

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 13, inclusive, answered orally.

Question No. 14 resubmitted.

Departmental Staff Data

15. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff assigned to the Government Information Service. [39726/18]

The Taoiseach: Following the review conducted by the Secretary General earlier in the year, it was agreed that the Department should revert to a reformed GIS model, with a smaller budget, less staff and a more limited role.

Accordingly, the budget has been reduced by 50%. The staff numbers have been reduced by 4.

In further alignment with the Secretary General's report, the reformed GIS team now incorporates the Government Press Office, giving a total of 17 on the newly combined team.

The civil servants in the reformed Government Information Service come under the management of the Assistant Secretary for Corporate Affairs, while respecting the role of the Government Press Secretary and the Deputy and Assistant Government Press Secretaries in day-to-day management of press and communications.

The work of the reformed Government Information Service includes; the work of the Government Press Office, the digital team/merrionstreet.ie, central support services for other Departments, providing services to the media, managing media events and producing communications material across all platforms.

GIS is supporting the development of the single Government identity, the single web portal project, gov.ie and capacity building in communications across Government. GIS continues to have a co-ordinating and supporting role for national, cross-Government communications, as has always been the case, but such campaigns are being led and funded by the relevant line Department.

Questions Nos. 16 to 19, inclusive, resubmitted.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

20. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee B on social policy and public services last met; and when it is scheduled to meet again. [38476/18]

The Taoiseach: Cabinet Committee B last met on 7th June and is scheduled to meet on Monday next, 22nd October, 2018.

The Committee, which covers the areas of Social Policy and Public Service Reform, ensures a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of commitments in the Programme for Partnership Government, and provides the opportunity to shape proposals on issues such as equality, disability and disadvantage which require input from multiple Departments.

Work continues as always on the agenda items to make further progress.

Questions Nos. 21 to 28, inclusive, resubmitted.

EU Meetings

29. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the informal meeting of EU leaders in Salzburg; if the issue of immigration was discussed by the Heads of State and Government in attendance; and the details of the bilateral meetings he had on the margins of the meeting. [39410/18]

30. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the recent informal meeting of Heads of State and Government. [39898/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 29 and 30 together.

I attended the Informal meeting of Heads of State and Government in Salzburg on 19 and 20 September. This was one of a series of Summits relating to the Future of Europe.

On this occasion, our focus was on migration and internal security. We also took the opportunity to discuss progress in the negotiations on Brexit.

On migration, we had a useful exchange on how best to progress the comprehensive approach we agreed at the June European Council. This involves working to secure our external borders and to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit; and dealing with the management of migrants within the EU.

On internal security, the issues we discussed included the increasing complexity of the cyber threats we face, including to the integrity of our electoral systems.

There were no formal Conclusions adopted, but the outcome of our discussions will feed into the next meeting of the European Council, which takes place in Brussels later this week, on 17 and 18 October

Our discussions on Brexit, which took place in Article 50 format, provided an opportunity to review progress in the negotiations and discuss next steps. I reiterated the need for a legally operable version of the backstop in the Withdrawal Agreement, and thanked EU partners for their ongoing support and solidarity on this issue. I emphasised my hope that the future relationship between the EU and the UK will be as close and comprehensive as possible, but reiterated that the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, with a robust and legally watertight backstop, must be agreed first.

I had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister May in the margins of the Summit on Thurs-

day, 20 September, in which we discussed the state of play in the Brexit negotiations, as well as developments in relation to Northern Ireland.

I also took the opportunity to engage informally with the other EU Heads of State or Government in the margins of the meeting.

I look forward to meeting with my EU counterparts again at the European Council in Brussels this week.

Questions Nos. 31 to 33, inclusive, resubmitted.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

34. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet committee D on infrastructure last met; and when it is scheduled to meet again. [39899/18]

The Taoiseach: The Committee last met on 1 February this year and the next meeting has been scheduled for 15 November.

As I have previously indicated to the House, Cabinet Committee D works to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery and ongoing development of policy in relation to infrastructure investment and delivery, housing, and climate action.

There is significant work underway on each of these areas across Government departments and agencies, in particular through regular discussion of these matters at meetings of Government.

The Committee also provides a forum for oversight of the delivery of Project Ireland 2040, the Government's overarching policy initiative to achieve balanced development and meet the infrastructure needs of our growing population.

