, unrestricted work while their application is being considered; when such plans will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28066/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): From 9 February 2018, when section 16(3)(b) International Protection Act 2015 was struck down by the Supreme Court, until the date of entry into force of the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive, any eligible International Protection applicants can access the employment permit system on the same basis as other non-EEA nationals. The interim arrangements for the short period prior to the opt-in enables those seeking international protection to access the labour market through the Employment Permit Acts. Employment permits are the remit of the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation and I have no remit or authority in this area.

Following Government approval, I used my executive powers to introduce an administrative scheme to allow (from the date the Supreme Court struck down the prohibition), for an additional access to the labour market not provided for under the employment permit system. This also allowed eligible applicants to activate their qualification for such access which will continue under any new scheme to be announced. This current interim scheme provides for eligible applicants for international protection (i.e. those in the system for over nine months without a first instance recommendation), to engage in self-employment. As on 21 June 2018, the total number of applications for self-employment received under this scheme is 752, of which 523 have been granted.

The arrangements that are currently in place are interim arrangements pending the completion of the process to opt-in to the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive. The opt-in process has proceeded quickly and, on Tuesday 22 May 2018, the decision of the EU Commission confirming Ireland's opt in to the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive was adopted. The decision was published in the Official Journal the following day. The implementation group, chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality and with representatives from all relevant Departments and Agencies, is finalising the details of the more permanent arrangements, which will include less restrictive access to different categories of work than the employment permits regime which applies in the interim period. It is expected that the more permanent and broader labour market access arrangements will be in place upon the completion of the transposing measures from the end of June this year.

Prison Service

269. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the prisons which are remand prisons; if remand prisoners can be transferred to another prison; the person that must request such a transfer; and the person or body that authorises it. [28076/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that Courts can commit remand prisoners to Cloverhill, Cork, Limerick, Portlaoise, Mountjoy female and Castlereagh Prisons.

I wish to further advise the Deputy that remand prisoners can be transferred to other pris-

ons and that such applications for a transfer can be made by a wide number of individuals but primarily are made by prison governors and prisoners themselves. All such applications are considered by my officials in the Irish Prison Service and any decisions arising are made on my behalf by those officials.

Prisoners Treatment

270. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the conditions remand prisoners are kept in; the entitlements prisoners while on remand to visits, wearing their own clothes and exercise and so on. [28077/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the detention of unconvicted prisoners is conducted in accord with SI 252 of 2007 (the Prison Rules) which outlines the various entitlements of such prisoners, including clothing, family visits, professional visits. Full details on the range of such entitlements are contained in the SI 252 of 2007 (the Prison Rules) which are available on the Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie.

I wish to further advise the Deputy that, insofar as is operationally possible, the majority of unconvicted prisoners are held in Cloverhill Prison. However, prisoners are also transferred to other prisons in order to alleviate overcrowding in that prison.

Work Permits Eligibility

271. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to review employment permit regulations to include the role of health-care assistants; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27396/18]

292. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she plans to take to regularise the status of migrant care workers working here that come from outside the EEA and the EU; her plans to change the rules to allow care workers from outside the EU and EEA to work legally here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28011/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 271 and 292 together.

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 occupation lists for the purpose of grant of 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, coordinated by the National Skills Council, the annual National Skills Bul-

letin and the annual Vacancy Overview Report in tandem with a public consultation process.

Care workers are currently included on the ineligible list of employments. In order to remove a skill from this list, there would need to be a clear demonstration that recruitment difficulties are solely due to shortages and not to other factors such as salary and/or working conditions. Organisations in the relevant sector would need to provide the necessary data to substantiate their claims. A detailed business case for removal of care workers from the ineligible list, based on this detailed data, would then need to be put forward by the Department of Health, as the lead Department for the sector, to my Department.

I am aware that my colleague, Minister of State Daly, with special responsibility for Older People, has had various meetings with the nursing home sector and this matter has been discussed. To date, such detailed evidence has yet to be provided by the sector to his Department. However, I understand Minister Daly is willing to work with the industry on this important issue to ensure continuity of service in the best interests of residents.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

272. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits that have taken place to Castlerea, County Roscommon, in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27417/18]

273. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits that have taken place to Boyle, County Roscommon, in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27418/18]

275. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits that have taken place to Tarmonbarry and or the Clondra area of Counties Roscommon and Longford in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27457/18]

276. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits that have taken place to Rooskey, County Roscommon, in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27458/18]

277. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA site visits that have taken place to Roscommon town in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27459/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 272, 273 and 275 to 277, inclusive, together.

IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties of Ireland to its client base. It is important to remember, however, that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the company concerned. It is also the case that site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new foreign direct investment (FDI) comes from existing IDA Ireland client companies.

Data on IDA Ireland site visits is collated on a county-by-county basis. Information on site

visits to particular towns is therefore unavailable. In 2017, County Longford hosted seven site visits with County Roscommon hosting three site visits by IDA client companies.

The table below outlines the number of site visits by IDA client companies to Counties Longford and Roscommon from 2012 to Q1 2018.

County	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Q1 2018
Longford	0	0	0	2	6	7	0
Roscommon	0	4	0	2	1	3	0

EU Legislation

274. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a submission by an organisation (details supplied) with regard to the transposition of the EU Trade Secrets Directive and the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. [27421/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): EU Directive 2016/943 on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure has been transposed by way of S.I. No. 188 of 2018 which was laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 June 2018. The Regulations, made under the 1972 European Communities Act, provide for civil redress measures and remedies in the event a trade secret is unlawfully acquired, used or disclosed.

During the course of my Department's transposition of the Directive, it received the submission referred to by the Deputy. Both my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which sponsored the Protected Disclosures legislation, obtained legal advice to the effect the Directive imposes a requirement of a subjective public interest test and that the transposing legislation should amend the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 by adding a requirement that a "protected disclosure" coming within Article 5 (b) of the Directive i.e. a disclosure involving revealing misconduct, wrongdoing or illegal activity, must be made for the purpose of protecting the public interest. Accordingly the S.I. contains such an amendment so that Ireland achieves a full transposition of the Directive.

Questions Nos. 275 to 277, inclusive, answered with Question No. 272.

IDA Ireland Staff

278. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of individual contractors employed by the IDA; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27543/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): There are eight externally contracted people currently employed by IDA Ireland. This figure includes six people engaged via recruitment agencies and two freelancers/sole traders.

The Enterprise agencies under my remit are provided with an overall pay ceiling within which they have some flexibility to align their staffing resources to manage their overall operations and priorities. Staffing resources are reviewed as an ongoing priority to ensure my Department's continued ability to facilitate the wide mission and volume of work in a range of challenging policy areas.

When responding to individual key strategic priorities and individual workforce planning

exercises, each Agency including IDA Ireland works with my Department to ensure they remain within agreed pay-budget limits.

Enterprise Ireland Staff

279. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of individual contractors employed by Enterprise Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27544/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the agency responsible for helping Irish companies to scale, innovate and succeed in global markets.

EI utilises contractors to provide key short-term functions. The agency uses a tendering process to select contractors, and these contractors then perform a variety of functions. An example of the kind of tasks that these contractors perform includes sitting on evaluation and analysis panels for client supports such as the Competitive Start Fund or the R&D Fund, providing expert input into the process. Contractors have also provided support on key capabilities for client companies, helping to address client companies' individual weaknesses and areas for improvement. This is in line with EI's aim of developing strong, resilient companies that can withstand the challenges and avail of the opportunities posed by Brexit.

Since 1 January 2017, there have been 22 individuals contracted by EI for services. This number does not include companies or self-employed persons operating through a third party (not PAYE), or mentors, for example.

Enterprise Ireland Staff

280. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of employees in Enterprise Ireland in salary brackets (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27545/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland (EI) supports companies in every region of Ireland to start and scale, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and in the future. In order to help its clients achieve employment growth in the context of a rapidly changing marketplace, EI uses a developmental approach across all aspects of clients' needs, including business development, sales and marketing capabilities, innovation and R&D activity, technology development, continuous competitiveness and lean improvements, leadership and management development, and access to finance.

EI has changed significantly in recent years. The agency has developed and adopted new business models for working with its clients and implemented new approaches to deliver services. EI needs to have the necessary skills, experience and expertise to enable them to work effectively with their clients and stakeholders and successfully deliver key objectives.

I am committed to working closely with EI so that the Agency is best-placed to optimise the growth potential that now exists for Irish companies to continue being a primary driver of economic growth and prosperity in Ireland.

TABLE 1: Number of Employees in EI by Salary Bracket*

Enterprise Ireland Employees by Salary Bracket June 2018

Salary Bracket €	Number of Staff
0 - 23,000	30
23,001- 30,000	72
30,001 - 40,000	43
40,001 - 50,000	92
50,001 - 60,000	31
60,001 - 80,000	141
80,001 - 100,000	188
100,001 -150,000	35
150,001 >	4
Total	636

*Please note the figures do not include local overseas staff.

IDA Ireland Staff

281. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of employees in the IDA in salary brackets (details supplied), in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27546/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Enterprise agencies under my remit are provided with an overall pay ceiling within which they have some flexibility to align their staffing resources to manage their overall operations and priorities. Staffing resources are reviewed as an ongoing priority to ensure my Department's continued ability to facilitate the wide mission and volume of work in a range of challenging policy areas.

When responding to individual key strategic priorities and individual workforce planning exercises, each Agency including IDA Ireland works with my Department to ensure they remain within agreed pay-budget limits.

The table outlines the number of employees in IDA Ireland in salary brackets ranging from €0-€23,000 to above €150,000.

SALARY LEVEL - 2017	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
€0 – €23,000	15
€23,000 - €30,000	12
€30,000 - €40,000	18
€40,000 - €50,000	55
€50,000 - €60,000	25
€60,000 - €70,000	42
€70,000 - €80,000	26
€80,000 - €90,000	31
€90,000 - €100,000	6
€100,000 - €110,000	5
€110,000 - €120,000	-
€120,000 - €130,000	-

SALARY LEVEL - 2017	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
€130,000 - €140,000	1
€140,000 - €150,000	4
€150,000 - €160,000	2
€160,000 - €170,000	-
€170,000 - €180,000	1

IDA Ireland Site Visits

282. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits undertaken by chairs of Enterprise Ireland and the IDA to counties Westmeath and Longford from 1 July 2017 to date in 2018; if visits or introductions to the facilities available at a location (details supplied) have taken place in the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27682/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The IDA Ireland Business & Technology Park located in Mallinstown, Mullingar, Co Westmeath consists of c.22.5 hectares (c.55.6 acres). The park is fully zoned and serviced and currently has one IDA client located there, namely Patterson Pumps. Patterson is an engineering company that manufactures industrial pumps and employs approximately 40 people.

IDA Ireland continues to market the Business & Technology Park through its network of overseas offices and having a client on the business park provides a positive reference for other potential investors.

Data on IDA Ireland site visits is collated on a county-by-county basis. Information on site visits to particular locations is therefore unavailable. There were 58 site visits to the Midland Counties of Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly in 2017 and seven visits in Q1 2018. All of these site visits were accompanied by an IDA Ireland Executive. Enterprise Ireland does not conduct site visits.

There are 34 multinational companies based in the Midlands, employing 4,327 people across the Region. In County Westmeath, foreign direct investment (FDI) has performed well, the county has 17 companies employing 2,794 people with three of these companies employing approximately 150 people in Mullingar. IDA Ireland actively engages with its existing client base to support them in growing their business to retain jobs and expand their existing footprint in the region.

The IDA is involved in a number of initiatives to attract FDI to Westmeath and Longford. A digital marketing campaign is in place to market the Midlands Region for potential investors showcasing potential locations including Mullingar and Longford. The Agency also maintains regular engagement with the Chief Executives of Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly County Councils to attract further investment to the region.

We recognise that there is room for improvement in Midlands and we are working hard, across Government, to further unlock the economic potential of the region. The Enterprise Agencies remain pivotal to this and they continue to engage with their clients, and with one another, to create jobs and source new investment for the region.

The table below outlines the number of site visits by IDA client companies to Counties Longford and Westmeath from 2013 to Q1 2018.

County	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Q1 2018
Longford	0	0	2	6	7	0
Westmeath	9	12	28	36	42	3

Work Permits Data

283. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications for employment permits from asylum seekers that have been made in the past three months; and the number of successful applications. [27714/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): From February 9th 2018, when section 16(3)(b) International Protection Act 2015 was struck down by the Supreme Court, until the date of entry into force of the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive, any eligible international protection applicants can access the employment permit system on the same basis as other non-EEA nationals. The opt-in process, involving formal discussions with the European Commission to ensure compliance with each aspect of the Directive, is expected to be completed in the near future. The interim arrangements for the short period prior to the opt-in enables those seeking international protection to access the labour market through the Employment Permit Acts.

The Employment Permits Section of my Department inform me that two applications for employment permits have been received from International Protection applicants. One application has been withdrawn by the applicant and the other application is currently being processed.

The Department of Justice and Equality advise that on 9th February 2018 it established a self-employment scheme for those who have sought International Protection in Ireland that are waiting more than nine months for a first instance decision on their application.

As of Friday 22nd June 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality had received 754 applications for self-employment and 525 of those applications had been granted.

Foireann Roinne

284. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Gnó, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27800/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Tá 898 duine fostaithe i mo Roinn faoi láthair. Toisc go bhfuil éileamh íseal ar sheirbhísí a fháil trí mheán na gaeilge i mo Roinn, níl postanna daingnithe nó aitheanta ina mbeidh gá le gaeilge mar riachtanas ann.

Tá an Roinn tiomanta go hiomlán don Scéim Teanga 2015-2018, a ullmhaíodh de bhun Alt 15 d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. Cuireann an scéim seo le prionsabail na Seirbhísí Ardchaighdeáin do Chustaiméirí agus le Cairt Chustaiméirí na Roinne, lena chinntiú nach mbeidh aon constaic roimh chustaiméirí na Roinne ar mian leo a ghnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge. I gcomhréir leis an Scéim seo, tá mo Roinn tiomanta do measúnú a dhéanamh ar bhonn leanúnach ar an éileamh ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge ar bhealach beartaithe, comhleanúnach ina mbeidh teacht ag daoine air.

I 2017, iniúchadh an tAonad um Fhoghlaim agus um Fhorbairt sa Roinn an méid cainteoirí

Gaeilge i measc líon foirne na Roinne. Léirigh an t-iniúchadh sin go raibh 10 baill foirne agus iad inniúl ar an nGaeilge agus 5 eile ar cainteoirí líofa iad. Anuas ar sin, lena chinntiú go bhfuil mo Roinn i gcónaí in ann seirbhísí ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar don phobal trí mheán na Gaeilge, tugann an tAonad sin deiseanna do fhostaithe na Roinne cúrsaí Gaeilge a dhéanamh le OneLearning chun a scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú. Táthar ag cur na hoiliúna sin ar fáil le go mbeidh cohórt ball foirne ar fáil againn chun cabhrú le haonaid ghnó freagra a thabhairt do chliant ar mian leo cumarsáid a dhéanamh leis an Roinn trí Ghaeilge. I dtaca leis an sprioc sin, tá 17 baill foirne tar éis cúrsa oiliúna a dhéanamh nó a chríochnú i mbliana (féach thíos).

Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil

Leibhéal	Líon Foirne
Leibhéal 4	11
Leibhéal 5	1
Leibhéal 6	3
Cúrsa bunleibhéil ar líne	2
Iomlán	17

Faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, tá treoir faighte ag an Roinn dréachtscéim nua a ullmhú agus a chur faoi bhráid mo chomhleacaí, an t-Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht & Gaeltachta, níos déanaí i mbliana. Leis an scéim nua, cuimseofar an tréimhse 2019-2022 agus cuirfear leis na gealltanais a rinneadh i scéim gaeilge reatha na Roinne. Agus an dréachtscéim nua á ullmhú, cuireadh comhairliúchán poiblí ar bun ar na mallaibh agus cuirfear gach aon aighneacht faighte san áireamh mar chuid den phróiseas sin.

Brexit Issues

285. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will commission an independent report into the economic benefits a united Ireland economy would bring to the island of Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27862/18]

286. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has examined or is planning to examine the potential benefits a united Ireland would bring to business across the island of Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27863/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285 and 286 together.

Over the past year, and currently, my Department is focused on undertaking Brexit-related analysis to ensure that we continue to provide the supports required by Irish based enterprises as they navigate the uncertainties and challenges posed by Brexit. For example, we have undertaken research in relation to economic impacts, commissioned from Copenhagen Economics, implications arising for skills in a post Brexit context, firm level insights into the implications at a sector specific level, implications for imports as well as surveying SMEs in relation to Brexit. Intertrade Ireland also undertook research on the potential impact of WTO tariffs, and on cross border trade and supply chain linkages supported by my Department. This ongoing analyses serves to inform policy in an evolving environment so that we meet the needs of businesses throughout the country, and help to inform ongoing negotiations. Our agencies continue to work closely with companies to tailor supports to meet their needs, and to capture opportunities to attract mobile investment.

I have no plans to commission research in relation to a united Ireland economy.

IDA Ireland Supports

287. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the action the IDA has taken in 2018 to assist the owners of a site (details supplied) to identify a suitable replacement industry for the site; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27871/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Hewlett Packard (HP) site is not in IDA Ireland ownership. The Agency is aware that HP has engaged agents CBRE, to handle the sale of the site and building in Leixlip, which has been on the open market since July 2017. The IDA continues to engage with the owner about its potential sale and is actively drawing the attention of its clients to the property.

Economic Competitiveness

288. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps being taken to address Ireland's reducing competitiveness; the measures or initiatives planned to reduce the cost of doing business here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27910/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland's competitiveness ranking, as benchmarked by the Institute for Management Development in its 2018 Yearbook, declined from 6th to 12th most competitive economy in the world. After several years of improvement, the decline in Ireland's overall ranking is disappointing. Despite the fall in competitiveness, Ireland's competitiveness performance remains positive. The IMD Report shows that Ireland is the 3rd most competitive economy in the Euro area and the World Bank's most recent "Doing Business 2018" report ranks Ireland the 17th most competitive economy out of 190 countries.

The IMD report is a timely reminder of the importance of remaining competitive in a global environment. It is important to continuously implement policies to improve our performance further considering significant challenges in the external environment, particularly Brexit. That is why we are continually examining how we can improve on factors that are crucial to improving our competitiveness, including our cost base, infrastructure and the availability of talent and innovation.

Enterprise 2025 Renewed - which I launched in March - placed an increased emphasis on enhancing our competitiveness position by developing our Irish owned enterprises. There is a strong focus on taking action that will embed resilience in our enterprise base. We are placing a spotlight on innovation and on skills. Enterprise Ireland also places a strong emphasis on competitiveness. It supports exporting enterprises with initiatives in Lean, RD&I, and management development. The Agency helps enterprises to take a strategic approach to understanding and responding to potential implications arising from Brexit and assists them to enter into new markets and diversify their export base. The Local Enterprise Offices offer a suite of supports to enhance the competitiveness of small and micro enterprises. Initiatives include mentoring, innovation vouchers, Lean Start and access to a Brexit diagnostic and guidance.

Addressing Ireland's cost competitiveness remains a key economic priority for Government and we continue to monitor Ireland's cost competitiveness on a regular basis. The Costs of

Doing Business in Ireland 2018 Report, published by the National Competitiveness Council on 1st June, found that the cost base for enterprise is internationally competitive across a range of metrics (e.g. the cost of starting a business, communications costs and average income taxes). Despite these improvements, Ireland remains a relatively high cost location and cost pressures are evident in property, credit, labour and business service costs.

Government is committed to taking action to address unnecessarily high costs (i.e. cost and price levels not justified by productivity) wherever they arise. A range of initiatives set out in the Action Plan for Jobs are in train across Government Departments to improve the ease of doing business, reduce the administrative burden, enhance our cost competitiveness and productivity, and drive greater efficiencies across the enterprise base. Through the Action Plan for Education and Pathways to Work the Government is working to ensure the pipeline of talent can meet the demand for labour to reduce labour cost pressure. The ongoing work of the Personal Injuries Commission, the implementation of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance and the complementary work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group should help to reduce insurance costs for businesses. In March, I launched the Brexit Loan Scheme which will make €300 million available to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees at an interest rate of 4% or less. Rebuilding Ireland Plan presents a wide-ranging set of commitments to address housing supply, and while many of these will take time, the Government is implementing and driving change.

In terms of ensuring our cost competitiveness, there is a role for both the public and private sectors alike to proactively manage the controllable portion of their respective cost bases, drive efficiency and continue to take action to address unnecessarily high costs. Such actions will ensure that improvements in relative cost competitiveness are more sustainable, leaving Ireland better positioned to cope with external shocks.

Foreign Direct Investment

289. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the action she is taking to attract foreign direct investment in view the fact that Ireland is included in the EU top ten for attracting foreign direct investment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27918/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am proud that Ireland continues to perform very strongly in terms of attracting FDI. It is a huge achievement that there are now over 210,000 people employed in IDA Ireland client companies here. The fact that the Agency has surpassed its overall five-year target of 209,000 within three years is further evidence of Ireland's success in growing the level of employment by multinationals here.

I am especially pleased to see that of the 237 overseas investments made in 2017, a record number of 111 were from new companies investing in Ireland for the first time. This reflects the health of the pipeline of foreign direct investment (FDI) here. The mid-year results for 2018 indicate that we can continue to rely on the selling points that make investing in Ireland so attractive in the first place.

Ireland's overall FDI offering which despite an increasingly competitive global environment, remains very attractive to overseas companies. Multinational companies invest in Ireland for many reasons, not just one. Ireland has a strong pool of highly skilled workers and a first-class education system that produces top-level graduates.

Our country benefits as well from favourable demographics – over 40% of our population

is under 29. Ireland's membership of the EU is another key selling point. When companies establish operations here, they immediately benefit from barrier-free access to an EU market of over 500 million consumers. Ireland is simply a great place to do business: we offer strong incentives for research and development, a rich talent pool and a stable and competitive corporation tax regime.

However we are not complacent and the Government is continuing to work hard to consolidate this country's traditional strength in terms of talent productivity and export competitiveness. Ireland's ability to remain competitive in attracting FDI is dependent on the provision of high-quality infrastructure. Underinvestment in capital infrastructure means that our future economic competitiveness would be harmed.

Through Project Ireland 2040, the Government is delivering a step-up in investment in road, energy, water and broadband infrastructure and in education and research facilities. Investment levels in Ireland will continue to increase at a sustainable rate and, very importantly, our infrastructure investment will allow our companies and economy to continue to compete with the best in the world.

Departmental Staff Data

290. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if personnel in her Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27944/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department operates within the Civil Service policy framework for Human Resources, and in this regard it carries out its functions in accordance with the circulars and policies set down by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Since the moratorium on recruitment was lifted in 2015, there has been considerable movement of staff.

In respect of the Deputy's queries regarding personnel being "removed from their position", "transferred to another role" or "terminated" due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct, I have provided some information in the statistical table below. It should be noted however, that the Department does not maintain records according to these categories. Instead, the Department maintains records in relation to "suspension", "re-assignment" or "dismissal/termination" arising from a sanction given under the Disciplinary Code, or an action taken under the Guidelines on Probation. These categories are the ones which broadly correlate with the information sought by the Deputy. Accordingly, these are the categories of information that information has been supplied under.

The specific reason for the sanction/action is personal information relevant to the individual concerned and it is the Department's practice not to share such information to ensure that confidentiality is protected. The sanction/action would however broadly relate to some kind of misconduct as defined under the Disciplinary Code, or relate to not meeting the departmental requirements in respect of satisfactory performance/attendance under the Guidelines on Probation. It should be noted that this may be broader than the criteria that the Deputy has indicated as "breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct".

Period of Time	Suspension	Re-assignment	Dismissal/Termination
27.6.14 - 26.6.18	0	0	3

Trade Missions

291. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans for a trade mission to Japan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27987/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland operates an intensive programme of international and domestic trade events with 200 such engagements planned for 2018. While there are no Trade Missions to Japan currently planned, an intensive programme of Ministerial visits and Trade Missions was carried out to mark 60 years of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Japan. This programme concluded in March 2018, however the focus on growing Enterprise Ireland client exports to Japan continues.

High level visits by the Department of Education, SFI and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are planned for Q4 2018 including an event with Keidanren (Japan's largest business association) addressing matters impacting Trade and Investment with Ireland. Enterprise Ireland is continuing with an intensive programme of inward buyer visits, fintech and life sciences initiatives, and Food FDI research in market.

Enterprise Ireland is the state agency under my aegis with responsibility for helping Irish companies to internationalise and scale. Enterprise Ireland's Trade Missions and Events promote the capabilities of client companies to potential business partners and customers in international markets; a central element of the agency's strategy for 2017 -2020: Build Scale, Expand Reach. In 2017 Enterprise Ireland ran 57 Ministerial-led international trade events, including a trade mission to Japan.

My predecessor, Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D., led a joint Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland trade and investment mission to Japan in September 2017. The trade mission, which also included a visit to Singapore, took place over 5 days and involved 60 Enterprise Ireland client companies. A Ministerial address to Keidanren presented an opportunity to engage with Japanese businesses and to sell the benefits of investing in Ireland.

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

A key objective of the most recent Trade Mission to Japan was to promote the potential of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), particularly from a 'new opportunities for Irish companies' perspective. It is expected that the Economic Partnership Agreement will be signed in July. The Agreement will open opportunities for Irish exporters across a range of sectors through tariff reductions and the removal of other barriers to trade.

Japan currently has high tariffs on agricultural products which will be significantly reduced on a phased basis. The EPA will also remove non-tariff barriers to trade in agricultural products bringing Japan's regulations more in line with other countries. These measures will provide opportunities for Irish exporters in the agri-food sector in particular for producers of cheese, beef, pork and processed agricultural products.

In addition to improved market access for goods, the EPA will present opportunities for the services sector. Irish exports of services to Japan were valued at €4.8bn in 2016, an increase of 48% on the previous year. The removal of barriers to trade in services through the EPA should support further growth in this area.

In addition to promotion of the Economic Partnership Agreement, other objectives of the trade mission to Japan included supporting participating Irish companies to further their relationships with new and existing customers, deepening relationships with existing IDA clients to secure further investments for Ireland, and positioning Ireland as a post-Brexit solution for Asian companies.

As part of the 'Global Ireland 2025' plan, which aims to take Ireland's global engagement to the next level by doubling our global footprint, the Government is committing significant resources to a new state-of-the-art Ireland House in Tokyo which will bring together a new embassy as well as state agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Bord Bia under one roof.

Question No. 292 answered with Question No. 271.

Commencement of Legislation

293. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when sections 20 to 23 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27489/18]

294. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if he will take steps to commence the section of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 that deals with children of same-sex couples and all related matters; his views on the distress, heartache and difficulties that its non-commencement is causing for families (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27564/18]

309. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health when Parts 2, 3 and 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; the reason for the delay in commencing these Parts of the Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27416/18]

331. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Health when the legislation regarding assisted human reproduction will be commenced (detailed supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27574/18]

370. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties experienced by married same-sex couples in getting both their names on their child's birth certificate and the difficulties they experience when applying for passports and other State documents in view of the fact that they have to apply as sole parents; the steps he will take to rectify the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27724/18]

371. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the commencement date for Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. [27731/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 293, 294, 309, 331, 370 and 371 together.

A number of technical drafting issues have come to light in relation to Parts 2 and 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.

Health and Social Care Professionals Regulation

295. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce standards for employment in the care sector; his further plans to require all care workers in the State to register for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28012/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Social Care Workers Registration Board has been established under the Health and Social Care Professionals Council (CORU) and is currently preparing for the registration of the profession. This includes the approval of education courses and requirements for registration including the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics. CORU is in ongoing consultation with social care workers and relevant stakeholders in progressing with the regulation of the profession.

In relation to the qualifications required for employment as a care worker, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Seirbhísí do Dhaoine faoi Mhíchumas

296. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Sláinte cén soláthar an bhfuil sé i gceist a chur ar fáil maidir le cúnamh speisialta urlabhra agus teanga a chur ar fáil do ghasúr óg (sonraí tugtha), a bhfuil Dyspraxia cainte air, don scoilbhliain seo chugainn, ina cheantar féin; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [28016/18]

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

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

Services for People with Disabilities

297. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a full residential package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27377/18]

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

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

Mental Health Services Staff

298. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a replacement consultant psychiatrist has been appointed to fill a vacancy (details supplied) owing to a retirement in the CAMHS service in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27381/18]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

299. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have an ASD assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27384/18]

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

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

Health Services Reports

300. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the report due to be published by the HSE working group established to examine lymphoedema services here; the publication date for the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27386/18]

308. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when the report on lymphoedema and lipoedema will be published; the reason for the delay in publishing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27413/18]

318. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE report on lymphoedema and lipoedema services here will be delivered. [27491/18]

319. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason there has been a delay with the HSE report regarding lymphoedema and lipoedema services here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27492/18]

329. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of the HSE working group report on the development of a model of care for lymphoedema and lipoedema; when he expects this report to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[27566/18]

344. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health when the report on services for persons with lymphoedema and lipoedema will be published; the reason for the delay to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27606/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 300, 308, 318, 319, 329 and 344 together.