Under Project Ireland 2040 four funds, totalling €4 billion in investment, have been launched to stimulate renewal and investment in rural and urban areas, the environment and innovation. All four funds were launched in May this year, with the application deadlines now closed for the first round of proposals. The relevant Departments are reviewing all applications received, with decisions on successful applications for the first round of funding expected over the coming months and the first projects to commence in early 2019.

The Land Development Agency, another cornerstone initiative of Project Ireland 2040, has also been set up and is working to ensure the optimum management of State land through strategic development and regeneration, with an immediate focus on delivering homes, including social and affordable homes.

Housing remains a central priority for the Government. We are seeing an increase in the number of new and refurbished houses available year on year – however, we are very aware that a huge challenge remains in meeting demand and tackling the ongoing issues in the housing market.

We are continuing to focus on increasing housing supply, tackling homelessness and increasing the availability of affordable and social housing. In addition to the work underway through Project Ireland 2040 and Rebuilding Ireland, Budget 2019 provides for an increase of 25% in the housing budget for next year.

Climate action objectives are also at the heart of Project Ireland 2040 and, building on the

National Mitigation Plan, an investment of €22 billion in Exchequer and non-Exchequer funding will ensure a step change in climate action policy.

In Budget 2019, a number of additional new measures were introduced to help lower carbon emissions including, a new accelerated capital allowances scheme for gas-propelled vehicles and refuelling equipment.

Questions Nos. 35 to 37, inclusive, resubmitted.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

38. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent engagement with the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Theresa May. [39900/18]

The Taoiseach: I had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Theresa May in the margins of the Informal Summit in Salzburg on Thursday 20 September.

During the meeting, I reiterated that I hope the future relationship between the EU and the UK will be as close, comprehensive and ambitious as possible, but that it is essential that the Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, is agreed first.

I stressed too, that there is not much time left if we are to conclude a Withdrawal Agreement, and have it operational by the time the UK leaves the EU.

The Prime Minister said that the UK would be bringing forward proposals for a backstop.

I also raised the current political situation in Northern Ireland and underlined the need to get the devolved institutions up and running again.

I look forward to seeing the Prime Minister at the European Council in Brussels this week.

Questions Nos. 39 and 40 resubmitted.

Departmental Administrative Arrangements

41. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the work of the international, European Union and Northern Ireland division of his Department. [39828/18]

The Taoiseach: The International, EU and Northern Ireland Division of my Department works on all international, EU and British-Irish and Northern Ireland affairs within the Department, including on Brexit.

The Division supports me in my international role including as a member of the European Council, and in my other EU and international engagements. The Division also provides advice and support to me in relation to Northern Ireland Affairs and British Irish relations.

This includes support for my international engagements, including meetings of the European Council and other EU Summits, bilateral engagements with heads of Government of EU Member States and other countries and in respect of international affairs more generally.

The Division also supports the work of Cabinet Committee C, which deals with EU Affairs and Brexit, and works closely with other relevant departments, notably the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Questions Nos. 42 to 55, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 56 to 107, inclusive, will be answered on Thursday, 18 October 2018.

Coistí Rialtais

108. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Taoisigh cá mhéad uair a tháinig an Coiste Rialtais ar an nGaeilge agus ar an nGaeltacht le chéile gach bliain le trí bliana anuas; an bhfuil sé fós ina Chathaoirleach ar an gCoiste sin; agus cá mhéad uair a d'fhreastail sé ar chruinnithe coiste ó thoghadh ina Thaoiseach é. [42157/18]

The Taoiseach: Pléann Coiste Comh-Aireachta B le réimsí Beartas Sóisialta agus Athchóiriú na Seirbhíse Poiblí lena n-áirítear oideachas, leanaí, ionchuimsiú sóisialta, an Ghaeilge, na healaíona agus cultúr agus feabhsú leanúnach ar sheirbhísí poiblí agus athchóiriú seirbhísí poiblí.

I mí Iúil 2017 a bunaíodh an Coiste. Tháinig an Coiste le chéile faoi dhó sa bhliain 2017 (11 Meán Fómhair agus 16 Samhain); agus faoi dhó go dtí seo sa bhliain 2018 (26 Márta agus 7 Meitheamh).

Sular bunaíodh Coiste Comh-Aireachta B -

- tháinig Coiste Comh-Aireachta ar na hEalaíona, an Ghaeilge, an Gaeltacht agus na hOileáin le chéile an 13 Deireadh Fómhair, 2016 agus faoi dhó ina dhiaidh sin an 27 Feabhra, 2017 agus an 25 Bealtaine, 2017; agus roimhe sin,

- tháinig Coiste Comh-Aireachta ar an nGaeilge agus an Gaeltacht le chéile an 30 Márta, 2015.

Ba é an Taoiseach a bhí ina chathaoirleach ar na cruinnithe Coiste Comh-Aireachta dá dta-
graítear.

Departmental Staff Data

109. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff in his Department and in bodies under his aegis appointed to the principal officer grade arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41869/18]

110. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition for principal officer and the 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service; the number appointed from the principal officer, higher, interdepartmental competition by year; and if a table (details supplied) will be completed. [41870/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 109 and 110 together.

Six appointments have been made to the Principal Officer grade within my Department since 7 July 2015 arising from internal or open competitions. Of these, four arose from internal competitions, one from the 2015 Principal Officer open competition and one from the 2017 Principal Officer open competition run by the Public Appointments Service. My Department also recruits staff using mobility initiatives such as secondments. There have been no appointments made to the Principal Officer (Higher) from interdepartmental competitions. Details of

the appointments are set out in the following table.

| Department of the Taoiseach | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Principal Officer (Higher) appointments arising from DPER Circular 13/2017 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Since 7 July 2015, there have been no appointments to the Principal Officer grade arising from internal competitions in the National Economic and Social Development Office - the only body under the aegis of my Department.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

111. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if he met or held meetings with persons (details supplied) or persons representing or advising a consortium in 2017 and to date in 2018; if so, the topics they discussed; and if he will publish minutes of the meetings. [41941/18]

The Taoiseach: As I stated in the House on the 11th October 2018, I was invited by Science Foundation Ireland to present Mr. David McCourt with the Science Foundation Ireland St. Patrick's Day Medal at a public event held in Washington DC in March 2018. This was reported in the media at the time. We did not discuss the national broadband programme.

I have had no other meeting or discussion with Mr McCourt or other representatives of any consortium or company, or their advisors, regarding the National Broadband Plan.

Departmental Administrative Arrangements

112. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the economic division of his Department. [41814/18]

The Taoiseach: The Economic Division in my Department supports me and the Government in developing and implementing policy:

- to deliver sustainable and regionally balanced economic growth and quality jobs, and
- to promote effective planning and delivery of infrastructural developments, including housing.

The Cabinet Committees and associated Senior Officials Groups supported by the Division help to deliver policies in these areas.

Cabinet Committee A deals with issues relating to the Economy, the Labour Market, Com-

petitiveness, Productivity, rural development, the Digital Economy and Pensions.

Cabinet Committee D works to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery and ongoing development of policy across the areas of infrastructure investment and delivery, housing, and climate action and provides political oversight in relation to Project Ireland 2040.

The Economic Division also:

- Monitors implementation of the Action Plan for Jobs;
- Leads Ireland's participation in the annual European Semester process;
- Prepares the annual National Risk Assessment which provides an opportunity to identify and consider potential economic risks and challenges on a structured basis; the 2018 report was published in July, and the 2019 National Risk Assessment process will commence shortly, and
- Is responsible for liaison with the Central Statistics Office.

The Division is also leading the preparation of Future Jobs in partnership with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. This is the Government's new economic initiative to ensure we are well placed to meet future challenges facing the Irish economy. Future Jobs will drive our development as a resilient, innovative, and globally connected economy, capable of coping with technological and other transformational changes ahead. It is aimed at enhancing productivity; labour market participation; innovation; skills and talent; and the low carbon economy and will be launched in early 2019.

A unit within the Economic Division also supports the Minister of State with responsibility for Data Protection and works to ensure a 'whole of Government' approach to data protection and broader digital issues. In this regard, the unit provides the secretariat to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Data Issues and to the Government Data Forum.

The unit is currently leading work on the development of a new overarching National Digital Strategy to enable Ireland to maximise the societal and economic benefits that arise from ongoing digitalisation and its transformative effects.

The Division also provides me with briefing and speech material on economic and related policy issues.

Given its role, the Division works closely with colleagues in the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, and in other Departments, which have lead responsibility for specific policy areas.