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

301. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied); and when the appointment will be expedited. [27388/18]

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

302. **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. [27392/18]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Appeals

303. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a nursing home support payment for a person (details supplied) will be reassessed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27395/18]

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.

In order to determine how much an applicant will contribute to the cost of their care, a financial assessment is carried out by the HSE which takes account of a person’s income and assets.

As per the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009, a participant in the Scheme can contact their local HSE Nursing Homes Support Scheme Office to request a review of the financial assessment, if twelve months have elapsed since the date of the initial financial assessment or the most recent review of that assessment.

HSE Nursing Homes Support Office, Floor 1, Áras Sláinte, Wilton Road, Cork. Tel: 021 4923522

A participant to the Scheme can also request a review, if to the satisfaction of the HSE, there has been a material change in the financial circumstances of the person since the financial assessment or the most recent review of that assessment.

Departmental Funding

304. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the measures that can be put in place to ease the funding burden on a group (details supplied), particularly in circumstances in which it provides a positive benefit to communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27397/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Funding for the Irish Men’s Shed Association is provided by the Health Service Executive; I have therefore referred the Deputy’s question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Home Care Packages Provision

305. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be allocated a home care package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27399/18]

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 (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

306. **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. [27408/18]

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

307. **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. [27409/18]

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. 308 answered with Question No. 300.

Question No. 309 answered with Question No. 293.

Health Services

310. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the future of a centre (details supplied) in County Meath; and if the centre will be properly funded. [27419/18]

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

311. **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. [27450/18]

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

312. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to plans to make the drug Raxone available on the general medical services scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27456/18]

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 Raxone for the treatment of visual impairment in adolescent and adult patients with Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON) is currently undergoing a full pharmacoeconomic assessment by the NCPE.

Once the assessment is complete, the application will be processed in line with the 2013 Act.

313. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will consider setting up a specialist centre for a condition (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27463/18]

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

314. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if appropriate staff will be allocated to alleviate pressure on beds which is the main cause of the trolley crisis in University Hospital Limerick in view of the inequality of whole-time equivalent front-line posts in the health service in the mid-west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27466/18]

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

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

In relation to the particular query raised with regards to staffing at UHL, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Autism Incidence

315. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of completed assessments of need in Cork city and county that resulted in a confirmed ASD diagnosis in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27467/18]

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

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

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

316. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a medication (details supplied) will be made available under the general medical scheme in order that persons can have the cost of this included in the €144 they pay per month; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27480/18]

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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

317. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be compensated for the cost of a cervical smear test to be carried out in a laboratory here. [27481/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The clinical advice from the HSE and the Department of Health is clear that there is no evidence that the clinical and technical aspects of the CervicalCheck programme have performed outside or below international standards or the quality guidelines set for the programme. All laboratories currently contracted by CervicalCheck meet the programme's standards and have ISO accreditation, certified by the relevant national authorities.

The HSE recommends that if a woman has received clear results previously, she should proceed with her next scheduled smear test as normal. If a woman still has concerns or is experiencing any symptoms, she should talk to her GP.

I have arranged that any woman who has had a CervicalCheck smear test, and who following consultation with her GP wishes to have a further test, may do so without charge. Unfortunately it is not possible to authorise payments for smear tests taken outside of the CervicalCheck programme.

Questions Nos. 318 and 319 answered with Question No. 300.

Services for People with Disabilities

320. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will reconsider the inclusion in the demonstration project of persons under 18 years of age as eligible for receipt of a personalised budget with regard to the provision of personalised budgets for persons with a disability, as recommended by the task force on personalised budgets to the Minister of State for disability issues. [27500/18]

327. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if lower age limits will be imposed on personalised budgets for persons with disabilities; if personalised budgets will be available to children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27559/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 320 and 327 together.

I have received the Report of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets and am currently considering its recommendations.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

321. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of lidocaine patches for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27539/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines play a vital role in improving the health of Irish patients. Securing access to existing and new and innovative medicines is a key health service objective. However, the challenge is to do this in a safe and sustainable manner. Treatment must be appropriate and proportionate and clinical decision-making, such as prescribing, should be based on both patient needs and sound medical evidence.

Lidocaine 5% medicated plasters are licensed for localised relief of post-shingles pain in adults. This is the patch's only licensed use in Ireland. It has been reimbursed in the community drugs schemes since 2010.

Clinical concern arose when, from 2012 on, usage increased significantly, to the point where more plasters were being used in Ireland than in the entire UK National Health Service. In such situations, it is important and appropriate for clinicians to review usage and, in 2016, the HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) reviewed the use of the plasters. The review estimated that only 5-10% of prescribing was for the licensed indication.

From September 2017, following the clinical review, the HSE introduced a new reimbursement approval system for the patches, to support appropriate use and patient care. Under these arrangements, the patient's GP or consultant applies to the MMP for reimbursement approval on behalf of the patient. If an application is refused, the clinician may submit an appeal, making a clear clinical case for the patient, to the MMP. Information for patients and practitioners is on the HSE MMP website at: hse.ie/yourmedicines.

The decision to introduce a new reimbursement approval process is a matter for the HSE and you will appreciate that, as Minister for Health, I cannot intervene in individual cases. However, I fully support the objectives of the HSE Medicines Management Programme.

Mental Health Services Provision

322. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the timeline for the roll-out of 24-7 cover in view of the fact that the HSE has committed to roll out fully 7-7 mental health service cover for the areas that currently are not serviced by the end of Q2 2018. [27540/18]

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

323. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied). [27542/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

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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 Recruitment

324. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if the position of general manager of University Hospital Waterford has been advertised; when the manager will be appointed; his plans to appoint a substitute at the hospital in the interim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27554/18]

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.

Medical Card Applications

325. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect a decision in respect of a medical card application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27555/18]

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

Data Protection

326. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he has had discussions with the Department of Justice and Equality regarding lacunae in data protection legislation that may be preventing mental health professionals from informing family members or others that are at risk of violence from a patient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27557/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I am not aware of any lacuna in data protection legislation as described by the Deputy and therefore I have had no discussions with the Department of Justice and Equality on the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that confidentiality is a fundamental principle of medical ethics

and is central to the trust between patients and doctors. In this regard, the Medical Council publishes a “Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics” for registered medical practitioners. This document provides guidance to doctors on matters relating to professional conduct and ethics, including responsibilities to patients as well as the issue of medical records and confidentiality.

It is important to note that the Guide clearly states that registered medical practitioners are specifically allowed to ethically breach confidentiality if, for example, they believe that the patient is at risk of harming himself/herself or others.

I hope this reassures the Deputy, however if he has a specific concern I would ask him to raise it with me for further consideration.

Question No. 327 answered with Question No. 320.

HSE Properties

328. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if he will grant permission for a feasibility study to be carried out at a property (details supplied). [27562/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the health care property estate, the individuals named in the deputy’s question should contact the relevant regional HSE Estates Office directly. The contact details can be found on the HSE website www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/estates/.

Question No. 329 answered with Question No. 300.

Home Care Packages Data

330. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of older persons waiting for home care packages; the waiting lists for home care packages in each CHO area; and the way in which this compares with June 2017. [27572/18]

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

Question No. 331 answered with Question No. 293.

Hospital Appointments Status

332. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [27577/18]

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

333. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a MRI appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27586/18]

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.

Disease Management

334. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy that all patients found to be colonised with CPE are informed of this fact; and if their having been informed is documented. [27587/18]

335. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy that all patients found to be infected with CPE are informed of this fact; and if their having been informed is documented. [27588/18]

336. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy that all patients that are found to be colonised with CPE and that are informed of this fact are offered advice on precautions to be taken to avoid the spread of the bacteria. [27589/18]

337. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy that all patients that are found to be infected with CPE and that are informed of this fact are offered advice on precautions to be taken to avoid the spread of the bacteria. [27590/18]

338. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in University Hospital Limerick that have been informed that they are colonised or infected with CPE since the beginning of 2018. [27591/18]

339. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in Tallaght Hospital that have been informed that they are colonised or infected with CPE since the beginning of 2018. [27592/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 334 to 339, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters, the questions have been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

340. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the rate of remuneration paid to general practitioners for attending patients at a nursing home (details supplied) in County Clare;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27598/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

341. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to address the inadequate speech and language, occupational therapy, psychology and physiotherapy being provided at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27599/18]

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

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

Dental Services Provision

342. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if the reason dental care is not provided to pupils at a school (details supplied) will be investigated; if funding for the service will be restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27601/18]

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

343. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27605/18]

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. 344 answered with Question No. 300.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

345. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a wheelchair and orthotic shoes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27607/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Provision

346. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 25 April 2018, the reason for the delay in the commencement of a day placement for a person (details supplied). [27610/18]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

347. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for orthotics and lumbar support by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27613/18]

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

348. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for knee replacement surgery for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27614/18]

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 sched-

uled 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

349. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an ophthalmology appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27615/18]

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.

Disability Support Services

350. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the work and cost of a unit (details supplied) in County Kildare. [27621/18]

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

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

Disability Support Services

351. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the work and cost of a unit (details supplied) in County Kildare. [27622/18]

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

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

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

Disability Services Provision

352. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if a situation with regard to a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27624/18]

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

353. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied). [27625/18]

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.

Drug Treatment Programmes

354. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the length of time persons are waiting for a methadone programme in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27626/18]

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

Drug Treatment Programmes

355. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the length of time persons are waiting for a methadone programme in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27627/18]

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

Addiction Treatment Services

356. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to cut funding for addiction services in counties Kildare and Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27628/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Department of Health coordinates the strategic response to drug and alcohol problems, as set out Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025. An objective of the strategy is to attain better health and social outcomes for people who experience harm from substance misuse and to meet their recovery and rehabilitation needs.

Ensuring timely access to health and social care services and extending the range of treatment options available is integral to achieving better outcomes. To this end, the strategy commits to expanding the availability and geographical spread of relevant quality drug and alcohol services and improving the range of services available, based on identified need.

As the matter raised by the Deputy in relation to funding for addiction services in counties Kildare and Wicklow is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

357. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the duration on a waiting list for a child to see a urologist at Children's University Hospital, Temple Street; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27629/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Figures for the end of May show that there are 720 patients on the Temple Street Children's University Hospital (TSCUH) urology Out-patient waiting list, of which 68% (491 patients) are waiting less than 9 months. For the same period there are 123 patients waiting for an Inpatient Day case urology procedure at TSCUH, with almost 75% waiting less than 8 months.

Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and €50 million was allocated to the NTPF in 2018 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.

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

In order to address the issue of growing outpatient waiting list numbers, my Department, the HSE and the NTPF, are in the process of finalising an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. This plan will support the HSE's compliance with its National Service Plan targets, reduce the growth in the number of patients waiting for Outpatient Services, improve the accuracy of the waiting list and trial a number of NTPF funded interventions, including weekend and out of hours clinics.

Hospitals Data

358. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations and procedures that were cancelled or postponed in each public hospital to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27630/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for hospital procedures is a key priority of this Government. On April 12th 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.

Dental Services

359. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding dental care under the medical card system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27633/18]

384. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health when the pre-economic crisis budget for the dental treatment services scheme will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27828/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 359 and 384 together.

The national approach to future oral health service provision will be informed by the National Oral Health Policy. 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. The policy is currently being finalised and I expect it will be published later this year.

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 contractors on the future delivery of oral health services.

The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 has put the setting and varying of payments for contractors on a non-emergency statutory basis, to enable the continued determination of payments to contractors based on a range of considerations, including affordability and value for money

It is my intention to consult with contractor representatives on a new multi-annual approach to fees, including a phased exit pathway from FEMPI, in return for service improvement and contractual reform and in line with Government priorities for the health service.

Hospital Appointments Status

360. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27634/18]

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 Data

361. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of doses of the HPV vaccine administered here to date; and the number of cases of anaphylactic or anaphylactoid reactions reported to the HPRA within the first three years of the vaccine being administered through the school system, that is between 1 September 2010 and 1 June 2013, before the number of vaccine doses per patient was reduced from three to two in 2014. [27638/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As information concerning the number of doses of HPV vaccine administered is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

The information that the Deputy seeks concerning the number of cases of anaphylactic or anaphylactoid reactions is not readily available. Therefore, I have asked the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to investigate the matter and reply directly to the Deputy.

It is important to reiterate that the HPRA and the European Medicines Agency continually monitor adverse events to vaccination. HPV is one of the most closely studied and monitored medicinal products. The vast majority of reports received by the HPRA have been consistent with the expected pattern of short term adverse side effects for the vaccine, as described in the product information. Mild and temporary reactions to any kind of vaccination are not unusual.

HIV-AIDS Programmes

362. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health the status of the HSE review of the medication PrEP; when he expects this review to be concluded; the action he plans to take to introduce a PrEP programme under the HSE; the action he plans to take to work to reduce HIV rates here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27652/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the question refers to service matters it has been referred to the HSE for their direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

363. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 320 of 22 May 2018, if he has received the report requested from the HSE regarding access to scans at University Hospital Kerry; if so, the outcome of the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27653/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has reported to the Minister on the issues raised, advising that all safety incidents, both clinical and non-clinical, must be notified through the process outlined in the HSE's Safety Incident Management Policy. It has advised that, while incident forms were received by the Risk Management Department at University Hospital Kerry (UHK) in relation to delayed scans, following investigation of each by the Risk Management Department, none were found to have caused any patient harm. Therefore, none were brought to the attention of hospital management in UHK for actioning.

I have been further advised that management in UHK has been working with radiologists in the hospital to develop a pathway to assign patients for scans in a manner that is consistent with HSE protocols relating to fair and equitable access to treatment for public and private patients, based on patient acuity.

In addition, the HSE has advised that a transparent, fair and equitable pathway has also been developed for GP referrals for ultrasound scans, which are non-urgent/routine, and for urgent cases, which are dealt with through the Emergency Department or AMAU if required.

In relation to the prioritisation used when scheduling patients for appointments, the HSE has adopted a National Waiting List Management Policy, which sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists. This policy was 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. The HSE has confirmed that it is satisfied that patients are assigned for scans in UHK in a manner that is consistent with HSE protocols relating to fair and equitable access to treatment.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

364. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for psychology services in County Donegal children and youth services, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27665/18]

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

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Payments

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the correct and appropriate level of nursing home contributions in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27666/18]

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.

In order to determine how much an applicant will contribute to the cost of their care, a financial assessment is carried out by the HSE which takes account of a person's income and assets.

As per the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009, a participant in the Scheme can contact their local HSE Nursing Homes Support Scheme Office to request a review of the financial assessment, if twelve months have elapsed since the date of the initial financial assessment or the most recent review of that assessment.

A participant to the Scheme can also request a review, if to the satisfaction of the HSE, there has been a material change in the financial circumstances of the person since the financial assessment or the most recent review of that assessment.

In order to be helpful to the Deputy I can confirm the local HSE office can be contacted at 045-880 419 where they will be able to provide further clarity around this particular case.

Transport Support Scheme

366. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of the health (transport support) Bill; if there are supports in the interim for those who would benefit from the legislation but were not in receipt of the mobility allowance prior to its closure and are receiving no State supports; if consideration is being given in the proposed legislation to allow for scenarios in which a person who qualifies for the scheme but is unable to obtain a car loan from a financial lender to purchase a car could arrange for a payment through the transport support scheme to go directly to a car dealership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27668/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in February 2013.

Since the closure of the Mobility Allowance, the Government has directed that the Health Service Executive should continue to pay an equivalent monthly payment of up to €208.50 per

month to the 4,046 people in receipt of the Mobility Allowance, on an interim basis, pending the establishment of a new Transport Support Scheme.

With regard to the Motorised Transport Grant, this scheme operated as a means-tested grant to assist person with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. The maximum Motorised Transport Grant, which was payable once in any three year period, was €5,020. Following the closure of the scheme in February 2013, no further Motorised Transport Grants have been payable.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. The Programme for a Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme, to assist those with a disability to meet their mobility costs. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the Spring/Summer session 2018.

My colleague, the Minister for Health and I recently brought a Memorandum to Government for proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet agenda on 8 May last. I intend to revert to Government with revised proposals to reflect the discussion at Cabinet, in due course.

While I cannot comment on the specific proposals under consideration, I can confirm that the proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with the greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

Respite Care Services Provision

367. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if improved respite care will be granted at the weekend for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [27713/18]

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

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

368. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital procedure for a person (details supplied); when the procedure will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27716/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

369. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason the family of a service user (details supplied) of a facility which provides accommodation for adults with intellectual disabilities in County Donegal has been advised that, due to upcoming service disruptions at the unit, they will likely be necessitated to source alternative accommodation arrangements during certain periods; the alternative accommodation services that will be made available to all service users of the facility should the service disruptions occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27717/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and

plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

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

Questions Nos. 370 and 371 answered with Question No. 293.

Emergency Aeromedical Service

372. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of taskings the emergency aeromedical service has carried out since it was established; the types of taskings by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27788/18]

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

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

373. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the steps that have been taken to fill the post of consultant orthodontist in CHO area 8; the length of time the post has been vacant; the increased efforts being made to fill the post; the waiting times as a result of the vacancy in CHO area 8 in comparison with all other areas of the health service in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27796/18]

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

374. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27797/18]

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 Reports

375. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the review of paediatric audiology services will be extended to other areas in which the audiologist at the centre of the review in counties Mayo and Roscommon worked; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27798/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Report of the look-back of paediatric services in Mayo and Roscommon provided between 2011 and 2015 represents a thorough analysis of the quality of service delivery in the area against standards for such services that were set out in the National Audiology Review Group Report (2011). Since 2011, the recommendations of this Report, including clinical governance and quality assurance processes, have

been the benchmark for the quality of service delivery throughout the country.

The Report and accompanying communication from the HSE includes an apology for the failures identified and for the anxiety that this has caused to families and those who may have been harmed. The HSE has invited parents of the children to meet with a senior manager and a senior audiologist to discuss the findings of this report and be updated on their child's care.

All 49 children who needed follow up as a result of the look back process are either currently receiving, or have already received, the appropriate care they need.

The HSE is reviewing the employment history of the individual clinician who provided the service with a view to determining if any further action is required. This is being expedited as quickly as possible.

Foireann Roinne

376. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Sláinte an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27809/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Tá Oifigeach Gaeilge ar leibhéal an Phríomhoifigigh Chúnta fostaithe i mo Roinn. Oibríonn an tOifigeach sin san Aonad Acmhainní Daonna agus tá dualgais Acmhainní Daonna uirthi i dteannta na ndualgas atá uirthi mar Oifigeach Gaeilge. Is é ról an Oifigigh Ghaeilge a chinntiú go mbíonn baill foirne ar an eolas faoina gcuid oibleagáidí i ndáil le seirbhísí a sholáthar trí Ghaeilge faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 agus a chinntiú go gcomhlíonann siad na hoibleagáidí sin. Níl aon cheanglas ann go seolfaí an gnó sin trí Ghaeilge.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

377. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether resignations (details supplied) were at least partly as a result of the lack of resources at primary care level and the resulting over burdening of secondary care CAMHS operating at less than a quarter of recommended resources for a safe service; if this is the case in other CAMHS nationwide; the advice he will give to consultant child psychiatrists operating in these circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27821/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

378. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the lack of primary care resources for child and adolescents with mental health issues and that it is leading to a higher rate of referral to secondary care CAMHS of children who should have been seen in the first instance by primary care services; if his attention has been further drawn to the lack of psychology, social work, occupational therapy and non-medical speech and language therapy specialists as a recommended part of multidisciplinary teams in secondary care

CAMHS; if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of a contingent over-reliance on medications to treat children with mental health issues as per the future of mental healthcare report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27822/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

379. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the figures for the use of medication in treating children and adolescents with mental health difficulties; the number of children being medicated; the proportion of children attending CAMHS who are on medication; the type of medications used; the duration of treatment by CHO area in each year since 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27823/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

380. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of CAMHS across the country by discipline and since 2008; if these figures can be compared to the recommendations in A Vision for Change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27824/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Administration

381. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether CAMHS psychiatrists that triage a referred patient to be seen by primary care in the first instance would be correct to reject the referral in view of the recent resignation of three CAMHS consultants and comments by the Minister for Education and Skills in Dáil Éireann on 14 June 2018 with regard to the referral pathway to CAMHS and primary care; if there are agreed guidelines for consultant child psychiatrists on triaging patients between primary and secondary care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27825/18]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

382. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of initial assessments of need of children with disabilities that are carried out by community healthcare organi-

sation annually. [27826/18]

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

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

Disabilities Data

383. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the qualifications that must be held by assessment of need officers; the number of officer positions nationally; his views on whether this number is adequate in meeting assessment demands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27827/18]

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

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

Question No. 384 answered with Question No. 359.

Legislative Programme

385. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the planned timeline for the introduction of legislation in relation to the duty of candour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27831/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government recently gave approval to the drafting of legislative provisions to provide for mandatory open disclosure through the development of the General Scheme of a Patient Safety Bill. The General Scheme has been developed by officials of my Department, with a view to having this item brought to the Government for consideration in early July 2018.

These provisions to provide for mandatory open disclosure of serious patient safety incidents (referred to as duty of candour in other jurisdictions), will be in addition to the provisions for open disclosure contained in the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017. The Regulations to prescribe the process for open disclosure in line with the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017 are also being drafted at present and are expected to be finalised shortly.

The Patient Safety Bill, in addition to addressing mandatory open disclosure, will also pro-

vide for a number of other important patient safety concerns, including in relation to mandatory reporting of serious incidents to an appropriate regulatory body such as HIQA, enabling the Minister for Health to issue guidance in relation to clinical audit, and extending the remit of HIQA to private hospitals.

Home Care Packages Provision

386. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a 24-7 home care package will be put in place for a person (details supplied); the care plan in place for another person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27835/18]

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.

Hospitals Data

387. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the full capacity protocol was implemented at hospitals across the State by hospital in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27849/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Escalation Framework, issued to the system in late 2015, consists of a tiered and incremental suite of actions to be adapted and implemented in hospitals with an ED during times when such hospitals are challenged in matching capacity and demand for acute inpatient care.

The full capacity protocol is the last escalation step in the HSE National Escalation Framework.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Action Plans

388. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the measures being taken to address the waiting lists for neurology treatments in CHO 6 and 7; the waiting list times for CHO 6 and 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27859/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): After contacting the Deputy, he confirmed that the hospital the question relates to is in fact Ireland East Hospital Group (and not CH06/7).

Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and €50 million was allocated to the NTPF in 2018 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.

In 2018 the NTPF will arrange treatment for 22,000 inpatient day cases, while the HSE will deliver 1.14 million elective inpatient and day case hospital operations or procedures. This will

mean that by the end of 2018 we will expect to see a significant reduction in the number waiting for a procedure to under 70,000 - from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

In terms of the neurology waiting list at the Ireland East Hospital Group, figures for the end of May show that there are currently 38 patients waiting for an inpatient/day case procedure, while 5,113 are on the Outpatient list. Of this number, almost 58% (2,692 patients), are waiting less than 9 months for an appointment.

In order to address the issue of growing outpatient waiting list numbers, my Department, the HSE and the NTPF are in the process of finalising an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. This plan will support the HSE's compliance with their National Service Plan targets, reduce the growth in the number of patients waiting for Outpatient services, improve the accuracy of the waiting list, and trial a number of NTPF funded interventions, including weekend and out of hours clinics.

I have requested a detailed briefing focused on neurology services from the Ireland East Hospital Group, and will respond to the Deputy directly when the information is made available to me.

Hospitals Building Programme

389. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 378 of 27 February 2018, when a comprehensive schedule of additional bed locations will be determined throughout the State for the additional 2,600 acute beds provided for under the National Development Plan 2018-2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27870/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments, and in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand.

In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. A submission received from the HSE in this regard is currently under consideration by my Department.

Medical Card Applications

390. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) was assessed on a discretionary basis for a medical card; the reason the person was not considered for a medical card or general practitioner card in view of their medical issues; if he will review the decision made on this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27874/18]

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

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

391. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on his engagement with the pharmaceutical industry and organisations involved with multiple sclerosis here with

a view to ensuring that new medical treatments are provided to persons suffering from this condition in a timely and affordable manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27878/18]

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 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.

Mental Health Services Funding

392. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding mental health funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27880/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The strengthening of Mental Health Services is a priority for me and for this Government. The mental health budget has risen from €711 million in 2012 to over €912 million in 2018, an increase of over €200m, or around 28%, in six years. I have already secured agreement from the Minister for Public Expenditure that the Budget will increase by a further €55 million in 2019.

The Government is addressing the issue of suicide in particular in a number of ways. These

include a national strategy to reduce suicide and self-harm, Connecting for Life; the launch of localised action plans to tailor the strategy to specific area needs; and continued research to inform an evidence base for providing support to those with suicidal thoughts.

Much of this work is carried out by a dedicated office, the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP). Its main purpose is to effectively support, inform, monitor and co-ordinate the implementation of Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide, Connecting for Life. To achieve the outcomes of the strategy, NOSP works with the broad range of statutory, non-statutory and community partners engaged in suicide prevention. We have increased funding to this body from €3.7 million in 2010 to the current level of €12 million.

These actions are reflected in the most recent suicide statistics. In 2011, Ireland had a suicide rate of 12.1 per 100,000 population. This has dropped each subsequent year, with the provisional data for 2017 showing a suicide rate of 8.2 per 100,000 population. The most recent Eurostat data, which compares data of suicide rates across 33 European countries, shows that Ireland had the 10th lowest rate of suicide for males and females of all ages in 2015.

It should also be highlighted that the statistic mentioned within the question does not reflect current figures. Taking the most recent Eurostat figures from 2015, these show that when looking at numbers of men aged between 15-24 who died by intentional self-harm within the European Union, Ireland ranks 19th .

Connecting for Life has identified specific priority groups who are at specific risk of suicide, which includes young people. Reducing the suicide within these specific priority groups along with the whole population is a key outcome set out by the strategy.

While funding mental health services, which is not exclusive to my department, is an important component of achieving a reduction in suicides and improved services, a proposal to simply add more money to the budget will not improve mental health services on its own. I would welcome proposals outlining recommendations and proposed actions from any organisation, which can in turn be evaluated on outcomes and available funding.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

393. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27881/18]

401. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the funding model in place for nursing homes (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27891/18]

402. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27906/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 393, 401 and 402 together.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable

for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The Report of the NHSS Review published in 2015 identified a number of issues for more detailed consideration, including a review of the pricing mechanism used by the NTPF, with a view to:

- Ensuring value for money and economy, with the lowest possible administrative costs for clients and the State and administrative burden for providers;
- Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible; and
- Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents with more complex needs.

The terms of reference for the review of the pricing mechanism also includes consideration of the appeals mechanism available to nursing homes.

A Steering Committee was established to oversee this review, chaired by the NTPF and including representatives from my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The NTPF are close to completing the review and will bring a draft of report to the Steering Group shortly.

Paediatric Services

394. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the wait times for children for a first consultation with an orthopaedic specialist in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Temple Street Children's University Hospital and the Mater Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27883/18]

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.

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.

The Scoliosis Co-Design Group is developing criteria for surgery based on clinical grounds and national and international best practice to ensure that children/young adolescents have surgery when clinically indicated for their individual case and within a time period that does not cause clinical deterioration of their condition.

There is a desire and a requirement to facilitate timely surgery. This will be enabled with the increased investment in the service in 2018, aimed at stabilising and expanding the current capacity, to meet the demand for timely scoliosis treatment.

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 terms of current wait times for orthopaedic consultations at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Temple Street Children's University Hospital and the Mater Hospital, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Paediatric Services

395. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the HSE national service plan target that 80% of patients waiting for a first out-patient appointment for scoliosis will be seen within a 52 week timeframe is an acceptable target wait time for children that live with scoliosis; the steps being taken to ensure that children have timely access to their first assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27884/18]

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 (CHG) 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. I look forwards also to the publication of the Scoliosis Action Plan which the Children's Hospital Group advise will be published in July of this year.

In addition to the increase in funding, 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.

While positive results have been witnessed through the work of the Inpatient Day Case (IPDC) Action Plan, 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.

In order to address the issue of growing outpatient waiting list numbers, my Department, the HSE and the NTPF are in the process of finalising an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. This plan will support the HSE's compliance with their National Service Plan targets, reduce the growth in the number of patients waiting for outpatient services, improve the accuracy of the waiting list, and trial a number of NTPF funded interventions, including weekend and out of hours clinics.

The CHG advise that in May Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin commenced an Out-

patient Department Spinal Review Clinic as an interim measure until the two new consultant posts are filled. Its aim is to reduce first OPD appointments to 6 months by September.

Hospital Services

396. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the international best practice wait times for scoliosis first assessments; if they are being adhered to; if not, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27885/18]

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.

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.

The Scoliosis Co-Design Group is developing criteria for surgery based on clinical grounds and national and international best practice to ensure that children/young adolescents have surgery when clinically indicated for their individual case and within a time period that does not cause clinical deterioration of their condition.

There is a desire and a requirement to facilitate timely surgery. This will be enabled with the increased investment in the service in 2018, aimed at stabilising and expanding the current capacity, to meet the demand for timely scoliosis treatment.

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

397. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the reason scoliosis four month surgery wait targets are not being met; the barriers for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27886/18]

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.

CHG has advised that consultants clinically prioritise patients for surgery on the waiting list. There is a desire and a requirement to facilitate timely surgery. This will be enabled with the increased investment in the service in 2018, aimed at stabilising and expanding the current capacity, to meet the demand for timely scoliosis treatment.

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.

CHG advises that, in order to achieve its targets for surgery this year, there will be additional activity across the hospitals over the summer months, as the scheduling of spinal surgery for patients in this age group is frequently dependent on the timetabling of exams in the first half of the year.

Paediatric Services

398. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which offers of outsourcing for scoliosis corrective surgery are made; his views on whether the method of offering outsourcing is allowing parents to make informed decisions regarding the outsourcing of their children's care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27887/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The long-term strategy to develop sustainable scoliosis services 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 (CHG) 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.

Firm foundations were laid last year in addressing issues with scoliosis services and efforts were focused primarily on legacy issues and a backlog on the waiting list. The CHG has advised that this work 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 in 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 treatment plan.

The CHG plan for the year ahead, in partnership with 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 this regard I look forward to the launch and publication of the Paediatric Orthopaedic Action Plan 2018 on the 12th July.

In relation to the manner in which offers of outsourcing are made to families, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

399. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the cohort of scoliosis patients that will have access to a facility (details supplied) under outsourcing initiatives; the way in which this initiative will work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27888/18]

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 (CHG) 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 relation to the specific use of the facility outlined in the question, I have asked the HSE to provide me with a response to the issue and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as the answer becomes available.

Hospital Procedures

400. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the use of MAGEC rods in the Children's Hospital Group; the reason these rods are not available to all children across the group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27889/18]

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.

Questions Nos. 401 and 402 answered with Question No. 393.

General Practitioner Services

403. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures he plans to imple-

ment to deal with the imminent shortage of general practitioners, particularly in rural practices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27907/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): General Practitioners play an important role in the primary care system. The number of General Practitioners on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,668 as at 18 May 2018 and the number of GPs contracted by the HSE under the GMS scheme has also risen from 2,098 in 2008 to 2,497 as of 1 June 2018.

The Government is aware of the manpower issues facing general practice and has taken steps to increase the number of General Practice training places accordingly.

In 2009, there were 120 General Practice training places available and this year we expect to fill 194 training places, an increase of around 60% over a nine year period. There were over 400 applications for the 2018 training programme which is a significant increase of almost 50% on the number of applications from 2017.

We will continue to work to improve the recruitment and retention in general practice in the coming years. Our objective is to achieve further increases in the number of GP training places in future years, and to ensure that all the available places are filled, in order to meet the future manpower needs of general practice.

Other efforts undertaken in recent years to increase the number of practicing GPs include changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible/shared GMS/GP contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, allowing GPs to hold GMS contracts until their 72nd birthday. An enhanced supports package for rural practices has also been introduced which includes improved qualifying criteria for rural support and an increase in the financial allowance from €16,216.07 to €20,000 per annum.

The Government is also committed to engaging with General Practitioner representatives on necessary service improvements and contractual reforms to the current GMS contract. Our goal is to develop a contractual framework that has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion, disease prevention and for the structured care of chronic conditions. This will enable general practitioners to better meet the needs of patients and will also promote general practice as a viable and rewarding career for both existing doctors and future medical graduates.

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.

General Practitioner Services

404. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures he plans to implement to ensure there is adequate general practitioner cover in counties Cavan and Monaghan in view of forthcoming retirements by general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27908/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): General Practitioners play an important role in the primary care system. The number of General Practitioners on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,668 as at 18 May 2018 and the number of GPs

contracted by the HSE under the GMS scheme has also risen from 2,098 in 2008 to 2,497 as of 1 June 2018.

The Government is committed to increasing GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future. Efforts undertaken in recent years to increase the number of practising GPs include changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible/shared GMS/GP contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, allowing GPs to hold GMS contracts until their 72nd birthday, as well as the introduction of enhanced supports for rural GP practices.

The Government is aware of the manpower issues facing general practice and has taken steps to increase the numbers of General Practice training places accordingly. In 2009, there were 120 GP training places and this year we expect to fill 194 places, an increase of around 60% over a nine year period. There were over 400 applications for the 2018 training programme which is a significant increase of almost 50% on the number of applications from 2017. We will continue to work to improve the recruitment and retention in general practice in the coming years. Our objective is to achieve further increases in the number of GP training places in future years, and to ensure that all the available places are filled, in order to meet the future manpower needs of general practice.

The Government is also committed to engaging with General Practitioner representatives on necessary service improvements and contractual reforms to the current GMS contract. Our goal is to develop a contractual framework that has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion, disease prevention and for the structured care of chronic conditions. This will enable general practitioners to better meet the needs of patients and will also promote general practice as a viable and rewarding career for both existing doctors and future medical graduates.

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 relation to forthcoming GP retirements in Cavan and Monaghan, as this is a service matter I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Ministerial Meetings

405. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the Minister of State, Deputy Jim Daly, has met officially with a person (details supplied) since their appointment; the date and location of each meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27919/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): There have been two official meetings between the Minister of State for Mental Health and the person the Deputy referred to in his capacity as chairman of the Mental Health Commission.

Minister McEntee met him on the 20 January 2017 in the Mental Health Commission offices in Waterloo Road and Minister Daly met him on the 18 September 2017 in Hawkins House.

The Minister was also due to meet with the Commission on 14 June 2018 however the meeting had to be postponed due to official business and he is now due to meet with the group in September as this time will maximise availability of the members.

Infectious Diseases

406. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to avoid outbreaks of measles here; the further steps he is taking to avoid vaccine complacency and to increase the uptake of the measles, mumps, and rubella, MMR, vaccine in view of the recent outbreak of measles in many European countries and the rate of uptake of the MMR vaccine here remaining at 92%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27922/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Measles is an acute and serious infection caused by the measles virus. Measles is highly infectious. It is a notifiable disease (under Infectious Disease legislation) and all cases are reported to Departments of Public Health for investigation and risk assessment.

Measles is transmitted through direct contact with an infected person or through the air when the infected person coughs or sneezes. The incubation period (the time from exposure to the virus until the first symptoms develop) is typically 10-12 days. From exposure to rash onset averages 14 days (7-18 days). Complications include a severe cough and breathing difficulties (croup), ear infections (1 in 20), viral and bacterial lung infections (pneumonia), and eye infections (conjunctivitis). Most of the complications are caused by secondary bacterial infections, which can be treated with antibiotics. More serious problems involve the nervous system and are rarer. Severe disease and complications are most likely in infants under 12 months, those with weakened immune systems, and the malnourished.

All children, teenagers and young adults should be up to date with MMR vaccination. MMR was first introduced in 1988, all people born since then should have received two doses of MMR. Any child, teenager or adult who missed getting the MMR vaccines according to national immunisation schedule (first dose at 12 months and 2nd dose at 4-5 years of age) should contact their GP and ask about the vaccine. The HSE is working hard in those areas of the country where MMR uptake is low and is also targeting marginalised groups where uptake of all vaccines has traditionally been low.

Awareness has been raised about the on-going risk of measles in the community among health care staff, as cases, if more occur, are likely to present to health care settings. For hospitals and health care facilities, it is important that there is an immediate triage and isolation of all suspect cases presenting to the facility as this can help prevent spread in the facility.

Due to increased MMR vaccination uptake in Ireland in the past decade measles has become relatively rare in recent years. In 2015 there were 6 measles cases, the lowest annual number reported since 1948 and a significant decrease on the previous year. Since then the number of cases reported has increased due to a number outbreaks associated with imported cases in people who had not been vaccinated. The Weekly Infectious Disease Report for week 24-2018 (10/6/18-16/6/18), published by the HSE-Health Protection Surveillance Centre on 20 June 2018, indicates that 63 cases of measles have been notified so far in 2018. The bulk of these are associated with an outbreak in the Mid-West, with linked cases elsewhere.

The HSE is taking actions to control this outbreak. An Outbreak Control Team meets weekly to investigate and control the spread of this potentially serious illness. The HSE Departments of Public Health in areas where cases are identified are investigating and implementing

control and communication measures with local GPs, and hospitals and in the community. The response has emphasised increasing uptake of the MMR vaccine which is the best method of preventing additional cases of measles.

Home Help Service

407. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the increases in the number of older persons waiting for home supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27927/18]

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

HSE Data

408. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support carers recruited by the Health Service Executive, HSE in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27928/18]

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

Health Services Provision

409. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the status of the outcome of a review into the additional care needs of a person (details supplied); the reason since receiving a reply from his Department on 17 October 2017 no further progress has been made in assessing his or her care needs; and the reason there has been a delay of eight months in deciding if he or she is entitled to additional care supports. [27929/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following receipt of a report from the Health Service Executive (HSE) regarding the individual's additional care needs, a reply issued to the family from my office in February, 2018. I have arranged for a copy of the February reply to be forwarded to the Deputy.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for a direct reply to the Deputy.

Parking Charges

410. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if there are car park subsidies for persons in receipt of social welfare payments and attending hospitals to visit a sick relative. [27930/18]

411. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if there are car park subsidies for persons attending regular hospital appointments. [27931/18]

412. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if there are car park subsi-

dies for persons whose loved ones are in hospital long term. [27932/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 410 to 412, inclusive, together.

I am advised that hospitals which charge parking fees are cognisant of the financial implications parking costs can have on patients and their families, particularly those with long-term illnesses. Some hospitals have introduced a maximum daily fixed parking charge, thus capping this expense. I understand that some hospitals also provide reduced rate parking for long-term patients and visitors for whom the payment of the full rate would cause hardship.

In March, I requested the HSE to carry out a review of hospital car parking charges, with the aim of establishing clear national guidelines in this area. The review will involve a wide range of stakeholders and will take account of the views of patient advocacy groups, the income generated by charges and the impact of any reduction in car parking income on hospital services. This review is ongoing and the HSE has advised it expects it to be completed in August.

Mental Health Services Provision

413. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the level of mental health supports that are in place for persons with eating disorders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27933/18]

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

Mental Health Services Provision

414. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the level of mental health supports that are in place for persons with anxiety disorders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27934/18]

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

Mental Health Services Provision

415. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the level of mental health supports that are in place for persons with suicidal ideations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27935/18]

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

416. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the lack of a dedicated community neurorehabilitation team in counties Laois and Offaly. [27936/18]

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

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

417. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health when he expects the practice of admitting children and young persons to adult mental health units to cease. [27937/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The reduction in the numbers of children admitted to adult psychiatric units has been a priority for the HSE Mental Health Services over recent years.

The HSE has to allow for some operational flexibility surrounding emergency placements in Adult Units, particularly where very short-term placements take place. Full account is taken of all relevant factors such as the preferences of all those involved, and geographical factors relating to access or visiting. In this context, the HSE continues to closely monitor on a weekly basis all child admissions to adult units, with a view to minimising such admissions as much as possible.

I, and my Department officials, regularly meet with the HSE to review various mental health issues including the enhancement of age-appropriate care for young people nationally, as additional mental health resources comes on-stream. Relevant data is regularly published on the HSE website, and this is subject to monitoring by the Department of Health.

Bearing in mind all the circumstances, I am satisfied that, where children have to be placed short-term in adult mental health units, the HSE makes any special arrangements necessary, such as one-to-one care, to protect and monitor these young people. The Mental Health Commission is also notified of such admissions.

The Deputy may be aware that I am currently considering proposed legislative amendments in relation to this issue and I will continue to work closely with all concerned on these proposals.

Vaccination Programme

418. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the differing public health standards here, in contrast to Northern Ireland, in which a procurement model will purchase quadrivalent winter influenza vaccinations for persons under 65 years of age including persons at risk, pregnant women and healthcare workers for the 2018 to 2019 flu season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27938/18]

419. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the reason his Department is unwilling to adopt a new procurement approach to ensure that persons here are optimally protected from the most potent influenza viruses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27939/18]

420. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the reason his Department will not procure a quadrivalent vaccination for the forthcoming winter influenza season in view of evidence that over 50% of hospitalisations from influenza arose from the B strain Yamagata, which will not be included in the trivalent vaccine procured for the 2018 to 2019 influenza season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27940/18]

421. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his views on the World Health Organisation, WHO, published recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2018 to 2019 northern hemisphere influenza season, which recommends the strains to be contained within both quadrivalent and trivalent influenza vaccines; if he will request the Health Service Executive, HSE to follow this guidance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27941/18]

422. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his views on the rise in hospitalisations and deaths from influenza this season; his plans to make a provision to prevent the same occurrence during the 2018 to 2019 flu season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27942/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 418 to 422, inclusive, together.

The Flu vaccine purchased by HSE is based on WHO advice on the composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the northern hemisphere Flu season. The WHO issued advice on 22 February 2018, recommended that quadrivalent vaccines for use in the 2018-2019 northern hemisphere influenza season contain the following:

- an A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage); and
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage).

It is recommended that the influenza B virus component of trivalent vaccines for use in the 2018-2019 northern hemisphere influenza season be a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus of the B/Victoria/2/87-lineage.

The HSE National Immunisation Office and HSE Procurement are responsible for the purchase of influenza vaccine. To ensure vaccine supply, this tender process must be completed 9 months in advance of the first delivery into Ireland at the end of August. The HSE has already completed and awarded the tender for the supply of trivalent inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine for 2018/19 at a cost of €3.2- 4 million (depending on whether contingency doses are procured). The trivalent vaccine used in Ireland is the most widely used influenza vaccine in Europe.

Every winter the HSE develops a Flu Plan aimed at reducing the incidence of influenza in the general population and on preparing the health services to deal with increased activity resulting from increased influenza rate. Last winter the primary focus was on increasing vaccination rates among healthcare workers and at risk groups. The additional measures put in place

last winter included:

- A national flu planning steering group which meets weekly is in place.
- A flu lead was put in place in each Public Health Department, who liaised with CHO and Hospital Group flu planning groups.
- There was digital advertising and promotions target at risk groups, the over 65s, pregnant women and healthcare workers.
- Each HG and associated CHO produced a Winter Plan which includes a specific section on Flu.
- The Flu Medication Protocol was revised.

The HSE also put in place additional measures to ensure it was in a position to identify and react to any significant increase in health service demands. These included:

- The National Flu Planning Group continues to meet every Friday.
- The SDU continues to liaise daily with HGs.
- Additional measures were activated when the ILI rate exceeded the baseline figures which fed into the Winter Initiative Planning and include cascading of information to HGs, CHOs and GPs concerning the use of anti-virals, respiratory hygiene, rescheduling of elective surgery and the activation of discharge plans.

These measures mitigated the impact of the sustained higher influenza rates on the health services last winter.

Departmental Staff Data

423. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27953/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I wish to advise the Deputy that nobody in my Department has been removed from their position, been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards, professional misconduct or incompetence.

Hospital Appointments Status

424. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27980/18]

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 when a procedure will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27982/18]

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 Expenditure

426. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the rates of payment made to each home care provider for home care and nursing care respectively through section 39 funding and the 2016 home care tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27995/18]

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

427. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will have a consultation with a view to having a knee replacement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28031/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its be-

half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, 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 Funding

428. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he will address the funding issue facing a centre (details supplied) in order that it may carry on with its work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28032/18]

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.

Laboratory Facilities

429. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 130 of 23 May 2018, the number of biochemistry and haematology blood tests taken in general practices in County Louth and at Louth County Hospital analysed in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [28033/18]

430. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 130 of 23 May 2018, the number of biochemistry and haematology blood tests taken in general practices in County Louth and at Louth County Hospital, were analysed in a laboratory (details supplied) in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [28034/18]

431. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the value of the service level agreement between the HSE and a laboratory (details supplied) for the analysis of biochemistry and haematology blood tests. [28035/18]

432. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the locations of laboratories for the analysis of biochemistry and haematology blood tests. [28036/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 429 to 432, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Laboratory Facilities

433. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE staff employed in each laboratory for the analysis of biochemistry and haematology blood tests in each of the years 2013 to 2017; and the staffing level at each laboratory. [28037/18]

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

Health Screening Programmes

434. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the details of waiting lists for developmental checks for babies in Ballymun and Finglas. [28061/18]

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

Home Help Service Provision

435. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the details in relation to a service (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28078/18]

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

Departmental Funding

436. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a shortfall in funding (details supplied) will be made up; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27475/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The European Commission has proposed, as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) would be allocated approximately €78.6 billion for the period 2021-2027. This represents a reduction in the region of 15% on the current period.

It should be noted that the proposal published by the European Commission is the initial MFF proposal. The final outcome will be determined by negotiations at EU level over the coming year. Achieving Ireland’s priorities in these negotiations will be a key issue for the Government.

While the shape of any new Multi Annual Financial Framework is ultimately a matter for Finance Ministers, and the European Parliament, I have been working successfully with counterparts in other Member States to build support for the retention of a strong CAP budget.

Over the coming months there will be detailed negotiations at all levels across the EU as we work together to shape the final outcome. At the centre of all our considerations will be the need to ensure that CAP Post 2020, properly funded, will continue to support farm families and

the rural economy.

A decision regarding the level of funding to be provided for the various elements of Ireland's Rural Development Programme will be made following the conclusion of the MFF negotiations in 2019.

Fishery Harbour Centres

437. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the OPW will intervene and enable remedial works to be completed at Inishmurray Island, County Sligo in order to allow the MSO to allow small passenger boats to bring persons to and from the island again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27680/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

My legislative remit does not extend to Inishmurray Island.

The pier on Inishmurray Island is the responsibility of Sligo County Council and responsibility for its maintenance and development rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government thereafter.

My Department does however provide limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority-owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme.

Sligo County Council successfully secured a funding allocation of €147,000 under the 2018 Programme for development works; however no application for funding was made to my Department in relation to Inishmurray Island.

Any application submitted by Sligo County Council in relation to Inishmurray Island in the future would be given due consideration in the context of the criteria set out, available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

TAMS Appeals

438. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will issue on a review of an animal welfare, safety and nutrient storage scheme application by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27368/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are a number of aspects that are required to be finalised in relation to the claim for payment in this case.

A review was carried out by the local office on the issue of 100% penalty which was originally imposed which has now been found in the applicant's favour and it is considered that the applicant retains full ownership of the investment item. This review letter has now been sent to the applicant.

The further processing required on other issues related to the claim will now be expedited.

GLAS Payments

439. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a balancing payment under the GLAS scheme will be issued to a farmer (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in issuing the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27371/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The required Commonage Management Plan for one commonage on the application has not yet been finalised and the case is therefore ineligible for further payments. Both the participant and their advisor have been advised of the requirement to finalise this plan immediately to ensure further payments and indeed participation in the scheme.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

440. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27401/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was contacted by an official from my Department informing her that processing of her 2017 Basic Payment has now been finalised.

A balancing payment in respect of 2017 will issue in the coming days.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

441. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the report, An Analysis of Abatement Potential of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Irish Agriculture 2021-2030, carried out by Teagasc; and his position on each recommendation proposed in the report. [27415/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I have noted with interest and welcome the report to which the Deputy is referring. The report, along with the recommendations contained within it, are currently being examined by the relevant officials in my Department. The report highlights the potential for GHG abatement from the sector over the period from 2021 to 2030 based on current scientific knowledge against the likely level of future greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions if no action is taken to address emissions.

The report is an important piece of research that will inform developments in relation to the capacity to protect sustainability within the Food Wise 2025 strategy, the National Mitigation Plan, and the sectoral adaptation plan for the agriculture, forestry and seafood sector that are currently being worked upon. Furthermore, its analysis will also help inform ongoing discus-

sions on CAP reform.

My Department is very aware of the challenges facing us regarding the need for the mitigation and reduction of GHG emissions, along with the requirement of ensuring that we are resilient and can adapt to climate change. With this in mind, it is more important than ever that our agricultural sector remains both climate and resource efficient.

At an overall level we are taking a whole of Government approach to climate policy. Officials from my Department work very closely with other Departments, in particular with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, which is the lead Department in this area.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

442. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing the 2017 basic payment scheme and area of natural constraints payments to a farmer (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27455/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for consideration under the both the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and the 2017 Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme.

Land parcels declared by the person named on the 2017 BPS application were also declared by another party. Following examination of the matter, my Department requested additional information from the person named to support his declaration of the land parcels concerned on his application.

Legal documentation was submitted by the person named. However, it was not sufficient to finalise the processing of the 2017 BPS application as it did not include maps which were referred to in the legal documentation. The map in question has now been received and this has facilitated my Department completing the processing of the 2017 BPS application.

Payments due under the 2017 Basic Payment and the ANC schemes will issue shortly to the person named.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

443. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment due to a person (details supplied) under the AEOS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27565/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named is a participant in the AEOS3 scheme. An inspection was carried out on 8 August 2016 and the participant was informed that there were non-compliances on each of the actions. A letter of findings issued on the 9 November 2016 advising the person named that the contract was rejected.

The person subsequently unsuccessfully requested a review by the Regional Inspector and also unsuccessfully appealed the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

The inspection findings were subsequently updated by the inspector involved and a new let-

ter of findings issued to the person named. A review of these findings has now been requested and is being considered by the Regional Inspector.

Food Labelling

444. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 160 of 25 January 2018, the reason there cannot be Irish language and Irish only food labels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27573/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The general framework for the labelling of food products has been established under Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011.

This Regulation requires, under Article 15, that the labelling of food products be provided “in a language easily understood by the consumers of the Member States where a food is marketed.”

Additionally, Member States can “stipulate that the particulars shall be given in one or more languages from among the official languages of the Union”.

In the Irish context, S.I. No. 556 of 2014 (European Union (Provision of Food Information to Consumers) Regulations) sets out, under Regulation 12, that labelling of food must be provided, at a minimum, in English with the option of additional labelling in the Irish language.

This national legislation was developed by the Department of Health to give effect to EU legislation on this issue which as outlined above is contained in Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011. In light of this, I have provided my colleague, Minister Harris, with a copy of your question and this reply for his consideration.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

445. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a payment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27639/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A review by the Director of Agriculture Appeals Office of the decision of the Appeals Officer has been requested in this case in accordance with the provisions of the Agriculture Appeals Act, 2001. The Agriculture Appeals Office has indicated that requests for reviews are generally dealt with in order of receipt and that both the Department and the person named will be advised of the outcome when the review has been completed.

Foireann Roinne

446. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27799/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Cé nach bh-

fuil aon phost faoi leith i gceist i mo Roinnse i ndáil le hOifigeach Gaeilge, tá Aonad Gaeilge sa Roinn. Ina theannta sin, is poist ainmnithe Gaeilge iad sé cinn de na poist laistigh den Roinn. Dá bharr sin, tá an acmhainn iomchuí ag mo Roinnse le déileáil le haon ní i dtaobh na Gaeilge.

Felling Licences Applications

447. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) will be allowed to plant a parcel of land. [27846/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named sought a felling licence to fell trees and convert the land to agricultural use. However the proposed alternative land was deemed unsuitable for forestry as it flooded.

Any other land that may be considered as an alternative to the felled site must receive prior approval for afforestation before the felling licence will issue. The new site in the townland named and any other land to make up the equivalent area to that on the felling licence application must be included in total on an application for afforestation submitted by a registered forester. That application will be examined through the normal process for afforestation licences.

Fur Farming

448. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the rationale behind continued licensing of fur farming here in view of the animal cruelty involved in caging mink in confined spaces without access to water although they are aquatic animals; if he has considered banning this activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27890/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has statutory responsibility for the welfare and protection of farmed animals under the European Communities (Welfare of Farmed Animals) Regulations, 2010 (Statutory Instrument No 311/2010) and the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. Irish fur farmers are, in this regard, subject to the same animal welfare legislation as other livestock farmers.

A small number of Member States have imposed bans on mink farming, however the activity is common in many European Countries.

A review of all aspects of fur farming in Ireland was commissioned in November 2011. The Terms of Reference of the Review Group were:

- (i) To review fur farming in Ireland taking into account existing legislative provisions for the licensing of mink farming;
- (ii) To comment on the economic benefits of the sector;
- (iii) To consider the effectiveness of existing welfare controls, and
- (iv) To make appropriate recommendations.

The Review Group invited submissions from the public and interested parties and considered over four hundred submissions which were received.

The Group concluded that it did not find the arguments in favour of banning the farming of fur animals in Ireland compelling and recommended that instead, fur farming be allowed to continue under licence and subject to official control.

On foot of the Review Group's deliberations, my Department introduced more rigorous controls on licence holders in the areas of animal welfare, animal accommodation, security and nutrient management. Licensees are subject to regular inspections, including unannounced inspections by the Department's Veterinary officers.

Afforestation Programme

449. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a farmer (details supplied) can plant land or sell the land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27921/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I understand that the person named wishes to plant forestry on his land and is exploring the possibility of selling the land.

The Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme is the main scheme for afforestation and applications must be made through a Registered Forester. A list of registered foresters and scheme information is available on my Department's website. Every proposed afforestation site is treated on its own merits and as such, it is not possible for me to give full information here on the potential of a particular site for afforestation.

Therefore, I would strongly urge anyone interested in planting forestry to contact a registered forester to arrange a site visit, where the possibilities for the site will be discussed in full. If the person named decides to go ahead with an application, the forester will complete the application process on his behalf. At no point in this initial application process is the land owner obliged to plant. If the site receives technical approval, the land owner may then decide to go ahead and plant, in which case the registered forester will make an application for financial approval.

With regard to selling the land, a land owner is free to decide how best to manage their land. However, forestry is a very worthwhile project for land owners, that provides a guaranteed premium for 15 years with income derived from the plantation at various stages throughout its lifetime.

Departmental Staff Data

450. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27943/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department deals with disciplinary matters in accordance with the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

When reaching a decision on what disciplinary action is appropriate, the nature and seriousness of the misconduct is considered, along with any mitigating circumstances. Careful consideration is given to the appropriate sanction, in cases where misconduct has been proven. The Code provides that one of the sanctions that may be imposed can be the reassignment to a different location or to different duties.

It is the case that personnel working in my Department have been transferred to a differ-

ent location as part of a disciplinary process relating to breaches of departmental standards within the past four years.

I can confirm that in the past four years, no staff member within my Department has had their employment terminated due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct. However, a number of individuals who had commenced employment with the Department have had their employment terminated whilst on probation.

Aquaculture Licence Applications

451. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27978/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU legislation. The process involves consultation with a wide range of scientific and technical advisers as well as various Statutory Consultees. The legislation also provides for a period of public consultation.

The specific application referred to by the Deputy is currently the subject of Public and Statutory consultation in accordance with the applicable legislation.

As the application is under active consideration as part of a statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter pending the completion of the licensing process.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

452. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the on-farm developments that qualify for a TAMS grant under the health and safety measures. [28005/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The TAMS II Scheme provides generous grant rates for a comprehensive range of investment items.

A wide range of Farm Safety related investments are grant-aided under the following measures - Animal Welfare, Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme, Organic Capital Investment Scheme, Tillage Capital Investment Scheme and the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme. These items include:

- Protective Fence around existing tanks
- Safety Agitation platform for existing external tanks
- New Tank Cover over existing open tank
- Replacement and new Tank extension Cover
- Replacement and new manhole covers
- Replacement of damaged slats for cattle, sheep and pigs

- Removal of existing internal agitation point and replacement by gang slats
- Tank extension to provide external agitation point
- Circulation pipe (6") to allow for agitation of slurry
- Simple Aeration systems
- Calving Gate in Existing House
- Replacement of a hinged door/sheeted gate with a new sliding door/roller door on agricultural buildings.
- Safety Rails on Silo Walls
- Retrofitting roof-light with safety cages
- Wiring/Rewiring existing agricultural building
- Yard Lights (min 200 W equivalent, either metal halide or LED)
- Calf dehorning crate
- Horse Stocks
- Wheel changing equipment
- Wheel pumping crates
- Fixed cattle-handling facilities
- Fixed cattle enclosures
- Mobile cattle-handling facilities
- Fixed sheep-handling facilities
- Mobile sheep-handling facilities
- Leg hoist/lifter
- Head scoop unit
- Hydraulic motor to substitute PTO shaft

In addition, all animal housing and slurry storage facilities constructed under TAMS II include a range of health and safety-related elements that create a safer working environment on farms.

It is also mandatory for all applicants under TAMS II to complete a Farm Safety Course prior to payment of grant aid. Full details of all items grant aided under TAMS II are available on the Department's website.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

453. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will issue to an application by a person (details supplied) under the TAMS scheme;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28017/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application for grant-aid under the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS on 23 February 2018. During administrative checks deficiencies were found due to no documentary evidence of grant of full planning permission being submitted at the time of application. Following a request for a review of the application the applicant requested to proceed with the investments applied for which do not require planning permission. The application is currently being checked for technical issues in the local office before approval issues.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

454. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when decisions will be made on TAMS applications under tranche 10 of the scheme; the reason for the delay in processing the applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28018/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All of the applications that were received in Tranche 10 of the TAMS II Scheme which closed on 8 June 2018 are currently going through the required administrative checks. There are no delays in this process. Once the administrative checks are completed a ranking and selection process is carried out prior to the applications being examined in the local offices for technical issues.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

455. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision on an appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Galway with regard to an overclaim has been issued; if so, the outcome of the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28079/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions relating to land eligibility under the BPS are set out annually in the Basic Payments Terms and Conditions Booklet as well as in the 2015 Guide to Land Eligibility booklet. Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department actively investigates incidents of illegal burning using satellite imagery. It is specified in the BPS Terms and Conditions that under the Wildlife Acts, growing vegetation cannot be burnt between 1st March and 31st August of any given year, on any land not yet cultivated.

As part of the process of determining land eligibility, parcels declared by the person named on his 2017 BPS application have been identified as having been burned outside of the permitted timeframes. Accordingly, such lands are not eligible for the purpose of a BPS payment and this has created an overclaim on the named person's BPS application. The overclaimed land has been excluded from the named person's BPS application and he was paid on the remaining eligible hectares.

My Department received an appeal from the person named on 22 February 2018. This appeal was reviewed by my Department and additional information was requested from the person named – this information was received on 15 June 2018 and is currently being examined.

A decision will issue directly to the person named shortly.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

456. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision on an appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Galway with regard to an overclaim has been issued; if so, the outcome of the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28080/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions relating to land eligibility under the BPS are set out annually in the Basic Payments Terms and Conditions Booklet as well as in the 2015 Guide to Land Eligibility booklet. Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out.

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The person named submitted an appeal and following review my Department has decided to waive the administrative penalty associated with his 2017 BPS application. However, the burnt land remains ineligible for payment.

The person named was informed of the decision on 12 April 2018 and was also given the opportunity to appeal this decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

457. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision on an appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Galway with regard to an overclaim has been issued; if so, the outcome of the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28081/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions relating to land eligibility under the BPS are set out annually in the Basic Payments Terms and Conditions Booklet as well as in the 2015 Guide to Land Eligibility booklet. Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out.

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The person named was informed of the decision on 12 April 2018 and was also given the opportunity to appeal this decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

458. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision on an appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Galway with regard to an overclaim has been issued; if so, the outcome of the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28082/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions relating to land eligibility under the BPS are set out annually in the Basic Payments Terms & Conditions Booklet as well as in the 2015 Guide to Land Eligibility booklet. Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department actively investigates incidents of illegal burning using satellite imagery. It is specified in the BPS Terms & Conditions that under the Wildlife Acts, growing vegetation cannot be burnt between 1st March and 31st August of any given year, on any land not yet cultivated.

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The person named submitted an appeal and following review my Department has decided to waive the administrative penalty associated with his 2017 BPS application. However, the burnt land remains ineligible for payment.

The person named was informed of the decision on 12 April 2018 and was also given the opportunity to appeal this decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Better Energy Homes Scheme

459. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the financial supports available for an insulation upgrade to a 1950s bungalow that is privately owned and the owners of which are not in receipt of fuel allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27428/18]

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. It provides grant support for energy efficiency measures. Fixed grants are provided for a range of measures, including attic and wall insulation, heating controls, solar thermal technology and heat pumps. A bonus is offered where multiple measures are undertaken. More information on the full range of grants offered under the scheme is available: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-grants/better-energy-homes/>, and interested homeowners can apply online. Homeowners can also receive funding for a whole-house energy efficiency upgrade through the Deep Retrofit Pilot. This pilot programme is funded by my Department and administered by SEAI. It commenced operation in 2017 with initial funding of €5 million, and is set to operate up to 2019. The programme aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland's housing stock and is designed to inform an affordable offering for high quality retrofit to individual homeowners across Ireland.

Grant funding will be provided for deep retrofit projects that include groups of 5 or more houses. Applications are currently accepted from organisations such as local authorities, energy agencies, community groups and other deep retrofit providers. The scheme will cover up to 50% of total capital and project management costs for retrofit projects which meet SEAI's project evaluation criteria. Funding of up to 95% of total capital and project management costs will be provided for projects involving voluntary housing association homes and homes that are in energy poverty. Successful projects must deliver a minimum Building Energy Rating of A3 and must incorporate renewable heating solutions.

Detailed information on grant support, evaluation criteria, the application process and a list of providers who are currently working with the scheme are all publicly available on SEAI's website. <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-grants/deep-retrofit-programme/>.

Broadband Service Speeds

460. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties being caused to rural businesses and rural communities by the lack of high speed broadband in counties Roscommon and Galway (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27473/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I am acutely aware of the impact that a lack of reliable high speed broadband has on people throughout Ireland, including in Galway and Roscommon. The Government's NBP aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. By 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention.

The Intervention Area for the State led intervention, coloured AMBER on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map (www.broadband.gov.ie) shows those premises that will not receive this service without Government intervention. Information on specific categories of premises can be accessed by entering the relevant eircode into the Map.

There are over 38,500 premises in Co Roscommon of which 47% of premises (c.18,000) are in the Intervention Area and will be part of the State led Intervention under the NBP. The remaining 53% of premises (over 20,500) will be served by commercial operators. 12% of

Roscommon premises are still due to receive high speed broadband under eir's ongoing planned rural deployment, which has already deployed to around 3,400 premises in the county.

There are over 134,000 premises in Co Galway of which 29% of premises (c. 39,000) are in the Intervention Area and will be part of the State led Intervention under the NBP. The remaining 71% of premises (c. 95,000) will be served by commercial operators. 11% of Galway premises are due to receive high speed broadband under eir's planned rural deployment, which has already deployed to around 13,800 premises in the county.

A full set of county statistics are available at www.broadband.gov.ie.

Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie>.

Data for Q1 2018 recently submitted by eir to my Department indicates that the company passed more than 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. Officials from my Department continue to meet with eir on monthly basis to review the company's performance on their ongoing rural deployment project in line with their obligations under the April 2017 Commitment Agreement. eir has signalled that there would be likely knock-on effects to the 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management in eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

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

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>.

Electric Vehicles

461. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the ESB is no longer rolling out new charging infrastructure in the form of charging points for electric vehicles; the measures he is putting in place to remedy this; and the funding amounts and timelines for same. [27965/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The majority of the existing network of publicly accessible charge points was rolled out by the ESB through its eCars programme. In addition, up to the end of 2017, the ESB installed free home charge points for the purchasers of new electric vehicles.

In March 2014, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities approved an application from

ESB Networks to recover the costs to a maximum of €25 million from network charges to cover the rollout of this infrastructure. Following a public consultation process, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities published its independent regulatory decision in October 2017. A key outcome of the decision is that expansions of the public charging network and the installation of home charging points could no longer be funded from network charges.

The vast majority of electric vehicle charging happens at home, which aligns with both technology and patterns of use of vehicles. To support home charging, I introduced the Electric Vehicle Home Charger Grant scheme this year. This scheme, which came into operation on 1 January 2018, supports the cost of installing a home charger up to a maximum of €600 for buyers of both new and second-hand electric vehicles.

The regulatory decision by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities also set out the need for the electric vehicle charging infrastructure to operate on a commercial basis. In the absence of State-led support, this is unlikely to happen in the near term. Capital funding of €1.5m has, therefore, been allocated in my Department's budget this year to support the provision of public charging.

A key aspect of the work of the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce, co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, involves examining how best to support the development of the public charging network. The first phase of the Taskforce's work, which focuses on electric vehicles, is nearing completion and I expect to bring forward proposals that will support the provision of effective and efficient publically accessible electric vehicle charging later this year.

Funding for public charging in local communities is already available through the Better Energy Communities Scheme. The scheme, which is administered by the SEAI, supports community based partnerships to improve the energy efficiency of homes, businesses and community facilities in a local area.

Broadband Service Provision

462. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the provision of broadband services in Ballymore, County Westmeath; if work is still scheduled to take place in autumn 2018; and if a more detailed timeline will be provided. [27695/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Deputy may recall that I have in previous replies dated 17 and 24 April 2018 respectively detailed the position in relation to the rollout of broadband in the townland of Ballymore, Co Westmeath. I am happy to provide a further update.

My Department's High Speed Broadband Map (www.broadband.gov.ie) shows that 99% (134 premises) of the townland of Ballymore, Co Westmeath are due to receive access to a high speed broadband connection via eir's ongoing rural fibre deployment.

In April 2017, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. eir has committed to completing this rollout by the end of this year. Information on eir's ongoing rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Quarterly updates on eir's rural deployment are published on this website. eir has passed a

total of 145,000 of the committed premises as of Q1 2018. This figure includes 3,600 premises in Westmeath passed to date. The Deputy will recall that in my previous reply I indicated that 4,000 premises in Westmeath remained to be passed. As of Q1 2018 this number has reduced to approximately 3,100 and therefore the incremental progress of eir's rollout can be seen.

My Department meets with eir on a monthly basis to review the company's performance on its on-going rural deployment project in line with its obligations under a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017. The Commitment Agreement provides that action will be taken by eir, within a window of six months of missing a quarterly target for an area. In line with this requirement, eir has signalled that there would likely be knock on effects to their 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management in eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

The remaining 2 premises in the townland of Ballymore will receive access to high speed broadband via the State led intervention. My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. 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>.

Plastic Bag Levy

463. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 455 of 19 June 2018, the amount collected from the plastic bag levy in each of the years from 2013 to 2017; the number of the 70 cent or more bags that have been sold in the same period by commercial and retail outlets; and his views on whether, by pricing the bags at 70 cent or more, retail outlets are evading their responsibilities by denying the State revenue, encouraging more plastic into the environment and discouraging recycling. [27795/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the reply to Question Nos 454 and 455 of 19 June 2018.

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: <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/environmental-protection-and-awareness/environmental-fund/Pages/default.aspx>.

The origins of the plastic bag levy lay in addressing the high instances of plastic bag littering which blighted our country. The levy has effected sustainable behavioural changes and practices resulting in a positive impact on litter and our environment generally. The type of bags referred to in the Question fall outside of the scope of the regulations and statistics on the level of their sales are not held by my Department. People tend to reuse such bags and not dispose of them as quickly. For that reason they have not been subject to a levy.

Environmental enforcement inspections in relation to the plastic bag levy are undertaken by local authorities. In addition to the role of the local authorities in carrying out environmental enforcement inspections, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners is responsible for compliance in relation to the collection of the levy. Such responsibilities include, inter alia, the identification of accountable persons; carrying out verification checks relating to the accuracy of the returns received; and pursuing accountable persons who fail to deliver returns and payments within the statutory time limits.

Foireann Roinne

464. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe ar son na hAeráide agus Comhshaoil an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27802/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Ba mhaith liom a chur in iúl don Teachta Dála gur ceapadh aon Oifigeach Gaeilge amháin sa Roinn seo agamsa chun ábhair a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge a láimhseáil. Tá an t-oifigeach seo lonnaithe san Aonad um Fhorbairt Straitéiseach agus Chumarsáid, agus 'sé atá freagrach as comhairle, tacaíocht agus cúnamh a thabhairt do na rannáin agus na haonaid sa Roinn, mar a bhaineann sé le cúrsaí Gaeilge.

Tá an duine seo ag grád an Oifigigh Feidhmiúcháin, agus is féidir liom a dheimhniú go mbíonn freagrachtaí eile air sa bhreis ar an méid atá faoina chúram mar Oifigeach Gaeilge. Bhí scéim teanga nua daingnithe leis an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta le déanaí, áfach, agus faoin scéim seo, ainmníodh post an Oifigigh Gaeilge mar phost lena ghabhann ard-inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas d'aon duine ceaptha sa ról sin.

Tá an t-ardchaighdeán seo bainte amach ag an oifigeach seo, agus tá sé in ann a chuid oibre a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge, nuair is gá.

Tá líon teoranta de phoist eile ann sa Roinn lena ngabhann inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas, amhail Rúnaí Príobháideach an Aire Stáit. Ina theannta sin, tá baill foirne éagsúla ann ar fud na Roinne freisin, a bhfuil raon leathan cumais acu ó thaobh na Gaeilge de.

Mar fhocal scoir, mar chuid d'athscrúdú na Roinne ar phlean an lucht saothair, measfar na riachtanais eile atá ann i dtaobh na teanga, agus cuimseofar iad sin inár bpleananna earcaíochta agus comharbais as seo amach.

Legislative Measures

465. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he expects the Waste Reduction Bill 2017 will be enacted; his views on a

campaign (details supplied); his views on the principles of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27845/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Waste Reduction Bill is a Private Members Bill sponsored by the Green Party.

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. 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.

As for the substance of the Bill, while I have made it clear that I support its principles, 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.

However, the EU recently published its proposal to address the top ten single use plastic items that make up approximately 70% of beach litter. I will not delay in introducing the necessary measures in the proposal when the EU legislation is finalised.

I am aware of the campaign “Sick of Plastic” and congratulate the Friends of the Earth organisation for the high profile achieved for the discussion around plastic. Informed citizens are key to our shared objectives around tackling plastic waste. My focus now is to work with our EU colleagues to ensure that we can collectively deliver a Union-wide package of measures which citizens, business and governments can get behind.

Hazardous Substances Disposal

466. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amounts, nature and dates of hazardous material or hazardous waste exported from Haulbowline Island for decontamination; and the destination of same in each of the years from 2007 to 2013. [27873/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): It has not been possible to collate the information in the time available, as the records relating to this material are being held by a number of agencies. I have asked my officials to arrange for the information to be retrieved and conveyed to the deputy by the earliest possible date.

Departmental Staff Data

467. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27946/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): No member of staff in my Department was removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated, due to breaches of departmental

standards, professional misconduct or incompetence in the past four years.

Departmental Agencies Staff Data

468. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the per capita waste management and enforcement staff numbers in the EPA and waste officers in local authorities here compared to the UK, Germany, Sweden and Belgium. [27962/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My commitment to supporting waste enforcement activities on the ground is demonstrated through the continued annual investment of €7.4 million in the network of 150 local authority waste enforcement officers, increased resources for the Environmental Protection Agency with an allocation of €34.8 million this year and the further development of the Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority Offices with an annual budget in excess of €1 million. My Department has also provided €3.3 million to support the national anti-dumping initiative in the past two years.

Notwithstanding this support provided from the centre, it is a matter for local authorities to ensure that the statutory functions that they are charged with delivering are adequately resourced, that they engage proactively with the other resources available through the EPA's NIECE Enforcement Network and that staff avail of the multitude of training and development opportunities to them as professional waste enforcement practitioners.

While the per capita waste management and staff numbers of other EU Member States are not recorded by my Department, a European Council evaluation report, entitled "The practical implementation and operation of European policies on preventing and combatting environmental crime in Ireland", which was published this year states that "The commitment of the Irish Government to supporting the enforcement of environmental regulation in Ireland has been demonstrated through continued investment in the network of local authority waste enforcement officers, increased resources for the EPA and the further development of the WERLA". The report further states that "the evaluation team found in the Irish system many examples of best practices to be shared with the other Member States."

North-South Interconnector

469. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason the publication of the studies on the North-South interconnector has been delayed; the timeframe for publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27983/18]

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 avail-

able. I expect to bring both reports to Government shortly.

Medical Waste Disposal

470. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the annual support of €75 for medical incontinence wear has been introduced; if so, the way in which it can be applied for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27990/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): An annual support of €75 per person is to be made available for persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence. This will help people meet the average annual cost for the disposal of medical incontinence products. My Department is in discussion with the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive, and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner regarding the administrative details and arrangements of the support, as well as engaging with the relevant stakeholders. I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to finalising the details for this support as soon as possible.

In line with the commitments set out in *A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland*, published in 2012, and in the interest of encouraging further waste prevention and greater recycling, flat-rate fees for kerbside household waste collection are being phased out over the period autumn 2017 to autumn 2018, as customers contracts come up for renewal. The necessary regulatory steps have been put in place to give effect to this measure.

It is worth noting that this measure is not ‘new’ for about half of kerbside household waste customers, who are already on an incentivised usage pricing plan, i.e., a plan which contains a per lift or a weight related fee.

As announced in mid-2017, mandatory per kilogramme ‘pay by weight’ charging is not being introduced. Allowing for a range of charging options, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances.

The Price Monitoring Group has considered nine months of data to date. While fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend is relative price stability. The Price Monitoring Group has reported that there are currently 9 different types of price models on the market. The main price examples include (i) a service charge plus charge per bin lift, with an excess per kg charge, and (ii) a service charge plus per kg weight charge. The most popular service offering now is the ‘service charge including weight allowance, plus per kg charge for excess above allowance’.

Legislative Programme

471. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to publish legislation to facilitate the installation of services along public roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27376/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Roads Act 1993 I have responsibility for overall policy in relation to public roads in Ireland. The road infrastructure is the largest asset managed by local authorities and the State. Its efficient management (both day to day and in the long term) is essential to economic activity as the majority

of commuting and haulage occurs using it.

Objectives typically include:

- The protection of the road pavement asset and avoidance of injury to the travelling public.
- The management of road works to avoid disruption to businesses and the travelling public.
- The efficient management of space in the road pavement for use by utilities.

With regard to the Deputy's question, I would welcome clarity around the specific services the Deputy is referring to, as there are several different pieces of legislation relating to the general issue, depending on the service concerned. Unfortunately, in the absence of such clarity, I am not currently in a position to furnish the Deputy with a more detailed and specific reply. However, I can confirm that I have no plans at present to publish legislation at this time in relation to installation of services along public roads.

Cycling Policy

472. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a cost assessment has been conducted in connection with the establishment of a national cycling office; and if so, the estimated cost of same. [27378/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public and sustainable transport. With the increased multi-annual capital funding that I secured as part of Budget 2018, there is over €110 million specifically allocated to developing "active travel" (i.e. cycling and walking) at a national level over the period 2018-2021. This programme will provide safe alternative active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure. This investment is in addition to the substantial improvement in cycling infrastructure that will be carried out as part of both the roll-out of BusConnects national programme and the investment that is allocated for sustainable urban transport initiatives.

I am not, however, involved in the day-to-day delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure projects. The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of cycling infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and the regional cities. My Department provides funding to the NTA who distribute this to the various local authorities nationally in relation to cycle scheme proposals that they put forward. In this regard, and in conjunction with the NTA, Local Authorities have a key role to play in advancing cycling schemes; both the elected members and executive through the planning and construction phases.

My Department also funds the development and roll-out of Cycle Right the national cycling training standard, developed by Cycling Ireland with the involvement of stakeholders including the RSA, An Garda Síochána, An Taisce (who operate the Green Schools Scheme), Coaching Ireland and local authorities. Cycle Right training aims to give trainees the confidence, skill and road safety knowledge to use their bike safely. Over a series of stages, cyclists will increase their proficiency and safe journeying on the road network. A key element to this training are the rules of the road. Cycle Right roll-out in our schools and communities is a key component of the resources made available by me in training participants to cycle safely and to move towards more active, healthy lifestyles. This Cycle Right programme, that currently costs €430,000 per annum, is accessible to primary schools across the country with a current uptake of over 15,000 pupils annually with an ambition to build on these numbers.

In the context of the work underway reviewing Public Transport Policy as committed to in the Programme for Government, my Department is turning its attention to considering the effectiveness of institutional arrangements in this area into the future, including the provision of a National Cycling Office, and having regard to the importance of ensuring strong outcomes with the budgetary increases that have been secured for the provision of enhanced cycling infrastructure and through training programmes.

Cycling Policy

473. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the percentage of the proposed BusConnects budget allocated to cycling, including the creation of new cycle paths, upgrading existing cycle paths and other cycling related projects under the BusConnects plan; and the cost of same. [27379/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the BusConnects Programme, in addition to transforming the bus system in Dublin including a full redesign of the bus network, will also provide much needed cycling facilities and make it easier and more attractive to cycle around the city region. Given the increasing number of cyclists across Dublin there is an imperative to provide safe and segregated cycling facilities where possible.

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 provides an update on the 230 km of continuous bus priority across 16 core bus routes, expected to achieve up to 40%-50% savings on current journey times, that are emerging as the likely core bus corridors in and out of Dublin city under this new investment Programme. These main bus corridors are also the main cycling arteries. The widening of roads for these bus lanes provides the opportunity to transform the cycling infrastructure at this time.

Despite the fact that the project is at an early stage of planning, with the details to emerge later in the year and progressive elaboration of the overall budget, at this point NTA calculates that over 200km plus of cycle tracks/lanes and will be built or improved on as one of a number of a key components to BusConnects.

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. The detailed designs when completed will feed into the consultation process expected in September/October.

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.

EU Directives

474. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeline for the legislation to implement the package travel directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27383/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Directive EU (2015/2302) on package travel and linked travel arrangements is due to be applicable in Irish law with effect from 1 July 2018. Officials in my Department have drafted a Statutory Instrument to give effect to the provisions of the Directive by amending existing legislation, primarily the Package Holidays and Travel Trade Act, 1995. This SI is currently being examined by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and will be signed into law once settled by that Office.

Taxi Licences

475. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given to amend section 15 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 to allow discretion on compassionate grounds, for example in cases of sudden death in which reassignment of the licence had not yet been carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27420/18]

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

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

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

Sports Capital Programme

476. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to announce application deadlines for the 2018 sports capital fund. [27454/18]

484. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for a new sports capital programme; the amount that will be available; and if there will be changes in the programme. [27619/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 476 and 484 together.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application

system and work in this regard has now commenced.

I have received sanction from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for a new round and I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round and the amount available shortly. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at that time.

Olympic Games Ticketing Arrangements

477. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost to date to his Department arising from a ticketing issue and related matters during the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27548/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Moran Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the receipt, distribution and sale of tickets for the Rio Olympic Games and ancillary matters carried out its work between September 2016 and June 2017. The total cost of the Inquiry amounted to €312,765. There are no outstanding amounts to be paid.

Driver Test Waiting Lists

478. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons waiting for a driver test in Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27549/18]

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

Driver Test Waiting Lists

479. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated waiting time for a driver test in Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27550/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While this is a matter for the Road Safety Authority, the average waiting times at driving test centres around the country can be viewed on the Road Safety Authority website at www.rsa.ie. This information is updated weekly.

Olympic Games Funding

480. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport whether he or Sport Ireland have extended funding to the Olympic Council of Ireland, OCI, since 2016; whether the OCI has requested funding from his Department or Sport Ireland since 2016; the purposes for which funding was given to the OCI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27558/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have previously

informed the House of the considerable progress that has been made by the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) in relation to improving its governance standards. This has involved, inter alia, the appointment of a new President and Executive Board in February 2017, a new Chief Executive Officer in April this year as well as confirmation in October 2017 that its relationship with the ticketing agency THG would be discontinued.

Taking account of this progressive improvement, I made the decision in September of last year to release outstanding 2016 funding of €150,000 to the OCI, which had been withheld following the emergence of governance issues during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. This decision was made on the condition that the OCI would continue their positive steps towards governance reform and addressing legacy issues. Subsequently, in December last year, I approved 2017 funding support of €300,000 to the OCI. The Board of Sport Ireland, through whom these payments are made, was satisfied that this funding was spent on athlete related activities and was in order for reimbursement.

In relation to 2018 funding, Sport Ireland has indicated that it expects to provide funding to the OCI, subject to the usual conditions applying. The level of funding would be determined by the Board of Sport Ireland. I have referred the question to Sport Ireland for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Rail Network Expansion

481. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the planned train station at Ashington and Pelletstown, Dublin 7; the precise location of the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27560/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

As the Deputy is aware, work commenced last year to complete a detailed design and prepare tender documents for a new train station at Pelletstown which is located between the existing Broombridge and Ashtown railway stations. Planning permission is in place and detailed design and tender preparation for the new station is currently being finalised. The tender document is expected to be completed in the next two months with a view to go to tender for construction later this year.

In light of the National Transport Authority's statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for an update on the matter raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Swimming Pool Programme Status

482. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a local authority swimming pools programme that closed for applicants on 31 July 2000; the status of the 57 applications that were being dealt with at that time; the pools that needed renovation and or modernisation; the new pools delivered and to be delivered in the next three years; the number of local authority swimming pools by county and local authority, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27575/18]

483. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has allocated funding for the reopening of a pool (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27576/18]

486. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the four swimming pool projects in the current local authority swimming pools programme, LASPP; the dates on which these projects will be delivered; the methodology being considered for the way in which LASPP funding will be awarded and applications for same assessed in the context of a national sports policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27670/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 482, 483 and 486 together.

Under the current (2000) round of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP), grant aid to a maximum of €3.8m is provided towards the capital cost of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. To date 51 pools have been completed under the Programme and these are listed in the table below.

There are four principal stages in the LASPP, namely: Preliminary Report; Contract Documents; Tender and Construction. Grant-aid is allocated only when tenders have been approved for the project and is capped at the time of allocation. My officials and technical advisor evaluate each stage and projects cannot proceed to the next stage unless prior approval is given by the Minister.

In January 2016, my Department contacted local authorities and sought expressions of interest in a limited round of swimming pool allocations. There were three expressions of interest received for new pools, two of which were valid and both in Dublin, one in Lucan and the other in Ballyogan. The third was for North Kildare but was not valid as the Council did not have title to the proposed site. Following consideration of the expressions of interest, and the two valid proposals for new pools, it was decided to include the proposal from South Dublin County Council (SDCC) for a new swimming pool in Lucan in the LASPP.

In April 2016, pool projects in Balbriggan, Ballaghaderreen and Loughrea, which had been included in the 2000 round of the Programme since 2000, were voluntarily withdrawn from the programme by the relevant local authorities.

Glenalbyn was also originally included in the 2000 round of the LASPP. However, in 2010, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC) asked that Glenalbyn be replaced in the LASPP with Loughlinstown. Following receipt of a detailed case, the Department agreed to the Council's request. €3.8 million was then allocated to Loughlinstown swimming pool in 2010 and the pool was developed and opened in May 2013. Accordingly Glenalbyn Pool is not considered to be in the current round of the Programme.

As mentioned earlier, in January 2016 the Department sought expressions of interest for the construction of new swimming pools and/or the refurbishment of existing pools. In response to this, DLRCC submitted an expression of interest for a pool for Ballyogan. An expression of interest for a grant for Glenalbyn swimming pool was not submitted.

Accordingly, there are currently four projects remaining in the current round of the LASPP. These are: Castlebar, Co Mayo, (a replacement pool where construction is underway and is nearing completion); Buncrana, Co Donegal, (a refurbishment which is at Contract Documents stage); Lucan, Co Dublin, (a new pool which is at Contract Documents stage); and Edenderry, Co Offaly, (a replacement pool which is at Preliminary Report stage). The priority in 2018 is on progressing the four projects through to the next stages of the programme, as appropriate.

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.

-	County	Pool Name	Replacement or Refurbishment	Date Opened
1	Wicklow	Arklow	Refurbishment	Jan 00
2	Wexford	Enniscorthy	Replacement	Jan 00
3	Meath	Navan	Replacement	Aug 00
4	Wicklow	Wicklow	Replacement	Jun 01
5	Wexford	Courtown/Gorey	Replacement	Oct 01
6	Louth	Dundalk	Replacement	Mar 02
7	Roscommon	Roscommon	Refurbishment	Apr 02
8	Clare	Ennis	Replacement	Sep 03
9	Kerry	AquaDome Tralee	Refurbishment	2003
10	Galway	Ballinasloe	Replacement	Oct 03
11	Dublin	Finglas	Replacement	Apr 04
12	Limerick	Grove Island Limerick	Replacement	Jun 04
13	Kerry	Sports and Leisure Centre Tralee	Refurbishment	Jul 04
14	Tipperary	Clonmel	Refurbishment	Dec 04
15	Cork	Churchfield, Cork City	Refurbishment	Jun 05
16	Dublin	Ballymun	Replacement	Jun 05
17	Galway	Tuam	Replacement	Sep 05
18	Louth	Drogheda	Replacement	May 06
19	Monaghan	Monaghan	Replacement	Aug 06
20	Cork	Cobh	Replacement	Aug 06
21	Cork	Youghal	Replacement	Sep 06
22	Dublin	Jobstown	Replacement	Nov 06
23	Kerry	Ballybunion	Replacement	Jun 07
24	Offaly	Birr	Refurbishment	Jul 07
25	Donegal	Letterkenny	Replacement	Jul 07
26	Limerick	Askeaton (outdoor)	Replacement	Aug 07
27	Longford	Longford	Replacement	Sept 07
28	Dublin	St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys	Refurbishment	Nov 07
29	Laois	Portarlinton	Refurbishment	Dec 07
30	Laois	Portlaoise	Replacement	Dec 07
31	Dublin	Clondalkin	Replacement	Jan 08
32	Tipperary	Thurles	Replacement	Apr 08

-	County	Pool Name	Replacement or Refurbishment	Date Opened
33	Dublin	St. Michael's House	Replacement	Apr 08
34	Kerry	Killarney	Replacement	Jul 08
35	Wicklow	Bray	Replacement	Sep 08
36	Dublin	Ballyfermot	Replacement	Oct 08
37	Wicklow	Greystones	Replacement	Oct 08
38	Offaly	Tullamore (outdoor)	Replacement	Oct 08
39	Kilkenny	Kilkenny City	Replacement	Dec 08
40	Kildare	Athy	Replacement	Mar 09
41	Kildare	Naas	Replacement	Mar 09
42	Dublin	Dundrum	Replacement	Apr 09
43	Mayo	Claremorris	Replacement	Sep 09
44	Tipperary	Roscrea	Replacement	Sep 09
45	Wexford	Ferrybank	Refurbishment	Jun 10
46	Dublin	Loughlinstown	Refurbishment	May 13
47	Donegal	Ballybofey Stranorlar	Replacement	Oct 13
48	Wexford	New Ross	Replacement	Aug 13
49	Dublin	De Paul, Navan Road	Refurbishment	Oct 15
50	Offaly	Clara	Refurbishment	Nov 15
51	Cork	Dunmanway	Replacement	May 17

Question No. 484 answered with Question No. 476.

Sport Ireland Remit

485. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action he has taken or plans to take with regard to engagement with youth and voluntary sports groups to encourage such bodies to reduce focus on the competitive aspects of sport at young ages and instead promote the participation of all young persons that who wish to become involved in sporting activities and have the opportunity to play games in their chosen sport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27650/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards. This includes responsibility for the development of strategies for increasing participation in recreational sport at national and local level.

I have referred the Deputy's Question to Sport Ireland for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Question No. 486 answered with Question No. 482.

Foireann Roinne

487. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil

dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27815/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Tá Oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha do mo Roinn a dhéanann dualgais bhreise orthu siúd a bhaineann le ról Oifigeach na Gaeilge amháin. Feidhmíonn an tOifigeach Gaeilge ag grad an Ard-Oifigeach Fheidhmiúcháin agus déanann sí gnéithe dá gcuid oibre trí Ghaeilge. Ar mhaithe le seirbhís ardchaighdeán a sholáthar do chustaiméirí, is gá, uaireanta, an custaiméir a chur ar aghaidh chuig rannán eile den Roinn.

Road Network

488. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 494 of 29 May 2018 and 485 of 19 June 2018, if he will initiate a grant scheme for the provision of cattle underpasses in view of the fact health and safety for all parties affected is of paramount importance. [27838/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue of cattle underpasses arises primarily on more heavily trafficked national roads. As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Driver Test Centres

489. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if additional staff will be allocated to a driver test centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27841/18]

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

Swimming Pool Programme Status

490. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 1218 of 21 March 2017, the status of funding for a swimming pool (details supplied) to address issues as a result of flood damage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27844/18]

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. The fund will be initially focused on the National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities. In due course, consideration may be given to applications for larger scale refurbishment work.

Sport and Recreational Development

491. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the building of a stadium (details supplied); if all required information from the club has been received; when he expects to grant approval for the plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27855/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): As the Deputy is aware, officials from my Department have engaged with Finn Harps Football Club and the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) to try to progress this matter. To date my Department has provided €834,000 to the project. In relation to the next stage, the club has submitted all of the required information regarding the request for funding for the appointment of a design team. This matter remains under active consideration in my Department at present and a decision will issue to the club as soon as possible.

Motor Insurance

492. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given to real time recorders of speed in cars that can be shared with insurance companies, which would result in a cost reduction. [27856/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies, and I have no role in determining matters such as any discounts in the motor insurance industry resulting from the use of real time recorders of speed in vehicles, which ultimately are a matter for individual insurers and for the insurance industry.

I would point out, however, that the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG), chaired by Minister Michael D'Arcy of the Department of Finance, in their Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance, published on 25 January 2018 included an Addendum to their earlier Motor Insurance Report on the use of telematics technology, including the real time recording of speed in vehicles. The Report's Addendum notes the potential of such technology to record data such as a vehicle's speed, braking, acceleration, swerving, etc., and to communicate in real time such data to the relevant insurance company. The report noted the view of the CIWG and of the Personal Injuries Commission regarding the potential of the technology to combat fraud and to enable insurance companies to better identify individual risk and price accordingly. It also noted that the technology is being pursued by a number of insurers in the Irish market at present.

The Addendum recommends that Insurance Ireland submit a report to the CIWG on the topic before September 2018.

Departmental Staff Data

493. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27959/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): With regard to the information being sought by the Deputy, I can confirm that my Department has not found it necessary to take such form of action in relation to any Departmental staff in the relevant period. In the event of any issues arising around the adherence of staff to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, such matters can be addressed by line managers by reference to a number of human resources policies including, for example, the Civil Service Disciplinary Code and Management of Underperformance policy. My Department provides all appropriate training supports to line managers on the implementation of such policies.

Departmental Funding

494. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital and current funds made available for walking and cycling investment in each of the past five years; the amount of funding he plans to make available in 2018, 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27966/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, investment in cycling infrastructure over the period in question was delivered under a number of different programmes and schemes, namely the Smarter Travel Programme, Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme and the Regional Cities Programme.

Projects funded under the Smarter Travel Programme, funded directly by the Department, involved integrated initiatives across a number of aspects of active/smarter travel and incorporated measures such as investment in cycle lanes, bike parking, footpaths, traffic calming measures, shared streets and other interventions that encourage and support modal shift to walking and cycling.

In addition since 2010 my Department has also provided funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme and the Regional Cities Programme to implement sustainable transport projects, including providing cycling infrastructure, in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and the regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Given the overarching scope of these programmes, it is not possible to isolate the specific funding allocation to cycling infrastructure over the preceding 5 years.

Looking forward, I was delighted to secure over €110m in capital funding which will be directly allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 2018-2021, which represents a threefold increase in funding on 2018 over the four year period. This programme will provide active travel

routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure. Allocation of funding and details of individual projects are managed by the National Transport Authority in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

A further €135m capital funding is allocated over this same period for investment in Sustainable Urban Transport projects, and these will include projects that will provide either direct or indirect improvements for urban cycling. This programme builds on investment to date to deliver improvements in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in the regional cities and the Greater Dublin Area. It includes traffic management, bus priority and other smarter travel projects, which will allow transport infrastructure to function more effectively and will help relieve traffic congestion. Allocation of funding and details of individual projects are also managed by the National Transport Authority in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

As the Deputy is aware, a further transformative initiative to support the modal shift to cycling will be delivered under the BusConnects programme, a plan to fundamentally transform Dublin's bus system. It is calculated to either build or improve over 200km of cycle tracks/lanes, alongside bus routes on the key radial routes into the city centre. This will provide safer cycling arrangements, largely segregated from other traffic along those corridors. This initiative is the foundation of the overall cycle network that has been planned for the Greater Dublin Area.

Public Transport Data

495. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the payments made from the green public transport fund. [27967/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): A Green Public Transport Fund was established by my Department in 2017 to support the uptake of low carbon, energy efficient technologies within the public transport sector. The fund will support the piloting and uptake of energy-efficient and alternatively fuelled technologies for PSO operators within the bus fleet and small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector, as well as bridging the price differential between such technologies and conventionally fuelled vehicles.

Under the new National Development Plan, we have committed that, from July 2019 onwards, we will no longer buy diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleet. Work is underway on preparing for implementation of this. In tandem, an up-to-date and comprehensive set of vehicle trials is being planned to commence later this year to help further inform purchasing decisions for new buses over the coming years. The technologies likely to be tested include full electrification, diesel-electric hybrids, and compressed natural gas; it is expected that the vehicles will be tested in both the GDA and in a regional city. The trials are likely to consider CO2 emissions, air quality impacts, and contribution potential towards renewable energy targets as well as costs, vehicle availability, and operational/infrastructural requirements. It is envisaged that in 2018 the NTA will employ the Fund to support the alternative urban bus fleet trials.

Funding has also been targeted to support the transition of the national SPSV fleet to alternative technologies through the establishment of a new Electric Vehicle SPSV Grant Scheme. By the end of May 2018, €45,221 had been drawn down from the Green Public Transport Fund to support this scheme. In addition later in 2018, as outlined above, the fund will support public transport bus trials to be deployed by the NTA to assess the various green options.

Road Safety

496. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the detail of his Department's involvement with the rollout of eCall (details supplied). [27968/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Department of Communications, Climate Change and Environment (DCCAE) has responsibility for the Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS) in Ireland. eCall is an EU initiative with the purpose to bring rapid assistance to motorists involved in a collision anywhere in the European Union and is an equipment device which alerts emergency services in the event of a collision. This is mandatory from 31st March 2018 and is a requirement under the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Directive 2010. In addition the ECAS had to be upgraded to accept these type of emergency calls by October 2017.

As my Department leads in relation to ITS it has engaged with DCCAE on eCall and has facilitated DCCAE engagement in an EU Commission programme, I_HeERO, which provided significant funding to assist with the upgrade of the ECAS.

Cycling Policy

497. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has undertaken a review of the national cycle policy framework; and if so, if he will provide a copy of same. [27969/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, one of the primary objectives of creating a National Cycling Policy Framework was to create a strong cycling culture so that cycling is seen as the normal way to get about, particularly when commuting over shorter journeys.

I am conscious of the key contribution that cycling can play as part of an integrated Public Transport policy. Census 2016 recorded a significant rise in the numbers cycling to work. It was also pleasing to note in the same CSO survey walking or cycling was the preferred mode of transport used for 45% of all journeys under 2km. That growing trend will be catered for by providing a network of safe cycling facilities that will encourage increased numbers to adopt what is a convenient and healthy mode of transport. As traffic levels rise in urban areas, cycling will play an increasing role in alleviating congestion and contributing to economic success.

In the Greater Dublin Area there has been a significant modal shift. The Annual Canal Cordon Report recently published by Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority - which provides data on trends in mode share of vehicles and people crossing the Canal Cordon in Dublin between 7am and 10am - indicates this change. It shows that 70% of all inbound trips crossing the canal cordon were made by a sustainable mode which includes cycling, walking, taxi and other public transport. Over the last 11 years, the share for sustainable modes has grown by 9 percentage points, and since 2010 there has continually been year-on-year growth. The most recent figures show that the mode share for cars has dropped to under 30% for the first time; it is now 29.2%, compared to 40% as recently as 2010. It should also be remembered that this figure does not include the numbers using private bicycles, Dublin Bikes or other public bike schemes between the canals.

In order to continue to build on this momentum and to encourage further modal shift nationally, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have secured over €110m in capital funding which is directly allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 2018-2021. A further €135m capital funding is allocated over this same period for investment in Sustainable Urban Transport

projects, and these will include projects that will provide either direct or indirect improvements for urban cycling. Investment of more than €750m on the Bus Connects Programme during the same period will deliver a transformative investment package that will finance new and expanded bus routes, greatly improve bus access, and also includes the commencement of construction of core bus routes that include segregated cycle lanes and pedestrian footpath all which will greatly assist in encouraging modal shift. My Department also spends over €2.5m per annum on behavioural change programmes including Green Schools, Cycle Right and Smarter Travel Workplace and Campus programmes aimed at encouraging a modal shift.

While significant progress has been made under a number of objectives contained in the National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) my Department has not yet undertaken a formal review of the policy framework or its implementation. However, the NCPF has been integrated into the Development Plans of the majority of local authorities so ensuring that the objectives and policies to support and promote cycling are taken account of in current and future planning. In addition, the National Transport Authority (NTA) published the GDA Cycle Network Plan covering the seven local authority areas in the Greater Dublin Area in 2013.

My Department has commenced a review of public transport policy “to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy”. Work on this policy review is at an early stage and is currently drawing together data and information from many sources. The review will cover all areas of public transport policy.

Smarter Transport

498. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has undertaken an annual review of the Smarter Travel policy as provided for in the document itself; and if so, if he will provide a copy of same. [27970/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The principles in the Smarter Travel policy are key drivers underpinning transport policy development within my Department and, as the Minister responsible for implementing these policies, I am fully committed to implementing cost effective actions that will contribute to the delivery of a sustainable and low carbon transport system for Ireland.

The Smarter Travel policy recognises that there is a significant challenge in changing travel behaviour, a challenge that is not exclusive to Ireland. Modal shift to sustainable transport modes and reducing our reliance on the car remain key policy objectives, and this is reflected in the wide range of infrastructure investment and behavioural change programmes administered and supported by my Department.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department has commenced a review of public transport policy “to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy”. Work on this policy review is at an early stage and is currently drawing together data and information from many sources. The review will cover all areas of public transport policy including smarter and active travel.

Departmental Funding

499. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the projects funded by the National Transport Authority’s sustainable transport measures grant programme for the greater Dublin area in each of the relevant local authorities in 2017; the amount

spent in each local authority on specifically walking or cycling projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27973/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, investment in the Greater Dublin Area on cycling and walking infrastructure in 2017 was delivered under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme through the National Transport Authority (NTA).

Projects funded under the this scheme for the Greater Dublin Area delivered improvements in public and sustainable transport infrastructure, including traffic management, bus priority and other smarter travel projects, allowing the transport infrastructure to function more effectively and helping to relieve traffic congestion. These projects also involved integrated initiatives across a number of aspects of active/smarter travel and incorporated measures such as investment in cycle lanes, bike parking, footpaths, traffic calming measures, shared streets and other interventions that encourage and support modal shift to walking and cycling. All funding in the Greater Dublin Area for cycling and walking programmes in 2017 came from the STMG programme. Given the overarching scope of these programmes, it is not possible to isolate the specific expenditure on cycling and walking infrastructure in 2017.

In 2017, under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants scheme, Dublin City Council received €3.7m, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council €1.3m, Fingal County Council €0.5m and South Dublin County Council received €1.7m.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) who work in conjunction with the various local authorities is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and oversees all Sustainable Transport projects funded by this Department.

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

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

500. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided relating the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27981/18]

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 operation of individual roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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

Light Rail Projects Status

501. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the status of the Luas for Finglas. [28063/18]

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

The NTA's Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 includes a number of proposals to further develop the light rail network including the extension of the Luas Green Line to Finglas.

Building on the success of Government's continued investment in building capacity and expanding the Luas network, the National Development Plan (NDP) will provide funding to undertake appraisal, planning and design of Luas network expansion to Finglas and also Bray, Lucan and Poolbeg. This is to ensure that we will be ready to expand Luas to where and when it is needed in line with sustained development in these areas.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for further reply on the information sought and issues raised. The Deputy should contact my office should a reply not be received within 10 days.

Early Years Sector

502. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline her views on a matter (details supplied) on a capital funding allocation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27382/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Early Years Capital Programme is designed each year as a discreet scheme to assist the sector to increase capacity and improve quality. In 2017 and again in 2018, the capital programme was over-subscribed indicating high demand and interest in the funding. The number of applications for the 2018 Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital Programmes was particularly high, with over 1,900 applications received.

All applications were appraised in a fair, thorough and impartial manner by Pobal on behalf of the Department. Due to the high demand for capital funding and the particularly strong standard of applications received, many services who submitted quality applications unfortunately did not receive an offer of funding. I regret that on this occasion the service in question's application did not result in an offer of funding.

All applicants who were unsuccessful have the opportunity to request a call-back on their capital application from Pobal, who can provide them with feedback and guidance on their application. All applicants who were unsuccessful can also request to have their application reviewed. Details on how to request a feedback call and/or review were sent to applicants from Pobal following the announcement of capital decisions. In addition, I would encourage this childcare provider to contact their local City/County Childcare Committee who can provide information and support on a range of issues that may be of assistance.

There are no further Capital programmes planned for 2018. Consideration of the 2019 capital programme is currently underway and feedback received will be used to inform the design of next year's scheme.

Child and Family Agency Reports

503. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when a person

(details supplied) will report on the alleged failures of Tusla in its handling of an alleged case of neglect and abuse of a number of children in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27474/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy is referring to an independent review I commissioned, in agreement with the Minister for Justice and Equality, to examine and report on the management of a complex and serious case of alleged child abuse and neglect involving sixteen children in four families.

While there is no evidence of any serious mishandling of the case by either Tusla or An Garda Síochána, I considered that it would be good practice to arrange for a short, focused independent ‘Serious Incident’ review of the actions taken in the case. The primary purpose of the review is to ensure that any learning which may arise is captured and informs future work.

The Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, and member of the Review Panel, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, is assisting with drafting the terms of reference for the review. These Terms of Reference have been submitted to the Attorney General’s Office in draft format, and are currently being considered by the Department of Justice and Equality, before they are finalised.

It is not possible to give a timeframe for the delivery of the report at this stage, given the complex and unusual nature of this case, and the importance of ensuring that this non-statutory review does not risk prejudicing the on-going investigation and criminal prosecution.

Traveller Education

504. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set down the estimated cost of restoring the teacher service for Travellers. [27535/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy may be aware, the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers was discontinued with effect from September 2011, in line with Department of Education and Skills policy on the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision.

The Department of Education and Skills have advised that the funding costs for the programme in the final full year of the programme in 2010 were €2,716,737.

Foster Care

505. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set out the status of a person (details supplied) in foster care. [27623/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to inform the Deputy that I am not in a position to comment on individual cases.

Children residing in foster care are subject to a Care Order. In some cases, a Guardian Ad Litem may be appointed to represent the best interests of the child, and to advocate on their behalf.

I wish to remind the Deputy that where cases have been heard in camera, it is not appropriate for me to make such comments as may lead to the identity of a child being revealed.

I can confirm that I have passed the matter to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for their

appropriate attention.

Family Support Services

506. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline her plans to grant funding to a group (details supplied) in view of the nature of the specialised services they provide; if Tusla is in a position to also provide further funding to the group; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27655/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department does not provide funding to the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has confirmed that it provided funding of €6,300 to the named organisation for Family Support Services Counselling in 2017.

Tusla has advised me that funding for 2018 has not yet issued to the organisation referred to by the Deputy, as Tusla has not been furnished with a signed and completed Service Level Agreement for 2018.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

507. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will reconsider a decision to refuse Pobal funding for a group (details supplied); the reason the application was unsuccessful; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27692/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The number of applications for the 2018 Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital Programmes was particularly high with over 1,900 applications received. All applications were appraised in a fair, thorough and impartial manner by Pobal on behalf of the Department.

Due to the high demand for capital funding and the particularly strong standard of applications received, many services who submitted quality applications unfortunately did not receive an offer of funding. I regret that on this occasion the service in question's application did not result in an offer of funding.

All applicants who were unsuccessful have the opportunity to request a call-back on their capital application from Pobal, who can provide them with feedback and guidance on their application. All applicants who were unsuccessful can also request to have their application reviewed. Details on how to request a feedback call and/or review were sent to applicants from Pobal following the announcement of capital decisions.

Consideration of the 2019 capital programme is currently underway and feedback received will be used to inform the design of next years scheme.

Child and Family Agency Staff

508. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set out in tabular form the number of social workers hired in each year since 2014. [27743/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla has advised that the gross number of new social workers hired each year since 2014 is as follows:

Year	Social Workers
Jan To Dec 2014	164
Jan To Dec 2015	180
Jan To Dec 2016	214
Jan To Dec 2017	180
Jan to May 2018	59

The above are the gross number of new social workers hired each year (i.e. attrition is not factored in).

Child and Family Agency Staff

509. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of Tusla's recruitment plan for 2018; the position regarding the targets for the additional administrative and ancillary staff planned to relieve the administrative burden on social workers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27744/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am advised by Tusla that its in-house recruitment function, Tusla Recruit, is working to a recruitment plan in 2018 and will submit its finalised 2018 Recruitment Plan to my Department by the end of this month.

The Plan will provide a full breakdown by grade of the more than 400 posts provided for as part of Tusla's 2018 funding that increased by €40.6 m this year and has increased by €144 m since the establishment of the Agency in 2014.

I am very supportive of Tusla's commitment to continue to prioritise the recruitment of clerical/admin grades in 2018. The deployment of clerical/admin support is essential to ensure that social workers can focus on their core professional tasks. With regard to clerical/admin recruitment specifically, I am advised that the final 2018 Recruitment Plan will show a recruitment target of in excess of 150 whole time equivalent additional clerical/admin staff.

Furthermore, Tusla is developing a Multi-annual Strategic Workforce Plan to identify the future composition of Tusla's workforce for 2019 and beyond. This will build on the 2018 Recruitment Plan and I expect to receive this in Q4, 2018. The development of a Multi-annual Strategic Workforce Plan is a complex task as it needs to support the delivery of Tusla's priorities and encompass a range of activities aimed at addressing Tusla's short, medium and long term needs and to manage the current challenges Tusla faces recruiting and retaining certain key grades.

Adoption Legislation

510. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if emergency legislation is required in respect of persons that may have been the subject of bogus birth registration and have no certificate of adoption in respect of being transferred to their adopting parents; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that persons left in this situation are in an indeterminate position, have grown up with their adoptive parents and need their rights vindicated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27769/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy will of course be aware of my announcement on May 29th that clear evidence of illegal registration

had been identified in respect of 126 St Patrick's Guild files. Tusla are actively engaged in a social work-led process of contacting the individuals concerned in a measured and sensitive way. I am aware of the complexity of issues that may arise for individuals receiving this life-changing information and I have already indicated my willingness to address the issues as they arise, with my Cabinet colleagues as required⁹.

In relation to emergency legislation, my priority is to proceed with the enactment of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 as quickly as possible. The Bill contains provisions relating to access to a statutory information and tracing service, and for the transfer and custody of relevant records. The Bill makes provision for persons who are the subject of illegal registrations, as well as adopted people and my officials are currently reviewing its provisions, in the light of the recent evidence emerging on illegal birth registrations, to ensure that it is robust in addressing the necessary issues. If additional amendments to the Bill are required to ensure this, this can be addressed as the Bill proceeds through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Adoption Registration

511. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set down the estimated number of improper adoption arrangements by religious bodies, nursing homes and other bodies in which no detailed records were ever kept; her views on the prevalence of this practice in the past; the number of persons affected; the steps that have been taken to contact those affected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27770/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Clear evidence of illegal registrations has been recently identified in respect of 126 St Patrick's Guild files and arrangements have been put in place to contact those individuals and support them through the process.

It is, of course, a concern that there may be many more cases of illegal registrations and it is for that reason that I have appointed an Independent Reviewer, Marion Reynolds, former Deputy Director of Social Services in Northern Ireland, to oversee an analysis of relevant records. I expect a report of this analysis within four months of this work being commenced. At that stage, I will be in position, on the basis of the report's findings, to decide on next steps.

This analysis can only be applied to those records currently within the custody of the State. In relation to the remaining estimated 50,000 records that are not in the custody of either Tusla or the Adoption Authority, the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 provides for the transfer of these records to the custody of the Adoption Authority. This will facilitate any necessary review of these records.

Foireann Roinne

512. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgaís bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27801/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tá roinnt oifigigh i mo Roinn atá ábalta seirbhísí a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge. Tá beirt oifigeach fostaithe i mo Roinn a earcaíodh ón tsruth Ghaeilge i gcomórtais de chuid na Seirbhíse um Cheapacháin Phoiblí a bhain le hOifigigh Chléireachais agus le hOifigigh Fheidhmiúcháin; chun feabhas a

chur ar sholáthar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge. Cuireann an bheirt acu seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge ar fáil ach tá dualgaisí breise acu chomh maith.

Adoption Legislation

513. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the position in relation to the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016; the way in which she plans to assist those affected by an incorrect birth registration under the terms of the Bill; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27861/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 has passed Second Stage in the Seanad and it is my intention that the Bill will be enacted by the end of the year. In order to progress the Bill, I recently met with advocacy groups and with Oireachtas colleagues, which was informative and helpful.

The Bill impacts on people who are the subject of illegal registrations, as well as adopted people. It provides people who were subjects of incorrect registrations with access to information and tracing services. It will also protect relevant records by bringing them into the custody of the Adoption Authority of Ireland. Officials are currently reviewing its provisions, in the light of the recent evidence emerging on illegal birth registrations, to ensure that it is robust in addressing this issue. If additional amendments to the Bill are required to ensure this, this can be addressed as the Bill progresses goes through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Departmental Staff Data

514. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if personnel in her Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27945/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): No personnel in my Department have been removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence.

National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy

515. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the progress on each action outlined in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 that fall under her Department's remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27977/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are a number of actions in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) which fall fully, or partly, under the remit of my Department. They are under the education, children & youth, gender equality, and public services themes and are as follows:

Action number	Theme
10, 12 – 13 incl., 15, and 17	Education
38 – 40 incl., 47 – 49 incl., and 52 - 54 incl.	Children and Youth
99 – 100 incl., 102 -103 incl., and 106	Gender Equality
143, 145, and 148 - 149 incl.	Public Services

Progress is being made in the implementation of these actions. My Department is currently preparing a progress report on delivery of the various actions and this will be forwarded to the Deputy when completed.

Officials from my Department attend the NTRIS Steering Group, which is chaired by Minister Stanton, Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration. The Steering Group, whose work which is coordinated by the Department of Justice and Equality, meets on a quarterly basis. The Strategy can be found on the Department of Justice and Equality's website at:

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf/Files/National%20Traveller%20and%20Roma%20Inclusion%20Strategy,%202017-2021.pdf>.

Library Services Provision

516. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be provided for a new library (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27556/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The provision of premises and facilities in the public library service is generally a matter for each local authority in its capacity as a library authority under the Local Government Act 2001. Accordingly, the development of a new library in Dingle is primarily a matter for Kerry County Council.

My Department funds a Libraries Capital Investment Programme that will invest some €23 m in 17 or so projects, as well as the My Open Library service, over the period 2016 to 2021. The programme was developed on the basis of priority proposals submitted by local authorities in 2015. Dingle Library was not submitted as a priority by Kerry County Council at that time and could not be considered for funding under the programme.

In January 2018, my Department received a proposal from Kerry County Council seeking funding for a new library in Dingle. While the current libraries capital programme is currently fully committed, funding for the new library could be considered were additional funds to become available.

Community Development Initiatives

517. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if RAPID or SICAP grants are suitable for funding a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27375/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The RAPID programme has been replaced by the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) which I

launched last month. The Community Facilities Scheme (CFS) has also been amalgamated into the CEP. The new programme provides funding to enhance facilities for disadvantaged communities. If the school in question is developing facilities for use by the entire community, it may be eligible for funding under this programme.

I have provided funding under this programme to each Local Authority area, taking into account levels of disadvantage and population in each area. Westmeath will receive €136,571, which is an increase on their 2017 combined RAPID and CFS allocation. An application can be made to the Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). Decisions regarding funding allocations will be made by the LCDC.

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) does not provide grant assistance for the works described.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

518. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the 2018 capital allocations for the town and village renewal scheme and the CLÁR programme will be finalised and published. [27414/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I launched the 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 27th April 2018 this year with a capital allocation of €15 million. Local Authorities are required to seek expressions of interest from communities for proposals under the scheme, and each county has been invited to submit up to 12 proposals to my Department for consideration.

The closing date for the submission of applications is 30th June.

My Department will assess all of the applications received, with a view to announcing successful projects as soon as possible thereafter. Projects will be expected to commence before the end of the year and will run for a period of up to 18 months.

Successful proposals are likely to include activities which have clear positive economic impacts on rural towns and villages. They will ideally also demonstrate close collaboration between communities and business interests in the design and delivery of the projects.

Over €31.6 million has been approved for more than 450 projects across the country since the Town and Village Renewal scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016. I anticipate that up to 200 further projects will be approved through the €15 million being allocated under the 2018 scheme.

The 2018 CLÁR programme was launched in February this year, with a closing date of end-April. My Department received in excess of 400 applications under CLÁR 2018 and my officials are currently finalising their assessment of these applications. I hope to make an announcement regarding successful applications shortly and listings of all successful projects will be available on my Department's website.

Action Plan for Rural Development

519. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline his plans to revitalise small towns and villages being devastated by rural decline in counties Roscommon and Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27471/18]

520. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline the funding allocated to rejuvenate rural and regional towns in counties Roscommon and Galway in the action plan for rural development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27472/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 519 and 520 together.

Since the publication of the Action Plan for Rural Development in January 2017, significant progress has been made in implementing and delivering on of the wide range of measures contained in the Plan.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a key component in the revitalisation of towns and villages across the country including those in Roscommon and Galway. Over €31.6 million has been approved for over 450 projects across the country since the Town and Village Renewal scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016 including over €2.3 m in respect of 36 projects in Roscommon and Galway. Full details of the projects approved in Roscommon and Galway are available on my Department's website-www.drcd.gov.ie.

I launched the 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme in April of this year, with an allocation of €15 million. The closing date for the submission of applications to my Department is 30th June and I anticipate that up to a further 200 projects will be approved in this round.

My Department also implements a number of other funding programmes which focus on rural development including the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, the CLÁR programme and the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS), the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) and LEADER.

The LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme, which is administered by my Department, is another key part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and has the capacity to deliver significant outcomes for rural areas. Funding under LEADER is available for a range of defined themes, which include enterprise development and job creation, social inclusion and the environment.

The approved LEADER allocations for the duration of the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme for County Roscommon is €8,852,659 and for County Galway is €12,195,883.

I will continue to support the implementation of the Action Plan for Rural Development and this, together with the additional investment provided for through the recently announced Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, will ensure that Government delivers on its commitment of strengthened rural economies and communities.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

521. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated under local improvement schemes in 2018 in counties Roscommon and Galway; if there will be an additional round of funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27476/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) is a programme for improvement works on small private/non-public roads. The scheme is currently funded by my Department and administered through the Local Authorities.

Following on from the successful re-launch of the scheme in 2017, I announced details of the 2018 Local Improvement Scheme on 27 February last. I allocated an initial amount of €10.8 million to County Councils across the country this year under the scheme. The 2018 funding includes an allocation of €370,290 to Roscommon County Council, and an allocation of €942,000 to Galway County Council.

Detailed information regarding the 2018 roads selected by Roscommon County Council and Galway County Council for improvement under the scheme can be found on my Department's website at <http://dracd.gov.ie/about/rural/local-improvement-scheme/>.

As part of the LIS scheme this year, I also requested each County Council to compile a secondary list of suitable LIS road projects which they could complete if additional funding becomes available under my Department's Vote later in the year. I will keep the matter under consideration in the context of my Department's overall expenditure performance over the coming months.

Action Plan for Rural Development

522. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of jobs created under the Action Plan for Rural Development in counties Roscommon and Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27477/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): One of the objectives of the Action Plan for Rural Development is to support enterprise growth and job creation in rural areas. The Government has set a target of supporting the creation of 135,000 extra jobs outside of Dublin by 2020 and specific measures to achieve this target are set out in the Action Plan. These measures are delivered across a range of Government Departments and agencies.

The latest Labour Force Survey published by the Central Statistics Office shows that employment increased nationally by 62,100 in the year to Q1 2018. Employment increased in almost all regions of the country in that period.

While specific figures are not available at county level as requested by the Deputy, employment in the West region, which includes Galway, Roscommon and Mayo, increased by 9,400 in the twelve months to Q1 2018.

The Regional Action Plans for Jobs, which are overseen by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, play a particularly important role in supporting job creation in the regions. My own Department also contributes directly to job creation in rural areas through programmes such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and LEADER. LEADER is a multi-annual programme which has a budget of €250 million over the period to 2020 and has a job creation target of 3,100 over the lifetime of the programme.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, which provides investment of €1 billion in rural areas over the next ten years, will also make a significant contribution to job opportunities for people who live in rural Ireland. I will be launching the first call for proposals under the Fund shortly.

Seniors Alert Scheme

523. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if there are circumstances in which the seniors alert scheme is available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27763/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is responsible for the Seniors Alert Scheme which encourages community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable them to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. Funding is available under the scheme towards the purchase by a registered community-based organisation of a personal alarm or pendant.

Following a review, a new version of the scheme came into effect on 1 November 2017. A number of changes were introduced under the new scheme including the provision of free monitoring for the first year and a revision of the living alone requirements. However, eligibility to the Scheme remains confined to those aged 65 or older. I note that the person in question should be eligible under this requirement in the near future.

Foireann Roinne

524. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27813/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Bunaíodh an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail ar an 19 Iúil, 2017, chun fócus athnuaite agus comhdhlúite a sholáthar ar fhorbairt tuaithe agus pobail in Éirinn.

Níl aon poist sa Roinn agus baint riachtanach ag an nGaeilge leis, áfach, aithníonn an Roinn an cúram chun seirbhísí áirithe a chur ar fáil don phobal trí Ghaeilge. Tá roinnt daoine sa roinn agus is féidir leo déileáil le freagracht agus fiafraí trí Ghaeilge, de réir mar is gá.

Leagtar síos in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 creat reachtúil do sholáthar seirbhísí Stáit trí Ghaeilge. Tá céad Scéim Teanga na Roinne á dréachtadh faoi láthair de réir a ndualgas reachtúil faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003.

Community Services Programme

525. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be awarded for a project (details supplied). [27816/18]

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

The organisation in question submitted a business plan for consideration under the CSP in April 2017. This application was unsuccessful but the organisation was given an opportunity in Autumn 2017 to submit a revised business plan. This was received by Pobal in December but again failed to adequately meet programme criteria, including those relating to financial sustainability.

The organisation may submit a new expression of interest to my Department should its position in relation to long-term financial sustainability improve.

Charities Regulation

526. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will request the Charities Regulator to undertake an examination of the final situation of an organisation (details supplied). [27843/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department does not provide funding to the organisation in question.

The Charities Regulator is an independent authority and was established in October 2014 under the Charities Act 2009. The key functions of the Regulator are to establish and maintain a public register of charitable organisations operating in Ireland and ensure their compliance with the Charities Acts. I have no function in this matter.

However, I understand it is open to any individual to report a concern regarding any charity to the Charities Regulator and full details of the process involved are available on www.charitiesregulator.ie

Social Enterprise Sector

527. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of progress of the national policy on social enterprises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27875/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development includes a commitment to develop and publish a National Policy on Social Enterprise, which will encompass the full range of activity in the sector.

In July 2017, my Department established a research partnership with the Social Finance Foundation for the purpose of carrying out targeted research and stakeholder engagement with the social enterprise sector to inform the development of the National Policy.

To support this work a Steering Group was established, comprised of representatives of Government Departments, social enterprise practitioners and representatives of the sector, to oversee the conduct of the research. In addition, a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process took place, involving regional workshops and an extensive online survey of social enterprises, all conducted in late 2017.

The research outputs from this project are currently being finalised, and my Department has now begun the process of preparing the draft policy. My Department will undertake further consultation with relevant stakeholders in developing the policy.

I anticipate that the National Policy on Social Enterprise will be published in the Autumn following this further consultation process.

Departmental Staff Data

528. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27957/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July 2017.

Since the establishment of the Department, no personnel have been removed from their position, transferred to another role or had their employment terminated due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence.

The Department is committed to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, under the Standards in Public Office Act 2001.

Departmental Reviews

529. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the six monthly report on Realising our Rural Potential will be published in view of the fact that it was due to be published in February 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28019/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development, was launched in January 2017. The Action Plan contains 277 actions for the delivery across Government, State agencies and other bodies over the next three years to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

The second progress report on the Action Plan was published on 4 May 2018 and is available on my Department's website at <https://drcd.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/APRD-Second-Progress-Report-Final-PDF.pdf>.

The report provides an update on the status of 271 Actions which were due for delivery in 2017, or which have a longer timeframe but had on-going activity taking place in 2017. The report shows that 254 of these actions were either completed on schedule or substantially advanced, representing an implementation rate of 93%.

The small number of actions which were behind schedule will continue to be monitored with a view to their completion as soon as possible.

The Government has reinforced its commitment to rural Ireland through the establishment of a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which will provide an additional €1 billion of investment in rural Ireland over the next 10 years. I will be launching the first call for proposals under the Fund shortly.

Social Isolation

530. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his attention has been drawn to the report 'A Connected Island, An Ireland Free from Loneliness'; his views on the findings of the report; the actions he plans to take on foot of the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28022/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am aware of the report which the Deputy refers to. As the Deputy will appreciate, the response to the issue of loneliness and isolation is delivered across a number of Government Departments and organisations. In that regard, the funding within other Government Departments which is available to initiatives or programmes which help address loneliness is a matter for the Ministers concerned.

From my own Department's perspective, I am responsible for the Seniors Alert Scheme which encourages community support for vulnerable older people in our communities through the provision of personal monitored alarms to enable them to live securely in their homes with confidence, independence and peace of mind. Funding is available under the scheme towards the purchase by a registered community-based organisation of a personal alarm or pendant.

During 2017, spend on the Scheme amounted to €2.7 million, with over 12,700 applications approved and more than 10,000 installations completed. A new version of the scheme came into effect on 1 November 2017, introducing a number of changes, including the provision of free monitoring for the first year and a revision of the living alone requirements. To the end of May 2018, over 9,200 applications were approved, with almost 10,000 installations completed.

The issue of isolation whether in urban or rural areas is one which should concern us all and I am committed to continuing my Department's response to this issue through programmes such as Seniors Alert.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme

531. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the back to school clothing and footwear allowance by €50 per child. [27523/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the extra costs when children start school each autumn. The Government has provided €49.5 million for the scheme in 2018 which will operate from June to September. The rate of payment in 2017 was increased by 25% to €125 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 years and €250 for children aged 12 years and over in second level education. These rates are payable in 2018 for eligible children. End of year records show that under the 2017 BSCFA scheme, payments were made to 151,000 families in respect of over 275,000 children at a cost of €49 million.

Using the total number of children covered by the scheme in 2017 as a basis, the additional cost to increase the BSCFA rates by €50 per child would be €13.75 million. Changes to increase the rate of payment of any scheme administered by my Department would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

532. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing funding to the school meals programme by percent-

age rates (details supplied). [27524/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €54 million in 2018 representing an increase of €6.5 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement. Based on the 2018 budgetary allocation of €54 million, the additional annual costs of expanding the school meals programme by 10%, 20%, 30% and 40% are €5.4 million, €10.8 million, €16.2 million and €21.6 million respectively. Changes to increase the funding of any scheme administered by my Department would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

533. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the A1 application process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27738/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An A1 Portable Document is a certificate issued in respect of an employee to confirm the attachment of that employee to the Social Security system of an EEA Member State. The certificates are important to prevent the duplicate charging of social insurance where employees work across the EEA, they confirm the duration of the attachment period and they confirm the country that is responsible for the payment of certain social security benefits. The turnaround time for processing of applications for A1 certificates is generally set at 4 weeks by my Department. However, properly completed applications that are submitted with the required supporting documentation contribute towards much speedier decisions, so much so that the majority of applications received are decided upon, and issued, within two to three weeks of original receipt.

A number of strict conditions are set out in the EU regulations, all of which must be met before an A1 Portable Document can be issued:

- An employed person wishing to avail of the posting arrangements must already be subject to Irish social security legislation immediately prior to posting. In this regard a minimum period of one month may be considered as satisfying this requirement, with shorter periods requiring a case by case evaluation.

- The employer must ordinarily perform substantial activities, other than purely internal management activities, in the territory of the Member State in which it is established.

- The work shall be regarded as being performed for the employer in the sending State and a continuance of a direct relationship between the worker and the employer that posted him must exist. The nature of such a 'direct relationship' requires the employee to verifiably continue to fall under the authority of the employer which posted him/her. A number of elements are taken into such evaluations including the responsibility for recruitment and dismissal, the employment contract, responsibility for remuneration (without prejudice to possible agreements between the employer in the sending State and the undertaking in the State of employment on the payment to the workers) and the authority to determine the nature of the work.

It should be appreciated that all applications for A1 Portable Documents must be thoroughly checked for compliance with the Regulations before a certificate is issued and Ireland is required to make every effort to ensure the integrity of its decisions, as part of the shared responsibility to ensure uniform application of the Regulations across all EEA Member States.

My Department is aware of the complexities of the Regulations for new Companies and my officials are very happy to help you develop an understanding of the rules that apply to the granting of A1 Portable Documents for employers that wish to avail of the posting provisions prescribed in the EU Regulations.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

534. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's support grant application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27369/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for Carer's Support Grant was received in my Department on 20 April 2018. This application is currently being processed and a decision will be made shortly.

Departmental Correspondence

535. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27370/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A reply issued to the Deputy on 30 April 2018, I have arranged for a duplicate copy to issue.

Social Welfare Appeals

536. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied) in relation to an overpayment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27400/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 18 June 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Expenditure

537. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018 on rent supplement payments to landlords being paid rent through one or other of the schemes for categories of units (details supplied). [27433/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 30,000 recipients for which the Government has provided €180 million for in 2018.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement, the Department's relationship is with the tenant. The tenant's engagement with the Department usually takes place after the tenant has reached an agreement with the landlord.

Landlord statistics for 2016 and 2017 are provided in the attached tabular statement. Also provided is a snapshot of the current landlord mix per the categories requested for week ending 18 June 2018.

The analysis shows that approximately 93% of all annual outturn is made to landlords with less than ten units. A significant majority of these landlords have only one property rented via the scheme, i.e., for 18th June 2018, of the 21,292 landlords noted for that week, 18,196 (85%) are renting only one property via rent supplement. Landlords renting two properties, 1,887 (9%) and those with renting three properties, 559 (3%) represent the other two main category groups of landlords. The remaining 650 landlords, those renting more than three properties, will account for approximately €12.5 million of the forecast outturn for 2018.

Rent Supplement: Outturn by Landlord Category for 2016, 2017 and 18 June 2018 Snapshot

Category			2016			2017	2018
No. of Houses Rented by Landlord via RS	No. of Landlords	Rent Paid to Landlords by DEASP	% Revenue Share	No. of Landlords	Rent Paid to Landlords by DEASP	% Revenue Share	No. of Landlords
		€'000			€'000		
							As at 18/06/2018
Less than or equal to 10	46,153	254,028	92%	35,443	215,112	93%	21,198
11 to 50	285	18,312	7%	178	13,068	6%	87
51 to 100	10	1,478	1%	11	1,760	1%	4
101 to 200	5	1,476	1%	4	1,281	1%	3
Greater than 200	Zero	0		Zero	0		0
Grand Total	46,453	275,294	100%	35,636	231,221	100%	21,292

Fuel Allowance Payments

538. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection if a fuel allowance payment was made to a person (details supplied). [27501/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): A revised decision in this gentleman's case has resulted in an over-payment being assessed against him in respect of Disability Allowance payments he received while absent from the State from 13 March 2016 to 01 November 2016. An appeal against this decision is currently with the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) and an oral appeal hearing is being scheduled. The person concerned will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

The Department is obliged to recoup any debt to it in an appropriate and timely manner and this includes the setting off of arrears due against the debt. The person concerned has been awarded Free Fuel Allowance from 2 November 2016 but arrears cannot be processed until the person in question has had their appeal heard and entitlement has been established.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals

539. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an increase of payment for a qualified child relative to children allowance was made to a person (details supplied). [27503/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): A revised decision in this gentleman's case has resulted in an over-payment being assessed against him in respect of Disability Allowance payments he received while absent from the State from 13 March 2016 to 01 November 2016. An appeal against this decision is currently with the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) and an oral appeal hearing is being scheduled. The person concerned will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

An application for an Increase for a Qualified Adult (IQA) allowance was received from this gentleman on 30 May 2018. This has now been awarded along with an Increase for Qualified Children (IQC) at full rate including the first mentioned above.

The department is obliged to recoup any debt to it in an appropriate and timely manner and this includes the setting off of arrears due against the debt. Arrears for IQA and IQC cannot be processed until the person in question has had their appeal heard and entitlement has been established.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

540. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will continue to receive the one-parent family payment until they complete their final year of college; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27561/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Qualification for One Parent Family Payment (OFP) is based on the age of the youngest child in the family. Currently payment normally continues up to when the youngest child reaches

seven years of age. Special provisions are in place for customers who are in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA), in these cases the OFP will remain in payment until the child for whom the DCA is paid, reaches 16 years of age. As the person concerned is in receipt of DCA, her OFP will continue until November 2018. If a person is in receipt of OFP (or Jobseeker's Allowance Transitional payment) he/she can choose to stay on his/her current social welfare payment (if he/she continues to meet the rules of the scheme) and apply for a student grant or he/she can choose to transfer to the BTEA, depending on which option benefits the person most.

As the person concerned will no longer satisfy the OFP qualifying criteria from November 2018, she may opt for Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) in order to receive financial assistance from the Department to facilitate her towards completion of her studies. She must apply to her local INTREO office in order to be accepted on this scheme in advance of the start of the upcoming semester. The person concerned would be entitled to BTEA until the end of her course of study.

BTEA participants are eligible for support to offset the cost of the student registration fee, including other fees payable to access courses, if the BTEA participant satisfies the eligibility criteria for both. Although individuals may not be entitled to the maintenance component of the student grant, they must still submit a student grant application form to SUSI to be assessed for a fee grant to pay for Student Contribution (formerly called the student services charge), field trip costs and tuition fees (if payable). However BTEA customers cannot be in receipt of both BTEA and a Student Maintenance grant.

Community Employment Schemes Places

541. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a community employment placement in respect of a person (details provided) will be extended to allow them complete a training course; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27583/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned completed his Community Employment Programme on 15/6/2018, having spent total of 164 weeks on the scheme. A P45 has issued to him. His start date was 4/2/2013. Requests for extensions for participants on Community Employment Schemes are only considered by this Department at the request of the Project Sponsor. Per Departmental records no such request has been received.

Disability Services Funding

542. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason for the refusal to grant an application by a centre (detail supplied) in County Sligo in order for it to make an appeal to Pobal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27584/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): 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 for the proposals received. 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>.

Following an extensive information campaign (including information events held in Cavan, Dublin and Limerick) and an application process, the Ability programme attracted applications from 59 projects.

A detailed and independent assessment process was undertaken by Pobal of the applications. Neither my colleague Minister Regina Doherty T.D., or myself had any role to play in the assessment process.

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%)

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.

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.

It is important to note, that where an organisation would like additional feedback, Pobal facilitates this as part of their standard processes. In such circumstances, as set out in the letters issued by Pobal, organisations make contact with Pobal and arrangements are made to provide further feedback. I understand that such a request has been made by this organisation and arrangements are being made by Pobal to discuss the matter with the organisation and provide additional feedback.

Pobal has also 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 were 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>.

The assessment process was therefore 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 applied irrespective of where the application originated. Therefore, the likelihood that an application based in an individual county would receive funding was based on the number of applications from that county and on an objective assessment by Pobal of the quality of that application.

The Ability programme attracted applications from 59 projects: applications were received from organisations in 22 counties. There were 13 counties in total for which only one application was received. Counties for which an application was received but could not be recommended for funding by Pobal include-Sligo, Donegal, Carlow, Clare, Westmeath and Waterford.

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.

In addition to the Ability programme, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection continues through its nationwide network of Intreo offices and through the Employ-Ability 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.

Pensions Data

543. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing all pension payments by payment type, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27585/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing all pension payments by €1 per week is detailed in the table:

Scheme	Full Year Cost 2019 - €m
Social Insurance Schemes	
State Pension (Contributory)	22.15
Widow/er’s Contributory Pension (Aged 66 and over)	4.46
Deserted Wife’s Benefit (Aged 66 and over)	0.12
Death Benefit Pension (Aged 66 and over)	0.02
Social Assistance Schemes	
State Pension (Non Contributory)	5.03
Carer’s Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	0.13
Half Rate Carer’s Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	0.31
Total Pension Payments	32.22

It should be noted that these costings include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant.

The costs shown above are on a full year basis and are based on the estimated number of recipients in 2019. It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of

emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2019.

The appropriate rate of weekly social welfare rates of payment, including the rates for pensioners, will be considered by Government in the context of Budgetary deliberations.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme

544. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the date upon which the four-year rule with respect to the back-to-work enterprise allowance was reduced to two years; and the instrument used to effect this change. [27597/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to work enterprise allowance (BTWEA) is a non-statutory scheme designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years; 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2.

The duration payable for the BTWEA was reduced from 4 years to 2 years with effect from 1st May 2009 in respect of new claimants. This change was announced in the Supplementary Budget of 7th April 2009 and implemented by way of amendment to the administrative guidelines. Existing participants on the scheme at 1st May 2009 maintained their payment for a 4 year period.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

545. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to issues following recent changes which now allow persons on JobPath to also take part in a community employment scheme (details supplied); the reason persons are unable to leave JobPath once they are on a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27602/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware the primary goal of my Department's activation services including the JobPath service, is to move people from full-time and part-time unemployment to full-time and sustained employment.

From 1st June all long term jobseekers who are currently engaged with the JobPath service and those who may be referred in future, have the option of applying for CE and Tús placement, thus facilitating the combination of the strengths of the two programmes. It will, in particular, enable those people with the JobPath service to not only continue to receive the personalised employment counselling and job search support provided by their JobPath personal advisors but also to avail of a Tús or CE 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 slightly.

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, any JobPath meetings and other interventions 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.

Application for participation on CE and Tús by JobPath customers is entirely voluntary and at their discretion.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Payments

546. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Laois will receive a social welfare payment. [27620/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A renewal application for Working Family Payment (WFP) was received from the person concerned on 16th April 2018.

However the renewal application could not be processed as the applicant had changed employment during the course of the last WFP award period. As the applicant had changed employment since the last renewal date it is necessary to complete a new application for WFP.

A new application for WFP was recently received from the person concerned.

The person concerned has been awarded WFP with effect from 15th March 2018 to 13th March 2019.

The first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on Tuesday 26th June 2018 and any arrears owing will also issue on this date.

The person concerned was notified on 22nd June 2018 of this decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Foster Care Supports

547. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a guardian payment is €400 while a fostering payment is €365; and the reason there is a difference in the payments in view of the fact that the responsibility is the same. [27657/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): At the outset, I want to clarify for the Deputy that the weekly rate of foster care allowance exceeds the weekly rate of guardian's payment.

One of the roles of my Department is to provide income support to families with children in the State. Guardian's payment (contributory) and guardian's payment (non-contributory) are, respectively, social insurance and social assistance (means-tested) payments made to a person caring for a child, where that child is defined as an orphan under social welfare legislation. These payments were known as orphan's payments until they were re-named in July 2006.

The purpose of the guardian's payment scheme is to provide income support in respect of those children whose parents are unable to provide for them, through death or other circumstances. Currently, there are around 1,600 people receiving guardian's payments in respect of approximately 2,300 children. Expenditure on guardian's payments schemes (contributory and non-contributory) was €19.7 million in 2017. A budget increase of €5 per week per orphan, implemented from March 2018, brings the weekly rate to €181 per orphan; the highest rate of weekly child income support paid by my Department.

Responsibility for fostering arrangements rests with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Specifically, under the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, "*National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020 – Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*", responsibility for supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children and the provision of family support services lies with Túsla, the Child and Family Agency. Family support services provided under the National Policy Framework are available to all families in the State, not just those caring for foster children.

While it is acknowledged that there are perceived similarities between guardian's payments and foster care allowance payments, the schemes differ fundamentally in their purpose. As outlined, the aim of the guardian's payment scheme administered by my Department is the provision of income support. However, the Child and Family Agency in exercising its functions has a broader range of responsibilities and considerations in respect of children in the care of the State than the provision of income support alone.

Foster care allowance for a child up to 12 years is payable at the weekly rate of €325, increasing to €352 for those over 12 years. Any proposal to align the weekly rate of guardian's payment to that of foster care allowance would have to be considered by Government in an overall budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Registration of Births

548. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27679/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The current legislation governing registration of births provides only for the registration of a mother's details and a father's details. It is not possible, at present, to register the details of a birth using the term "parent". This is provided for in section 99 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which is yet to be commenced.

In the meantime, births should continue to be registered under the current procedures and then re-registered (to have the second parent registered as "parent") once the amending legislation has come into effect. The relevant provisions for re-registration are contained in section 95 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which amends civil registration legislation relating to registration of births, and which also is yet to be commenced.

A number of amendments to civil registration legislation, including those referred to above, remain to be commenced pending the roll-out of training to staff of the Civil Registration Service who are employees of the HSE. The General Register Office is in a position to begin provision of training as soon as the HSE notifies it of the dates and venues. Discussions to commence the training are well advanced and it should hopefully commence shortly.

I welcome the initiative today by my colleague, Minister Harris, to bring forward two minor amendments to the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 that will allow for commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of that Act, dealing with Donor-Assisted Human Reproduction.

Invalidity Pension Applications

549. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27703/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 07 December 2017. Payment, including arrears due from 07 December 2017 to 27 June 2018, will issue to his nominated bank account on the 28 June 2018. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 21 June 2018.

The gentleman's application for an increase in respect of a qualified adult and a qualified child is being processed.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

550. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the entitlements to holidays for employees working in the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27712/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An employee's entitlement to paid annual leave is set out in section 19 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (the 1997 Act). Section 19 of the 1997 Act transposed Article 7 of the original EU Working Time Directive (Directive 93/104/EC) - now consolidated by EU Directive 2003/88/EC. Under section 19 of the 1997 Act, an employee acquires an entitlement to 4 weeks' annual leave if he or she works at least 1,365 hours in a leave year, or acquires an entitlement to one-third of a working week for each month in the leave year in which he or she works at least 117 hours, or acquires an entitlement to 8 per cent of the hours he or she works in a leave year (but subject to a maximum of 4 working weeks).

The Court of Justice of the European Union has interpreted the annual leave provisions of the EU Working Time Directive and has ruled that annual leave entitlement also accrues during sick leave. These rulings on accrual of annual leave entitlement during sick leave were formally transposed into Irish law by section 86(1) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 and amended the annual leave provisions in the 1997 Act.

Any annual leave entitlements in a contract of employment over and above the statutory minimum will be a matter for negotiation between the employer and employee. Therefore, employers and employees are free to agree better terms than those set out in the legislation.

The 1997 Act also provides for 9 public holidays in addition to the statutory annual leave entitlements.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) provides information on employment rights, equality and industrial relations matters. Any persons with questions or complaints regarding their rights under employment legislation should contact Workplace Relations Customer Service on lo-call 1890 80 80 90 or via its website, www.workplacerelations.ie.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Administration

551. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the med 2 form needs a signature from the spouse of the claimant; the arrangements made to facilitate a claim without this signature in cases in which the claimant and spouse are estranged, for example in the case of domestic abuse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27745/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A person who wishes to obtain treatment benefit (TB) as a dependent spouse on their spouse's/partner's PRSI record, must complete an eligibility check form, e.g. ME2 for hearing aids, to have their eligibility assessed. In order to determine eligibility the Department must confirm two things, firstly that the insured spouse/partner satisfies the PRSI contributions requirement and secondly that the person seeking TB is financially dependent on them.

To ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations, the Department seeks the written consent of both parties to their data being used to make the necessary eligibility enquiries. The insured spouse is asked to consent to the Department accessing their PRSI record to qualify their dependant spouse/partner; they are not asked to consent to their spouse having the treatment.

Where a person indicates that they are not in a position to obtain their spouse/partners signature on the form, the Department can still proceed to determine eligibility. In these cases, they should indicate in writing the particular circumstances that apply when submitting the relevant eligibility check form to the Department. The necessary enquiries will then be made to establish eligibility and to advise the customer accordingly.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

552. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in respect of an appeal for payment of rent supplement arrears in the case of a person (details supplied); if an oral hearing can be facilitated in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27775/18]

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.

The person concerned was in receipt of rent supplement since 12/12/2016 at a monthly rate of €861.29 with a total of €8,613 paid to December 2017. On 6/9/2017, a letter was issued to

the person concerned advising their claim was under review and to return requested documents within 14 days to avoid suspension to payment. The review form SWA 3A states “Failure to return the form (fully completed) by the date specified may result in your payment being suspended/withdrawn without further notice”. As documents were not returned, payment was suspended. On 8/1/2018, a second letter was issued to the person concerned advising them that given their circumstances they could nominate the rent supplement payment to be paid directly to the landlord. To date, form SWA 3A, verification of rent paid in September 2017, November 2017 or December 2017 has not been received as requested.

On 28/3/18, the person concerned forwarded a copy of a determination they had received from the landlord. On the 9/5/18, the landlord contacted this Department to advise the person concerned had left the property following an enforcement notice. As is procedure, rent supplement was closed at the address. Notification of cessation of claim could not be issued to the person concerned as their whereabouts was not known at that time.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

553. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) has enough contributions to apply for an invalidity pension. [27780/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The lady concerned is currently in receipt of a disability allowance payment from my Department at a reduced rate, because of her means.

Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

To qualify for IP a claimant must, inter-alia, have at least 260 (5 years) paid PRSI contributions since entering social insurance and 48 contributions paid or credited in the last or second last complete contribution year before the date of their claim. Only PRSI classes A, E, H or S contributions are reckonable for IP purposes.

A claimant must also be regarded as permanently incapable of work, which is defined as: incapacity for work of such a nature that the likelihood is that the claimant will be incapable of work for life, or an incapacity which has existed for 12 months prior to the date of claim, and where the Deciding Officer or an Appeals Officer is satisfied that the claimant is likely to be unable to work for 1 year from the date of claim.

According to the Department’s records, it appears that this lady satisfies the PRSI contribution criteria for IP. However, entitlement to IP can only be definitively determined on receipt of a completed application form. An application form issued to her on 25 June 2018. On receipt of the completed form, a decision on her eligibility will be made and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

554. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27806/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Níl Oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha ag an Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí. Tá freagracht, áfach, ar an Aonad Pleanála Corparáidí as faireachán a dhéanamh ar fhorfheidhmiúchán Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 agus Scéim Teanga na Roinne 2015-2018. Feidhmíonn an tAonad mar rannóg idirchaidrimh le hOifig an Choimisinéara Teanga agus leis an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta agus cuireann an tAonad tuairiscí agus eolas eile ar fáil de réir mar is gá.

Mar chuid dá fheidhm faireacháin, tugann an tAonad Pleanála Corparáidí faoi roinnt áirithe cúraimí:

- Déantar forfheidhmiúchán ghealltanais na Roinne sa Scéim Teanga a athbhreithniú gach bliain – ba i Mí na Nollag 2017 a tugadh an t-athbhreithniú ba dhéanaí chun críche;

- Coinnítear liosta, in ord aibítre de réir an tsuímh, de shonraí teagmhála na mball foirne a bhíonn toilteanach seirbhís trí Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil;

- Eisítear fógraí gach ráithe chuig an bhfoireann ar fad, chun dualgais na Roinne a chur i gcuimhne dóibh maidir le bheith ag déileáil le custaiméirí ar mian leo plé le seirbhísí na Roinne trí Ghaeilge;

- Cinntítear go gcuirtear na dualgais faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 agus faoin Scéim ar a súile don fhoireann i gcúrsaí ábhartha oiliúna na foirne lena n-áirítear cúrsaí intreorach d'iontrálaithe nua agus cúrsaí oiliúna do bhainisteoirí;

- Déantar suirbhéanna ar ár n-oifigí a bhíonn ag plé aghaidh ar aghaidh lenár gcustaiméirí chun leibhéal agus cineál na seirbhíse a bhíonn ar fáil trí Ghaeilge a chur in iúl agus

- Tuairiscítear faoi sheachadadh na seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge agus faoi fhorfheidhmiúchán na Scéime inár dTuarascáil Bhliantúil.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

555. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27836/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

556. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27848/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 11 April 2018. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 11 July 2018. Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

557. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding pensions for community employment scheme supervisors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27882/18]

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. They are not employees of my Department or public servants, and as such were not subject to pay reductions under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) which only applied to public servants.

While the motion called for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to meet with unions with a view to addressing the issue of CE supervisors' pension provision, the issue is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A number of Departments including my own Department are represented on this group, as are the unions and Pobal.

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.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

558. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if personnel in her Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27950/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In the four year period from 1st June 2014 to 31st May 2018, thirteen (13) staff members of my Department had their employment terminated as a result of serious misconduct in breach of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. In addition, one other staff member was transferred to another role during this period due to misconduct in breach of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy

559. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress on each action outlined in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 that fall under her Department's remit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27975/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Inclusion Strategy referred to by the Deputy is a whole of Government initiative aimed at improving the lives of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland.

My Department is committed to advancing new employment and economic opportunities for these communities, through effective public employment services, and in partnership with stakeholders on the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Steering Group, informed by representatives of the Traveller and Roma communities.

Progress on the actions relevant to my Department in the Strategy is set out in the following two tables, covering the two themes of "Employment and the Traveller Economy" and "Public Services".

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Table 1: DEASP progress on actions under theme 3 of the NTRIS: Employment and The Traveller Economy

No.	Action	Progress Made/Planned Progress
24	The Department of Social Protection (DEASP) will promote the availability of existing employment and training services (e.g. those provided by the Education and Training Boards) to the Roma and Traveller communities and continue to ensure promotional and information materials are available and accessible on any of its schemes and services including via the Department's website. The Department of Social Protection will provide tailored supports for the long-term unemployed and for young people to build their confidence and prepare them for the workplace.	The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) is currently planning a series of customer information campaigns for 2018 on how best to promote the availability of existing employment and training services to both the traveller and Roma communities as outlined in the National Traveller/Roma Inclusion Strategy. In the coming months, the Department will seek to engage with a number of Traveller and Roma representative groups to discuss the schemes and services with a view to assessing how best to proceed with the promotion of these schemes and services.
25	The Department of Social Protection will develop targeted initiatives to increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training services.	In order to inform developments on this action, the Department has begun collating statistical information (to the extent that this is available) on current levels of participation by the Traveller and Roma communities in activation programmes.
27	The Department of Social Protection and Department of Rural and Community Development will put in place liaison arrangements between INTREO and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) to enable Travellers and Roma to access relevant supports, training and opportunities.	DEASP staff in INTREO offices will continue to work in partnership with SICAP officers to enable Travellers and Roma customers to access relevant supports, training and opportunities.
32	The Department of Social Protection, in collaboration where appropriate with the Department of Justice and Equality, will support Traveller MABS.	The DEAPS supports National Traveller MABS (NTMABS), by way of including provision for an onward annual grant from the Citizens Information Board's overall annual funding allocation. In 2018, NTMABS has been allocated €308,576 from CIB's budget
36	The Department of Social Protection will ensure that Travellers and Roma under the age of 25 who register as unemployed claimants of Jobseekers' payments will receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of registering, in line with commitments under the Youth Guarantee.	This is ongoing under the 'Youth Guarantee'.

Table 2: DEASP progress on actions under theme 10 of the NTRIS: Public Services

Theme: 10. Public Services

Number	Action	Progress Made / Planned Progress
143	All Departments and relevant agencies will ensure that all relevant public service staff members receive anti-racism and cultural awareness training.	The Department continues to provide up-to-date information and training to staff on entitlements for all clients in relation to its schemes and services. Awareness and respect for equality and diversity (including relevant legislation) is an integral component of all our training activity in line with the core values of the Department. A programme framework of a QQI Level 6 Certificate in Social Protection Studies has been developed DEASP in partnership with the National College of Ireland. The framework has been submitted and presented to QQI for formal evaluation and validation and is currently progressing through the governance processes and structures. The DEASP and NCI expect to be a position to commence enrolments in Q4 2018, subject to official QQI validation.

Citizens Information Board

560. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has received the 2017 annual report of the Citizens Information Board; if so, if she is satisfied with the way in which the vote in Dáil Éireann on the Citizens Information Board and MABS of 30 March 2017 is treated therein in view of the Citizens Information Board executive's subsequent course of action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28069/18]

561. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has received the 2017 annual report of the Citizens Information Board; if so, if she is satisfied with the way in which the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Social Protection's Report and recommendations of 1 June 2017 are treated of therein in view of the Citizens Information Board executive's subsequent course of action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28070/18]

562. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has received the 2017 annual report of the Citizens Information Board; if so, if she is satisfied that all expenditures reported therein meet the requirement of the Comptroller and Auditor General that public moneys may be appropriated only on the authority of Dáil Éireann, in view of the vote in Dáil Éireann on Citizens Information and MABS of 30 March 2017 and in further view of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Social Protection's report and recommendations of 1 June 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28071/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 560 to 562, inclusive, together.

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).

In February 2017, the Board of CIB made a decision to reorganise the governance arrangements of the 93 individual local companies to a new regionally based 16 company model comprising 8 CIS and 8 MABS companies. The aim of the change is to improve the effectiveness of the control environment, financial management and governance of the CIS and MABS networks which are 100% State funded. The change is about improving the governance framework, focusing on frontline service delivery to citizens, improving the consistency and quality of service delivery and where possible, extending services for those who need them. I am satisfied that the board of CIB made this decision in the best interest of the citizens which it serves.

Implementation of the Board's decision has already seen the establishment of 6 new companies – 3 CIS and 3 MABS in North Leinster, South Munster and Dublin South. All staff, assets and liabilities of the 38 local companies involved in this phase have transferred to the new companies. There has been no change to service delivery points, no reduction in staffing, nor has there been any diminution of services for clients. The final phase of implementation is now underway, with the remaining 5 CIS and 5 MABS regional companies due to be established in Q4, 2018.

The annual grant provided to CIB under Section 4 of the Comhairle Act 2000 is accounted for under Section 22 of the Act, which requires that the annual accounts, approved by the Board, are submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG).

CIB's 2017 accounts have already been submitted to the C&AG for audit. When the audit is complete, a copy of the annual accounts and the report of the CandAG 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.

Section 24 of the Comhairle Act, 2000 requires CIB to make an Annual Report to the Minister by 30th June each year. The annual report for 2017 is expected by the required date and will be laid the Houses of the Oireachtas, as required by legislation.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Data

563. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the expenditure in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018 on RAS, HAP and all other housing payments to landlords being paid rent through one or other of the schemes for categories of units (details supplied). [27433/18]

579. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the expenditure by his Department on rent supplement payments including RAS, HAP and all other housing payments to landlords being paid rent through one or other of these schemes for units (details supplied), respectively in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and the housing estates and apartment complexes in which more than 10% of

units are in receipt of the respective types of rent supplement. [27470/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 563 and 579 together.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a flexible and immediate housing support that is now available to all eligible households throughout the State. There are currently more than 37,000 households having their housing needs met via HAP and some 21,000 separate landlords and agents currently in receipt of monthly HAP payments.

Limerick City and County Council provides a highly effective HAP transactional shared service on behalf of all local authorities. This HAP Shared Services Centre (SSC) manages all HAP related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord. Accordingly, my Department does not recoup individual local authorities in respect of HAP rental payments in their administrative areas but rather recoups all landlord costs via the HAP SSC.

The HAP scheme is funded through a combination of Exchequer monies and tenant differential rents collected in respect of HAP tenancies. Budget 2018 has increased the Exchequer funding for the HAP scheme to €301 million, in order to meet the continuing costs of existing HAP households, and the costs of the additional 17,000 households, targeted under Rebuilding Ireland, to be supported by HAP in 2018.

The Exchequer outturn for the HAP scheme in 2016 to 2017 and the 2018 spend to date, are as follows:

Year	Target	Additional Households supported at end of year	No. of LAs operating HAP Scheme	Outturn - €M
2016	12,000	12,075	28	€57.69m
2017	15,000	17,916	31	€152.69
2018 (to date)	17,000	8,409	31	€117m

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) was established in 2004 and placed responsibility on local authorities to meet the accommodation needs of people in receipt of Rent Supplement for 18 months or longer, and who are assessed as having a long-term housing need. RAS has provided a more structured, accommodation-based approach to the use of the private rented sector to meet long-term housing need, thereby eliminating dependence on temporary income support payments, i.e. rent supplement.

The table sets out the data available in relation to funding provided by my Department to local authorities under the Rental Accommodation Scheme in 2016 and 2017. Funding provided by my Department includes the continuing cost of contractual agreements made by local authorities with landlords under the Scheme and the additional cost of new tenancies that are secured during that year.

Year	Target	Additional Tenancies supported at end of year	No. of LAs operating RAS Scheme	Exchequer Allocation - €M	Outturn - €M
2016	1,000	1,256	31	131	145*
2017	1,000	890	31	142.8	144.3**

* An additional €13.89m in RAS recoupment claims was offset against local authority RAS Reserves in 2016
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** An additional €1.38m in RAS recoupment claims was offset against local authority RAS Reserves in 2017
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The 2018 budgetary provision is €134 million and will support approximately 19,900 continuing RAS contracts, and the cost of a further 600 tenancies to transfer from rent supplement in 2018 in line with the Rebuilding Ireland targets. Expenditure to 31/05/2018 amounted to €42.7 million. From 2018 onwards, annual RAS targets are reducing to take account of the increasing focus on rent supplement transfer to HAP.

My Department does not collect data in the manner outlined, including in respect of the numbers of housing estates and apartment complexes in which more than 10% of units are in receipt of housing support.

Home Loan Scheme

564. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration has been given to extending the eligibility criteria for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan for applicants with properties on rural sites in excess of 175 sq. m; if further consideration has been given to the differentiation in property values between urban and rural sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27373/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): There is a range of criteria, set out in the enabling Regulations, establishing the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme, which determine whether an applicant will be considered eligible for a loan. The criteria include that the property being purchased with a loan must not have a gross internal floor area of 175 square metres or more.

The Regulations also provide that the Scheme is not available to purchase a house or an apartment which has a market value in excess €320,000 in Counties Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Louth, Meath, or Wicklow or €250,000 in all other areas.

I have no plans to change these provisions at this point in time.

Ministerial Meetings

565. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to a recent meeting (details supplied); if he will liaise with his ministerial colleagues to ensure funding is provided to restore a park; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27402/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I am aware of the recent meeting referred to by the Deputy, organised by Minister McHugh and at which my Department was represented, to discuss funding for the restoration of Swan Park in Buncrana which was damaged following an extreme pluvial rainfall event which occurred in the Inishowen Peninsula area of Donegal on 22 August 2017.

Funding for repair of public infrastructure is undertaken by the relevant Department(s) in line with sectorial responsibilities. Each Government Department liaises directly with local

authorities in relation to funding of repairs and restoration being carried out through the local government system.

Since 2009, my Department has made financial support available to assist local authorities in meeting the costs of clean-up and necessary immediate works associated with significant severe weather emergency events. This is in recognition of the exceptional nature of activities carried out by local authorities in responding to these types of emergencies and the fact that the costs of these un-programmed activities cannot be met from within existing resources. My Department's scheme does not include funding for capital repair works.

Following receipt of a request from Donegal County Council for funding of €1.729m, my Department recouped that sum in full to the Council on 15 December 2017 under the arrangements for response and clean-up costs in relation to the flooding in the Inishowen peninsula in August 2017. The funding of repair to public parks, including Swan Park, does not fall under the remit of my Department's scheme and my Department's involvement in the funding aspects of this matter concluded with this payment to Donegal County Council.

Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility

566. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the financial supports available for the removal and replacement of an asbestos roof on a privately owned residential bungalow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27427/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department does not have any grant available specific to the removal of asbestos from homes.

The Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability provide a range of grants for necessary improvement works or adaptations to houses in order to facilitate the continued independent occupancy of their own homes by older people and people with a disability. These schemes cover works reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of applicants, and could in those circumstances include the removal of asbestos.

The schemes are administered by local authorities and it is a matter for each local authority to determine how the funding is apportioned between the various grant measures and to manage the operation of the schemes in their areas from within the capital allocations provided by my Department.

For private home owners, it is recommended that expert advice should be sought in dealing with asbestos materials and if removal is necessary it should only be done by a competent contractor with the required training.

Departmental Funding

567. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an organisation (details supplied) has received a grant; if so, when it received the grant; and the location in which the housing was built. [27430/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In December 2008, my Department approved funding of €2.2m under the Capital Assistance Scheme in respect of a project intended to be delivered by St. John of Gods at Clancy Barracks, Clancy Quay, Dublin 8. However, no payments were made in respect of this scheme as the

project did not proceed.

Local Authority Housing Data

568. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average cost of one, two, three and four bed local authority new build units on the basis of costings submitted to his Department by local authorities over the past 12 months; the all-in costs and construction only costs; and the itemised costed list of the individual non-construction costs for each unit size. [27434/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information sought in relation to average costs, to the extent and in the format to which it is readily available, is set out in the following table. The costs set out below are average costs arising in local authority areas, which are based on the analysis of returned data from tendered social housing schemes over an extended period. Construction cost figures are reflective of building costs (including VAT) and also include normal site works and site development. All-in costs include cost of construction, land cost, professional fees, utility connections, site investigations/surveys, archaeology where appropriate, and contribution to public art. Abnormal costs are excluded from these figures.

-	1 bed	2 bed (1 sto- rey)	2 bed (2 sto- rey)	3 bed	4 bed	1 bed Apt.	2 bed Apt.	3 bed Apt.
Con- struc- tion Costs	€ 143,750	€ 149,576	€ 157,771	€ 167,224	€ 176,629	€ 150,918	€ 157,065	€ 173,953
All-in Costs	€ 182,944	€ 189,644	€ 198,491	€ 209,106	€ 219,694	€ 192,068	€ 199,112	€ 218,818

My Department continues to maintain a clear focus on delivering value for money both in terms of the construction and all-in costs of social housing projects.

Local Authority Housing Provision

569. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the planning rebate scheme uptake; the cost per annum by local authority since its establishment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27435/18]

570. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of reducing the planning rebate scheme minimum unit threshold from 50 to five units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27436/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 569 and 570 together.

The Development Contribution Rebate Scheme was introduced in 2015 to enhance the viability of the construction and sale of residential units at affordable prices in locations of greatest need. The rebate is applicable in respect of units that were completed and sold after 1st January 2016 and before 31st December 2017 that meet the other conditions of the scheme, including that eligibility is confined to residential developments of at least 50 housing units. The scheme

only applies to the metropolitan areas of Cork City and County Councils and all of the Dublin local authority areas.

The first recoupments were made under the scheme this year and to date some €2.8m has been paid to local authorities in respect of 326 housing units; further claims are on hand for processing which will take total recoupments under the scheme to over €5m in respect of 564 units, broken down as follows:

Local Authority	Units	Amount
Fingal County	238	€2,241,293
South Dublin County	270	€2,213,641
Dublin City	56	€606,141

Given that the timeframe for the scheme, within which it was open to developers to deliver and sell qualified units, has passed, I am not considering any proposals to adapt or extend the scheme. It is not possible to estimate the cost of extending the scheme in the manner suggested as this would depend on the number of units that would meet the scheme criteria.

Rental Sector Strategy

571. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of doubling the number of whole-time equivalent staff working on the private rented sector functions in local authorities. [27437/18]

572. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of doubling expenditure on the private rented sector functions in local authorities. [27438/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 571 and 572 together.

The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, set out a series of measures to be introduced to ensure the quality of private rental accommodation by strengthening the applicable standards and improving the inspection and enforcement systems.

On 1 July 2017, updated regulatory standards, the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2017, came into effect. These Regulations focus on tenant safety and include new measures covering heating appliances, carbon monoxide and window safety. In August, my Department published a guidance document to assist and support local authorities in implementing the new Regulations.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations and responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations rests with the relevant local authority, previously supported by a dedicated stream of funding provided from a portion of the proceeds of tenancy registration fees, collected by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

Since establishment of the RTB, over €34 million has been paid to local authorities to assist them in the performance of their functions under the Housing Acts, including the inspection of rented accommodation. Over 185,000 inspections were carried out during this period. The Department offers a subvention to local authorities to carry out inspection of properties under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations with funding dispersed on the basis of €100 per inspection carried out and €50 per follow-up inspection that achieves compliance.

However, the Rental Strategy recognises the need for additional resources to be provided to local authorities to aid increased inspections of properties and ensure greater compliance with the Regulations. Provision has been made for an additional €2.5m in 2018, with the intention of providing further increases each year in the period to 2021 to facilitate a targeted inspection coverage of 25% of rental properties annually.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each Chief Executive is responsible for the staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. Consequently, it is a matter for each authority to consider what level of staffing and resources are appropriate in order for the authority to fulfil its statutory and regulatory functions. In this context, it is not possible to provide the specific information sought.

Private Rented Accommodation Deposits

573. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated cost of establishing a national deposit scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27441/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015 provides for, among other things, the establishment of a tenancy deposit protection scheme to be operated by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

There have been significant changes in the rental market since the 2015 scheme was first envisaged and designed. For example, the draft scheme was originally intended to be financed by the interest payable on deposits lodged; this is no longer viable, given current financial market conditions. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that disputes relating to deposits are no longer the most common dispute type referred to the RTB.

Financing the operation of the scheme is an important consideration, particularly in terms of ensuring that the likely outcomes of a new scheme are achieved efficiently and effectively and that the best value from public funds is secured. In 2015, an analysis of the potential Deposit Protection Scheme costings was undertaken and the estimated costings were as follows:

- Set-up Year: €1.5m; annual operation: €3.5m - €4m.

However, there have been significant changes to interest rates, the financial market and rents since then and careful consideration would be required to introduce any necessary reforms and enhancements to the 2015 scheme, with a view to considering whether and how to introduce a re-designed scheme that is fit for purpose and suitable for current and future rental and financial markets. Following completion of the review of the existing provisions and other matters, it is anticipated that legislative changes will be required and these will need to be developed and progressed through the Oireachtas.

Residential Tenancies Board Data

574. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for the Residential Tenancies Board in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [27442/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The Residential Tenancies Board's (RTB) funding is derived primarily from a proportion of the fee income accruing from tenancy registrations, as set down by Ministerial Order. This income was intended to enable the RTB to move to an entirely self-financing position in 2010. However, due to a deterioration in the RTB's finances as a result of reduced registrations, a growing demand for RTB services and new functions under amendments made to the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, it has become necessary to provide direct Exchequer funding to supplement fee income.

Section 176 of the Residential Tenancies Act provides that the fees received by the Residential Tenancies Board under the Act shall be paid into, or disposed of for the benefit of, the Exchequer in such manner as I, as Minister, may direct. By various Ministerial Directions since 2005, a percentage of fees received by the RTB under the Act has been allocated for transfer to local authorities for the purpose of the performance of their functions under the Housing Acts in relation to private rental standards inspections. Since 1 July 2016, the RTB retains the entirety of the fees received under the Act to defray its costs.

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 2016, 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.

In 2016, my Department provided some €668,000 in Exchequer funding to the RTB. €170,000 of this amount was a requirement that arose outside of the 2016 Estimates process during the year, for an advertising campaign carried out by the RTB in quarter 1 2016, highlighting changes on foot of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015.

In 2017, Exchequer funding of €2,329,000 was paid by my Department to the RTB. Included in this amount was €265,000 additional funding outside of the Estimates process in 2017, that arose during the year in respect of:

1. the provision of Fire Safety leaflets to all landlords to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in respect of fire safety requirements - €107,200;
2. €112,000 in respect of an Auto-address Eircoding project which was required to support the roll-out of the Rent Pressure Zone measure; and
3. Legal costs - €46,000.

RTB drawdown of Exchequer funding to date in 2018 amounts to €2.355m (from the overall

allocation of €5.341m for 2018), primarily to support the operational costs of the RTB's core functions and the additional powers and functions to be rolled out to the RTB over a multi-annual change period which will empower the RTB by giving it the necessary powers and resources to protect tenants and landlords in the residential rental sector.

Details of the RTB's own self-financing income and expenditure can be found in the RTB Annual Report and Financial Statements at the following link: <https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/rtb-publications/>.

Shared Ownership Scheme

575. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of recommencing the shared ownership scheme stood down in 2011. [27448/18]

583. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on the shared ownership scheme per annum since its inception from 1991 until its disestablishment; the number of units provided per annum through that period in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27568/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 575 and 583 together.

In 2011, the Government announced the standing down of all affordable housing schemes, including the Shared Ownership (SO) scheme, given the changes in the property and lending markets. From 1991 to 2010, a total of 16,492 loans were issued under the scheme, of which 3,323 remained at the end of Q4 2017.

Data in relation to activity under the Shared Ownership Scheme (and other affordable housing schemes) is available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/affordable-housing/affordable-housing-and-part-v-statistics. Information is readily available on the costs of the SO scheme per annum from its inception until its discontinuance.

There are no plans at this time to develop a new Shared Ownership (SO) scheme. If such a scheme was to be introduced, any costs arising would be determined by the terms of the scheme and the number of eligible applications received.

Social and Affordable Housing Funding

576. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated first and full year cost of recommencing the 1999 affordable purchase scheme stood down in 2011. [27449/18]

582. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on the affordable housing initiative through site grants and other departmental funding per annum since its inception from 1999 until its disestablishment; the number of units provided per annum through that period in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27567/18]

585. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-

ernment the amount spent on the low cost housing sites initiative through site grants per annum since its inception from 1999 until its disestablishment; the number of sites provided per annum through that period in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27570/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 576, 582 and 585 together.

Data relating to activity under the Sale of Sites Scheme are available on my Department's website at the following web-link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/affordable-housing/affordable-housing-and-part-v-statistics>.

Data concerning activity under the Part V Scheme, the Shared Ownership Scheme, the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme and the Mortgage Allowance Scheme are also available on my Department's website and can be accessed at the following web-link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/affordable-housing/affordable-housing-and-part-v-statistics>.

Information regarding Exchequer funding for affordable housing is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

I have commenced the relevant provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, the effect of which is to place a new scheme for affordable purchase on a statutory footing. It is intended that the income thresholds will be the same as for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, and other criteria will be set out in regulations. The elected members of each local authority will be responsible for determining the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households, in line with the framework of the national scheme.

To support the main local authorities concerned in getting their sites ready for affordable housing, I am redirecting the €50 million funding for phase 2 of the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund to the Serviced Sites Fund, increasing the scale of the fund from the previously announced €25 million to €75 million, to cover the period to 2021. To drive activity, I will be inviting applications for funding under the Serviced Sites Fund later this week.

Emergency Accommodation Provision

577. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if standard cost efficiency guidelines have been issued for the procurement of emergency accommodation in privately operated hotels, hostels and bed and breakfasts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27461/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of homeless accommodation and related services rests with individual housing authorities.

My Department does not fund any homeless service directly but provides funding to housing authorities towards the operational costs of homeless accommodation and related services. Under the funding arrangements, funding is provided on a regional basis, whereby it is delegated to a lead authority in each region. Protocols have been put in place with each of the

lead authorities, which set out the arrangements and responsibilities between the Department and the lead authorities in relation to the provision of on-going revenue funding for homeless accommodation and related service costs. The protocols provide that all funding arrangements, delegated under the funding allocation system in place, must be in accordance with statutory requirements and public financial procedures, including the Public Spending Code.

In addition, delegation is contingent on key principles and the allocation of such funding by the lead authority, within individual headings of expenditure, is on the basis that all such decisions are in accordance with Government policy and the attainment of key performance targets and objectives. Housing authorities must provide at least 10% of the cost of any funded services from their own resources. Furthermore, housing authorities may also incur additional expenditure on homeless related services outside of the Exchequer funding arrangements that apply.

Property Registration

578. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1284 of 12 June 2018, if the matter raised will be re-examined in view of the fact that the Property Registration Authority has no responsibility for the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27464/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 120(5)(a) of the Registration of Title Act 1964 as amended provides that a claim under Section 120 shall be made in the prescribed manner to the Property Registration Authority and notice thereof shall be given to the Minister for Finance. All compensation payable under Section 120 shall be paid by moneys provided by the Oireachtas.

Compensation paid under Section 120 is provided from the public purse. If not agreed, this is determined by the Court, therefore requiring due consideration and, where relevant, advice from the Chief State Solicitor. Matters that involve a claim for substantial compensation are referred to the Chief State Solicitor where counsel's advice may be sought.

While the Property Registration Authority remains responsible for dealing with the matter, it is not in a position to progress an application for compensation until such time as it receives the necessary advice from the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

Question No. 579 answered with Question No. 563.

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report

580. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a matter (details supplied) regarding the local government boundary review will be clarified. [27485/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I established two independent Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees on 13 December 2017 to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas having regard to, among other things, the results of Census 2016 as well as the commitment to consider reducing the size of territorially large local electoral areas as set out in A Programme for Partnership Government (May 2016). The two Committees reported to me on 12 June 2018 and now stand dissolved.

I am satisfied that the recommendations of the two Committees are clear and will enable work to commence within my Department on the preparation of the necessary orders to give effect to the Committees' recommendations in relation to local electoral areas. It is anticipated that these orders will be made in the Autumn of this year.

Working Family Payment

581. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on the way in which the working family payment is treated as income when registering for social housing supports while council mortgage applicants cannot include the working family payment as an income. [27547/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Social Housing Support Household Means Policy sets out the manner in which housing authorities will assess the means of applicant households for the purpose of determining the household's ability to provide accommodation from its own means and by extension its eligibility, or otherwise, for social housing support.

The determination of whether an applicant household meets the income criteria is based on a calculation of net income. Net income means that income tax, Universal Social Charge, pension-related deduction within the meaning of Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009, and PRSI are deducted from the relevant assessable gross income. The income of all persons aged 18 years and over included in a social housing application is assessed for the purposes of determining whether an applicant household meets the income requirements.

In general, all income is assessable including all social welfare payments received except a specific list of payments that include for example child benefit, education grants, carer's allowance, payments under FAS schemes and fuel allowance. The Means Policy specifically states that Family Income Supplement (now known as Working Family Payment or WFP) is deemed to be income for the purposes of assessing eligibility for social housing. This is appropriate for assessing the level of social housing support that may be given, as such support is based on the means of the household seeking the support and may be subject to review if the circumstances of the household change. The Social Housing Support Household Means Policy was developed in 2011 and is currently under review by my Department, with a view to assessing whether the approach taken is still appropriate in the current housing context and to ensure that household income is treated in a consistent manner across the social housing system.

With regard to the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme, it is not, as a general rule, available to those in receipt of unemployment or other social welfare benefits. However, where there is a primary income of a waged or salaried nature, long-term State benefit payments may be considered. State benefit payments allowable are:

- State Pension (Contributory);
- State pension (Non-Contributory);
- Widow's/Widower's Pension;
- Blind Pension;
- Invalidity Pension; and
- Disability Allowance.

The reason that these payment are considered as assessable income for the scheme is that they are long-term payments. The inclusion of other social welfare payments, which are more short-term, would not be appropriate in determining a capacity of applicants to repay a loan over a period of up to 30 years, as is the case with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan.

The long-term nature of the social welfare payment must be confirmed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. All applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are referred to the relevant local authority's Credit Committee for a final decision.

Question No. 582 answered with Question No. 576.

Question No. 583 answered with Question No. 575.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

584. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on the mortgage allowance per annum since its inception until its disestablishment; the number of units provided per annum through that period in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27569/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Mortgage Allowance scheme provides for an allowance of up to €11,450 payable over a 5 year period to tenants or tenant purchasers of local authority housing, to assist them to purchase or have a private house built with a mortgage. New applications are still being accepted by local authorities under the scheme.

The amount spent on the scheme, and the number of housing units supported, are as follows:

Year	Amount	Houses
2018 (to 22 June)	€177,677	16
2017	€436,609	38
2016	€470,478	41
2015	€518,628	49
2014	€623,585	64
2013	€998,403	107
2012	€1,344,078	142
2011	€2,016,535	196
2010	€2,640,408	246
2009	€3,189,733	284
2008	€3,177,887	279
2007	€3,336,791	284
2006	€3,133,177	253
2005	€2,606,355	207
2004	€2,275,896	14
2003	€1,722,879	153
2002	€1,090,482	128
2001	€822,266	141
2000	€1,007,983	186
1999	€1,136,812	198

Year	Amount	Houses
1998	€1,291,404	209
1997	€1,365,592	245
1996	€1,087,797	214
1995	€759,334	163
1994	€569,773	114
1993	€129,069	24
Totals	€37,929,631	3,996

Question No. 585 answered with Question No. 576.

Foreshore Issues

586. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an official from the foreshore licence unit will visit a house (details supplied) in County Kerry to inspect the flood prevention works carried out on the foreshore and confirm it is the primary residence of the occupants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27594/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The property referred to is one of four still advertised as available for holiday rental. The particular area in question is State-owned foreshore reclaimed without appropriate consent and without payment of rent which, except in exceptional circumstances, foreshore leases/licences attract.

The persons named have made an offer to purchase the area. However, my Department has informed them that the nature of the offer made could not be recommended for approval to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. To date, no agreement has yet been reached to sell this area of foreshore. My Department last corresponded with the legal advisor to the persons named in March 2018, outlining this position.

Foreshore Issues

587. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an official from the foreshore licence unit will visit a club (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27595/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): There is an ongoing legal case involving the club concerned. This matter is therefore sub-judice. In that context, it would be inappropriate for an official of my Department to visit the club or for me to comment further.

Constituency Boundaries

588. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the timeline for the review of the European Parliament seat and boundary review; if there is further consideration or amendment of the recently published review of the local government boundaries; and if the publication of that report constitutes the official enactment of the new local electoral area boundaries. [27612/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The composition of the current 2014-2019 European Parliament was established by European Council Decision 2013/312/EU of 28 June 2013, which, in the case of Ireland, provided for the election of 11 MEPs. The current number of MEPs in the European Parliament is 750 plus the President with each Member State having between 6 and 96 Members.

Council Decision 2013/312/EU provided that it would be revised again in advance of the 2019-2024 parliamentary term upon an initiative of the European Parliament to be presented to the European Council before the end of 2016. The launch of this process was, however, postponed by the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs (i.e. the AFCO Committee) until after the referendum in the United Kingdom on its withdrawal from the European Union.

Following a report on the matter by the AFCO Committee, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on 7 February 2018 which contains a Proposal for a Decision of the European Council establishing the composition of the European Parliament. In broad terms, the proposal provides, among other things, that:

- when the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union becomes legally effective, 27 of the United Kingdom's 73 seats would be re-distributed among 14 Member States, of which 2 would go to Ireland, increasing Ireland's MEPs from 11 to 13 in number. This would mean a reduction in the overall size of the European Parliament from 751 to 705 members;

- however, as set out in the Parliament's resolution, if the date on which the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union becomes legally effective takes place after the European Parliament elections are held in mid-2019, the number of MEPs to be elected from each Member State for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term would remain the same as that of the current parliament. The additional seats would only be filled on the date after which the United Kingdom's withdrawal becomes legally effective.

The proposal, which will require unanimity, is now under consideration within the European Council. My Department is aware that the consent of the Parliament was sought by the Council by way of written procedure and that MEPs gave their consent to the proposal on 13 June 2018. I understand that it is anticipated that the proposal will be adopted by the European Council at its meeting on 28-29 June 2018.

In the event that Ireland's total number of seats in the European Parliament is changed in respect of the 2019-2024 parliamentary term, it will be necessary to review our European constituency arrangements. Under section 5(1A) of the Electoral Act 1997, provision is made for the establishment of a Constituency Commission in such circumstances to review, and report with recommendations on, European Parliament constituencies. This was done in 2013 prior to the last elections to the European Parliament.

On the matter of local electoral areas, I established two independent Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees on 13 December 2017 to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas having regard to, among other things, the results of Census 2016 as well as the commitment to consider reducing the size of territorially large local electoral areas as set out in A Programme for a Partnership Government (May 2016). The two Committees reported to me on 12 June 2018 and now stand dissolved.

The publication of the two Boundary Committee Reports does not constitute the official enactment of the new local electoral area boundaries. Orders will need to be prepared in ac-

cordance with section 23 of the Local Government Act 2001. In this regard, work will now commence within my Department on the preparation of the necessary orders to give effect to the Committees' recommendations in relation to local electoral areas.

It is anticipated that these orders will be made in the Autumn of this year. The local electoral areas to be specified in these orders, and the number of members to be elected for each electoral area, will apply at the next local elections, which are due to be held in late May 2019 in tandem with the elections for the 2019-2024 European Parliament.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

589. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the report on the future of the tenant purchase scheme will be published; the reason for the delay in publishing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27631/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

In line with the commitment given in *Rebuilding Ireland*, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

In finalising the report some further consultation was necessary and due consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Student Accommodation

590. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of his commitment to bring student residences under the rules of the Residential Tenancies Board in respect of rent pressure zones; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27632/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Rent Pressure Zones have their legal basis under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016, which regulate the landlord-tenant relationship in the private rented residential sector. Pursuant to section 3(1) of the 2004 Act, the Acts apply to every dwelling that is the subject of a tenancy. The provisions of the Acts, including those provisions providing for the rent pressure zone measure, do not apply where the dwelling is occupied by a person under an agreement which is not a tenancy agreement.

Licensing agreements, such as those that apply in respect of some types of student accommodation, are not covered by the legislative protections of the Residential Tenancies Acts

because they are not deemed to be tenancy agreements for the purposes of the Acts. Consequently, the restrictions on rental increases in Rent Pressure Zones, provided for in the Acts, do not apply to accommodation types that are not subject to a tenancy agreement.

However, if there is any doubt as to the type of agreement in place in respect of individual dwellings, for example whether it is a tenancy or licence, the matter should be referred to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) for a determination.

In addition, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is liaising with my Department, including through the forum of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation which is convened by the DES, to examine the wide range of student accommodation types (and ancillary services) available with a view to considering how best to regulate pricing arrangements, including, if appropriate, new regulatory or legislative proposals. I have asked that both Departments consider further action in this area in the context of the forthcoming Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2018.

Home Loan Scheme

591. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the action he plans to take in circumstances in which individuals have been refused a loan under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme due to the fact that they were marginally over the threshold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27648/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): It continues to be the case under the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, which was introduced on 1 February 2018, as with the previous local authority House Purchase Loan, that single applicants applying for the loan must not be earning more than €50,000 gross per annum and the combined income of joint applicants must not be greater than €75,000 gross per annum. This is to ensure the effective targeting of limited resources.

I have no plans to review these income limits at present.

Home Loan Scheme

592. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the timeframe for the publication of the review of the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27649/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Following the initial launch and roll-out of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) in February, 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, in April as part of my Department's ongoing oversight and monitoring of the new loan scheme 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 online 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 monitor the uptake and responses to the loan scheme, clarifying any issues that arise, as necessary. 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.

Housing Adaptation Grant Applications

593. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of county councils that have received in full their 2018 allocations for the provision of the housing adaptation grant scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27669/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): My Department provides funding to local authorities under the Housing Adaptation Grants scheme for Older People and People with a Disability in private houses. Information on the 2018 allocations under this scheme, already notified to each of the local authorities, is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/special-housing-needs/minister-english-announces-eu6625-million-funding-improve-homes-older>. Funding is drawn down by the local authorities as they complete projects over the course of the year.

In respect of adaptations and extensions to existing social homes to meet the needs of local authority tenants, the proposals for such works from each of the local authorities have recently been evaluated and funding allocations for the full year will be confirmed shortly to all local authorities. Ahead of that, they have been advancing work under the scheme based on a funding provision of up to 65% of their 2017 allocation. This has allowed them to plan and progress works under the scheme and allows for the full utilisation of the 2018 allocation throughout the year.

Departmental Expenditure

594. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the gross voted capital expenditure for his Department in 2017 and 2018 by function, that is, housing, water, local government, planning and Met Éireann, in tabular form. [27676/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information requested is set out in the table.

-	2017 Gross Voted DHPLG Capital Expenditure (Out-turn) - €000	2018 Gross Voted DHPLG Capital Expenditure (Estimate) - €000
A - HOUSING	759,762	1,065,419
B - WATER SERVICES	18,888	531,918
C - LOCAL GOVERNMENT	11,091	9,942
D - PLANNING	1,240	17,956
E - MET ÉIREANN	1,315	5,750
TOTAL	792,296	1,630,985

Local Authority Housing Rents

595. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the review of the disparate systems of differential rents for social housing will be completed; if his attention has been drawn to the disparity between differential rents in County Wexford and south County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27702/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Rent policy has varied across housing authorities since 1986 with the result that households in similar circumstances may be charged different amounts of rent depending on the city/county they are living in. There are currently 36 differential rent schemes in operation nationwide, which vary both in the amount of rent charged and in what is deemed to be income as well as other administrative matters.

At present the making of rent schemes and the setting of rent levels is a matter for each local authority under the provisions of the Housing Act 1966. Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft national differential rents framework under section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Such a framework had as its main aim the facilitation of a significant harmonisation in local authority rents, whilst retaining the general principle of rents related to household income.

The introduction of a rent framework could mean that the amount of rent payable by households may be subject to change in some cases. This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. The overall objective is to ensure that housing supports are fair and sustainable, prioritise those on the lowest incomes and avoid creating social welfare traps that may prevent people from either returning to work or to the private housing market.

I expect that the review will be completed shortly.

Home Loan Scheme

596. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the criteria for a person to be reclassified as a first-time buyer for the purpose of applying for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; the way in which this applies if the person previously purchased a house with another person and no longer retains an interest in the property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27765/18]

597. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a person that previously owned a property and was not married can be reclassified as a first-time buyer under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; if the same rules that apply to persons that were married and are now separated also apply to couples that were not married; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27766/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 596 and 597 together.

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.

The Regulations under which the Scheme is established provide that the loan is available to

first-time buyers only. The Regulations define a first-time buyer as having the same meaning as a first-time buyer in Section 92B of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999, which defines a first-time buyer as a person who has not individually or jointly with another person previously purchased a house or an apartment.

However, applicants who are separated or divorced may be treated as first-time buyers, in accordance with the regulations, if they meet certain conditions as set out in Section 92B of the 1999 Act, including that:

- they are legally separated or divorced under a court order or by a separation agreement or have been granted an annulment by a court;
- 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;
- they have made no financial gain from the transfer of the ownership of the family home; and
- the other party has remained in the family home.

Under the legislation, applicants wishing to avail of this exception must provide evidence that they are divorced, legally separated or have an annulment granted by the High Court.

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.

Foireann Roinne

598. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Tithíochta, Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [27810/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Mar chuid dá Phleanáil d'Fhórsa Saothair, déanann mo Roinn monatóireacht ar líon na bpost ina bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag teastáil. Tá sé arna chinneadh nach bhfuil poist sórt sin ag teastáil sa Roinn, faoi láthair, agus mar sin níor earcaigh an Roinn Oifigeach Gaeilge ar leith. Déantar athbhreithniú ar an gcás ar bhonn rialta.

Tá roinnt ball foirne faoi láthair i mo Roinn atá cumasach a gcuid dualgas a chomhlíonadh trí mheán na Gaeilge agus is féidir na baill seo a dhíriú i dtreo réimsí oibre faoi leith ina bhfuil gá le Gaeilge agus/nó Béarla nuair is gá. Leanfaidh mo Roinn ag soláthar deiseanna do bhaill foirne a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú trí oiliúint teanga ag leibhéal éagsúla a chur ar fáil.

Approved Housing Bodies

599. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if new community-based housing bodies are eligible for capital funding for the

construction of voluntary houses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27847/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In order to be eligible for funding for the construction of social housing, housing bodies must be registered as Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in accordance with Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992.

To become an AHB, the body must comply with a range of criteria including that it is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Details on how to apply for approved status can be found on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/voluntary-and-cooperative-housing/approved-housing-bodies-AHBs>.

AHBs may avail of funding of up to 100% under my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme to assist them in providing housing for the elderly, homeless and people with disabilities. Details of the scheme and of how to apply for funding under it are available from the local authorities, who are responsible for its administration.

In addition, Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) is available as a low-interest loan provided by local authorities (and recouped by my Department) to AHBs to allow them access to early working capital (up to 30% of the relevant costs) for the purchase, construction or refurbishment of units that will then be made available for social housing purposes under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). Low interest rate borrowings are available to AHBs from the Housing Finance Agency to support the financing of the balance.

The oversight of AHBs is currently conducted through the Voluntary Regulation Code (VRC), Building for the Future, A Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland. The VRC is overseen by the Interim Regulation Committee (IRC), based in the Housing Agency.

Since the Code was put in place, any AHB applying for housing funding from my Department and local authorities must furnish proof of compliance with the Voluntary Code. Only those AHBs that have undergone a satisfactory assessment as part of the annual assessment process by the Regulation Office are considered eligible for funding for the provision of social housing.

Home Loan Scheme

600. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of loans that have been applied for and approved, respectively, under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme by local authority in tabular form; the number of council officials in each local authority area who are dealing with the applications for these loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27876/18]

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 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.

However, 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, and 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. This was made up of 540 applications from Cork, Galway, Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow and 619 applications from Dublin. There were 340 applications received from counties outside those listed.

Of the 1,499 applications received, 1,150 were deemed to be valid. Of these valid applications, 876 had been assessed and 52% of these had been recommended for approval.

Each local authority must have in place a credit committee whose responsibility it is to make the decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the regulations, having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

In relation the number of council officials in each local authority area dealing with applications, it is a matter for each local authority to determine the level of staffing assigned to administering the Scheme, having regard to its resources, its staffing priorities and the volume of applications it anticipates in respect of the new Loan Scheme.

Departmental Staff Data

601. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if personnel in his Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27954/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): No staff in my Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence.

Personnel in my Department operate to the standards outlined in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. Breaches, should they occur, are managed under the relevant policy including the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

Homeless Persons Data

602. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the 875 persons removed from the March and April 2018 homeless report by local authority and by family type in tabular form; the detail of the accommodation arrangements for each of these families at the time they were removed from the homeless figures; and the reason for this removal. [27979/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

My Department currently publishes data on a monthly basis on the number of homeless persons accommodated in emergency accommodation funded and overseen by housing authorities. These reports are based on data provided by housing authorities, produced through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS). The reports are collated on a regional basis, are published on my Department's website and can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

During the compilation of the March Homeless Report, in the course of examining data from local authorities, my Department ascertained that a number of local authorities were categorising households who had been provided with accommodation in local authority owned or leased stock, as being in emergency accommodation. As the households in question were not in emergency accommodation, the relevant local authorities amended their March and April figures accordingly.

My Department does not have a breakdown of the family types involved. The numbers of individuals previously recorded as being in emergency accommodation, who had actually been in houses and apartments prior to the reporting periods in question, is set out in the table below.

Region/local authority	Adults and Dependents
DRHE	376
South West Region(Kerry)	66
Mid –East (Meath)	45
Mid-West Region (Limerick)	101
South East Region (Waterford)	76
North East Region (Louth)	211
Total	875

My Department has written to each local authority, seeking further information on the accommodation in place for all individuals reported as being in emergency accommodation for the period of the March homelessness report. The collection of this data from the local authorities is ongoing.

Vacant Properties Data

603. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications for renovation of houses under the Galway County Council voids programme; the number of these that were single houses on their own site as opposed to being in a housing estate; the date the application was received; when a decision will be made on the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28021/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966 provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock is a matter for each individual local authority. While my Department provides a measure of funding under the voids programme, to local authorities to assist them in bringing vacant local authority housing stock back to productive use, it does not grant permission to local authorities to refurbish properties. It is a matter for the local authority to determine whether and when they refurbish a property.

Earlier this year, local authorities submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for the voids programme in 2018. In March, Galway County Council sought funding to bring some 40 units back to productive use. My Department

does not hold details on the individual houses including whether they are single houses on their own site or in a housing estate. The evaluation of the proposals from all local authorities, including Galway County Council, is currently being finalised and funding allocations will be confirmed to the local authorities shortly.

Local Authority Housing

604. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of Prospect Hill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28062/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Prospect Hill is a partially finished development on the Finglas Road in Dublin 11, comprising 469 units. I understand that the receiver involved has appointed a contractor to undertake a programme of remediation works at the development, which are currently under way and are being carried out on a phased basis. The works involved are due for completion by October 2019.

It should be noted that Dublin City Council have already taken ownership of 58 units in Block 2 of Prospect Hill for which remediation works have been completed.

Labour Activation Projects

605. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the assistance available for young persons to train and gain employment in public projects in their local area (details supplied). [28065/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Dublin City Council have advised my Department that they are in the process of making an application for planning permission to demolish the former Ballymun Shopping Centre. The City Council hope to have a contractor appointed later this year. While every effort will be made to use local labour, demolition contracts require specialist skills and training pertaining to machine driving, asbestos removal, demolition general operative duties and security.

Ballymun Job Centre (BJC), which was established in 1986 as a community response to a chronic unemployment situation, provides a wide range of services in the community. BJC has a long history of innovative approaches to dealing with youth unemployment, including the highly successful Ballyrunners Programme, and the EQUAL Youth Project. It also delivers the Local Employment Service in Ballymun. Dublin City Council is happy to engage with the BJC and Poppintree Youth Project to see if existing programmes meet the needs of the young persons engaged in Poppintree Youth Project and to assist in the development of other programmes if required.

The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme in the Ballymun Area is delivered by the Dublin North West Area Partnership. A core objective of this programme is to engage with groups/individuals and residents of disadvantaged communities. SICAP, responsibility for which rests with my colleague, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, aims to support those who are unemployed but who do not fall within mainstream employment service provision through employment or self-employment and in doing so provide them with the skills needed in order to access and create social enterprise opportunities.

Land Ownership

606. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the legislative measures and-or ministerial guidelines that are in place to ensure that the ownership of council lands cannot be placed permanently outside the control of the elected members of that council through a previous disposal of such lands to a wholly owned subsidiary of the council with the chief executive as its sole shareholder and operating as a special purpose vehicle for the private commercial development of such lands and thereby ensuring that such lands cannot be used in the provision of social housing by the council or by approved housing bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28067/18]

607. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the process by which a council may through the use of section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001 divest its ownership of council lands and transfer such lands to a wholly owned subsidiary of the council with the chief executive as its sole shareholder; if such a disposal to a wholly owned subsidiary of the council is considered a full disposal of the council's interest in such lands and therefore placing such lands outside the reach of Government policy and ministerial directives in respect of the use of publicly owned lands for the provision of social and affordable housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28068/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 606 and 607 together.

Every local authority is required to maintain a register of all lands in its ownership, or leased by the local authority. When land is no longer held by the local authority, the date and manner in which the local authority ceased to hold such land and the consideration, if any, paid to the local authority in respect of such land, must also be recorded.

In relation to the disposal of land, elected members are required to be notified, under Section 183(1) of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, of any proposal to dispose of land held by a local authority. Such notification shall include particulars of the land, the names of the persons from whom the land was acquired and to whom it is to be disposed of, and the consideration proposed in respect of the disposal.

It is a matter for the local authority elected members, by resolution, to decide to amend the terms of the disposal or resolve that the disposal not be carried out.

Any issue of whether an individual land transaction falls within the terms of section 183 is a function of the specific circumstances involved. If there is a doubt as to whether the terms of section 183 have been appropriately applied in an individual case, this is a matter that the elected members should pursue with the Chief Executive, in the first instance, and legal advice on the matter should be obtained, as necessary.

One of the key objectives of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to increase the supply of high quality social housing and homes at more affordable price points on local authority lands as quickly as possible, particularly in areas where demand is greatest. In that regard, details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership were published on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map on 27th April 2017. These sites can be viewed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/>.

Derelict Sites

608. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his future plans for a location (details supplied) which has been derelict for a

long time after being purchased by a vulture fund from which no information is forthcoming. [28072/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Derelict Sites Act 1990 provides local authorities with a range of powers to deal with derelict sites within their functional areas, including powers to require specified measures to be taken in relation to a derelict site, to impose a levy on sites which are included in the local authority's derelict sites register, or to compulsorily acquire any derelict site.

I understand from Dublin City Council that the particular site in question is not included in their Derelict Sites Register. Under the Act, I have no role to play as Minister in relation to particular sites where they are not already included on the relevant authority's Derelict Sites Register.

It is open to any person to contact a local authority in relation to a particular site which may be considered a derelict site for the purposes of the Act. It is a matter for local authorities to determine the most appropriate use of the legislation within their respective functional areas.

Boat Permits

609. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a commercial boat licence is available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27391/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Commercial licences and permits to operate boats at the location in question are advertised by way of tender. The last such tender was advertised on 2 May 2018 with responses due by 12 noon on Thursday 17 May 2018. The process of awarding licences is ongoing and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this point.

Heritage Sites

610. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the financial supports available to help conserve and protect a historic structure (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27667/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Financial support for the protection of heritage buildings and historic structures is provided by my Department through a number of schemes which are generally administered by local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is a scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures (i.e. structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures). It is designed to leverage private capital for investment in small scale conservation projects across the country and to support the employment of skilled conservation professionals. I have allocated funding of €2 million in total for this Scheme in 2018.

The Structures at Risk Fund enables conservation works to heritage structures in both private and public ownership, which are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. I have allocated €1.324 million for the Structures at Risk Fund in 2018.

Details of the projects approved under both funding schemes are published on my Depart-

ment's website and local authority websites.

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.

I understand that informal contact has been made with my Department in relation to the structure mentioned by the Deputy, which was the subject of an application under the 2018 Structures at Risk Fund. Initial feedback on that application was provided and the applicants were advised by my officials to contact the Architectural Conservation Officer in the local authority for more detailed feedback and advice. This has also been provided.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports. Grant schemes for 2018 are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website www.heritagecouncil.ie.

Job Creation

611. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of her plans to help create high-skilled quality jobs in the Gaeltacht of Baile Ghib, County Meath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27725/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that as a result of a fact-finding trip to the County Meath Gaeltacht in 2017, the Board of Údarás approved the setting up of an Enterprise Forum in order to research and assess the development of employment opportunities of the area. The Enterprise Forum was established on the 30 November 2017.

The aim of this enterprise action group is to seek to strengthen enterprise development opportunities in both Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib - particularly in the context of their close proximity to Dublin.

The aims include:

- Researching the resources and opportunities that exist in the area by engaging with local entrepreneurs, community groups, language groups and other relevant parties;
- Assessing the results of the research and preparing recommendations for job creation in this Gaeltacht region;
- Preparing a 3-year strategy for the Ráth Chairn and Baile Ghib Gaeltacht with a recommended budget to implement its objectives.

This coordinated approach will encompass input from relevant stakeholders including Meath County Council, SOLAS, the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board/Regional Skills Fora, the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, NUI Maynooth, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, along with business and community representatives.

I understand that the forum has met 6 times and hopes to complete and publish a plan in Autumn.

In that overall context, I am informed that the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta recently approved a support package for a proposed PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) pellet extrusion project in Baile Ghib that will create up to 20 jobs in the area in the coming years - thus building on the 219 full-time jobs in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the area at the end of 2017.

Industrial Development

612. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the local community's concerns in the Gaeltacht of Baile Ghib regarding the proposed location of a plastic melting facility in an Údarás na Gaeltachta premises; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27726/18]

613. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the fact that Údarás na Gaeltachta did not send a representative to a public meeting in the Gaeltacht of Baile Ghib to address the local community's concerns regarding pollution, health and planning over a proposed plastic melting facility in an Údarás na Gaeltachta premises; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27727/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 612 and 613 together.

I have been advised by Údarás na Gaeltachta that the proposed project, which is to be located at a vacant Údarás na Gaeltachta facility in Baile Ghib, is not a plastic melting facility. Údarás na Gaeltachta have informed me that the proposed project will manufacture PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) pellets/chip directly from industrial offcut filament and fibre material from PET manufacturing facilities. I understand that this residue material is not contaminated and arrives at the facility in a clean and dry baled format, which is then shredded, heated and extruded into pellet form.

I have also been informed by Údarás that they assessed the project, technically and financially, during the due diligence process and satisfied itself, with assistance and technical expertise of Enterprise Ireland, that the project warranted support. I am advised that the building in question is to undergo a refurbishment programme which will ensure that it adheres to all building regulations and fire certification.

In relation to the concerns of the local community, I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that some members of the local community in Baile Ghib recently made contact with them to highlight concerns they had regarding the proposed project. Údarás na Gaeltachta have assured me that they have ensured that the concerns of the community were fully considered and they have been provided with as much information on the project as is possible. I also understand that the residents had previously met the project promoter and had received information from the promoter regarding the proposal.

With regard to the non-attendance of an Údarás na Gaeltachta representative at the public meeting, I have been advised that the proposed project is at a very early stage of development and full details of every aspect of the business are not, as yet, available. I have also been advised that Údarás na Gaeltachta have ensured that all information available to them was passed on to the members of the community that were organising the public meeting on the matter to ensure that the public's concerns were addressed as early and in as much detail as possible. In addition, it was Údarás na Gaeltachta's understanding that the project promoter was unable to attend the public meeting that had been arranged. Given that most of the queries raised by the

community related directly to the project promoter and was information that only the project promoter would have had at that time as the project was at a very early stage, the considered view of the Údarás was that their presence at that meeting, at that juncture, would have been counterproductive and unsatisfactory to all sides. I understand however that Údarás has provided a response to the queries that were raised and provided as much information as was available in advance of the meeting to assist in addressing the public's concerns addressed as early and in as much detail as possible.

I understand that The project promoter has met with the community, and has also been in contact with Meath County Council to ensure that any permissions, regulations or licences that are appropriate are in place for the project.

Údarás na Gaeltachta works hard at all times to source strong projects which can sustainably achieve their business goals, adhere to all regulatory requirements within the state and its industrial development goals, while establishing a positive relationship between the local community, the company, and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Industrial Development

614. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of grant aid given to a company (details supplied) by Údarás na Gaeltachta; the number of jobs the company created; the length of time the company remained in the Baile Ghib Gaeltacht; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27728/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that employment grants of €170,000 and rent subsidy grants of €41,631 have been paid to the company referred to by the Deputy.

I understand that the company took possession of the factory premises in Baile Ghib in October 2014, that it had 23 full-time employees during 2015 but that that figure gradually fell to zero during the period from November 2015 to the end of February 2016.

I have been further advised by Údarás na Gaeltachta that they initiated proceedings against the company to revoke these grants but were unsuccessful in that regard.

Commemorative Events

615. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the minute silence to commemorate the Great Irish Famine, which took place on the Friday prior to the National Famine commemoration day and which was observed by national schools and sporting bodies, is no longer being requested by her; and her plans to reinstate same. [27773/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The 2018 National Famine Commemoration was held at University College Cork, on Saturday, 12 May in the presence of President Michael D. Higgins. I can confirm to the Deputy that, in advance of this year's Commemoration, an invitation issued from my Department to all schools and sporting organisations throughout the country to observe a minute of silent reflection in memory of all those who suffered during the Famine.

Commemorative Events

616. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when international famine memorial day will be held in 2018; and the location of same. [27774/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Officials from my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are continuing to develop proposals in relation to the 2018 International Famine Commemoration and details will be announced in due course.

Foireann Roinne

617. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha dá Roinn; an post lánaimseartha atá ann nó an bhfuil dualgais bhreise ar an oifigeach Gaeilge; cén grád atá ag an oifigeach Gaeilge; an bhfuil sé nó sí ábalta a ghnó nó a gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [27803/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Tá Scéim Teanga mo Roinne, a ullmhaíodh i gcomhréir le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, le fáil ar Shuíomh Gréasáin mo Roinne (www.chg.gov.ie).

San áireamh sa Scéim, tá sonraí maidir le seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn mo Roinn trí Ghaeilge agus leagtar amach inti freisin líon post atá ainmnithe mar phoist Gaeilge sa Roinn. Agus na poist seo á n-ainmniú, tugadh aird ar leith ar na poist atá lonnaithe i gceantair Ghaeltachta agus ar phoist atá lonnaithe lasmuigh de cheantair Ghaeltachta a bhfuil idirghníomhaíocht shuntasach i gceist leo le pobail agus cliaint Ghaeltachta agus/nó a labhraíonn Gaeilge.

Cé nach bhfuil Oifigeach Gaeilge ceaptha ag mo Roinn, tá dualgas maoirseoireachta ar fheidhmiú Scéim na Gaeilge ar Ard-Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin san Aonad um Rialachas Corparáideach faoi láthair atá in ann gnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge.

Turf Cutting

618. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the NPWS will provide consent for turf cutting activity on the lands of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry which are designated as a hen harrier area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27860/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Turf cutting is not an activity requiring consent in Hen Harrier SPAs.

However, my Department is not in a position to use herd numbers to identify land parcels and therefore cannot determine on the basis of the information supplied whether or not the land in question is in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

If the lands in question are not in a SAC, then the question of consent does not arise. The landowner can contact the local NPWS office to make sure that this is the case, or alternatively supply the Folio Number(s) of the lands in question to my Department for this to be checked.

Departmental Staff Data

619. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if personnel in her Department have been removed from their position, have been transferred to another role or had their employment terminated in the past four years due to breaches of departmental standards or professional misconduct or incompetence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27947/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised by officials in my Department that as of 26 June, 2018 one person has had their employment terminated from the Department in the last four years. The termination was carried out in line with all guidelines as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.