Naval Service

113. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the progress of the investigation into the issuing of a directive on 3 October 2018 informing members of the Naval Service that the 72 hour notice period for members going to sea was being scrapped; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41769/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The military authorities have advised me that an email which indicated a change in the 72 hour notice period for members going to sea was issued in error and without the approval of the Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service (FOCNS). The email was rescinded on the same day.

I am further advised that the FOCNS is satisfied that this matter does not require any further investigation.

Departmental Staff Data

114. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41842/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The number of appointments made by my Department following internal competitions to the position of Principal in the period since 7 July 2015 are as follows:

| 2015 (from 7 July) | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Departmental Staff Data

115. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition and the 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41855/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The number of persons appointed to the Department of Defence from panels arising from the 2015 open competition and 2017 open competition for Principal run by the Public Appointments Service are as follows:

| 2015 | 2017 |
|------|------|
| 1 | 1 |

In addition to open competitions, my Department also recruits through the civil service mobility scheme for Principals in order to ensure an appropriate mix of skills and experience among its senior management.

Ministerial Meetings

116. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when he last met the head of the Defence Forces. [41071/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): A range of powers and responsibilities were delegated to me as Minister with Responsibility for Defence by the Defence (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2017, made on 5 July 2017 under s. 2(1) of the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1977. In that role, I frequently meet with the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces and receive regular briefings in relation to a wide range of defence matters. I last met with the Chief of Staff on 11 October 2018.

The Taoiseach is briefed as required on defence issues.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

117. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and dentists in the Defence Forces medical corps; the number of vacancies in these areas in the medical corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42465/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information requested by the Deputy is as outlined in the following table.

| - | Strength | Vacancies |
|------------------|----------|-----------|
| Medical Officers | 20 | 3 |
| Dental Officers | 4 | 3 |
| Nurses | 6 | 0 |
| Physiotherapists | 5.5 | 0 |

An additional four Medical Officers are currently seconded as part of the Military Medicine Training Scheme which was launched by the Defence Forces in 2017. Military Medicine as a specialist discipline was formally recognised by the Irish Medical Council in 2015.

Defence Forces Training

118. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of progress on the plans for an institute for peace support and leadership training at the Curragh; when the feasibility study under way is due to be received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42529/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence includes a commitment to evaluate the potential development of a new Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training at the Defence Forces Training Centre in the Curragh. The current Programme for a Partnership Government also includes a commitment to develop this Institute. It is foreseen that the new Institute would have international standing and contribute to the overall development of knowledge and experience in the areas of peace support, leadership and conflict resolution.

Scoping work was carried out on the proposal throughout 2016. A concept paper was developed and some initial consultations took place with national and international third level and research institutes, as well as potential philanthropic contributors. Arising from this, it was decided to conduct a formal feasibility study. Following a tender process in 2017, a contract was awarded to a consultancy body to complete this study. Work on the study commenced in January 2018 and an interim report is expected to be finalised shortly. This interim report will inform the next steps to be taken.

State Visits

119. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he or his officials have received confirmation as to whether President Trump will visit Ireland in the near future. [41073/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): It was announced on Friday 31 August by the White House that the US President proposed to visit

Ireland in November – this visit has since been postponed, with the US Administration citing scheduling reasons.

At the present time, the Government has received no confirmation from the US Administration about future plans for the US President to visit Ireland.

Departmental Staff Data

120. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in his Department and in bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer or counsellor grade arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41863/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The number of staff in my Department appointed to Principal Officer and Counsellor grade arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015 are as detailed in the following table.

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Counsellor | 11 | 6 | 12 | 1 |
| Principal Officer | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Departmental Staff Data

121. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition and the 2017 open competition for principal officer and counsellor run by the Public Appointments Service by year; and if a table (details supplied) will be completed. [41864/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following table details the number of persons appointed from the relevant panels in my Department as requested.

I would like to bring to the attention of the Deputy that there was no Counsellor element in the 2015 Open Principal Officer competition (Campaign ID 1512210) from which to assign candidates for that role in my Department.

My Department continues to assign candidates to the role of Counsellor from the 2017 Open Principal Officer Competition (Campaign ID 17101202) which came into effect from 23/11/2017.

I would also like to note that my Department assigned one Principal Officer from the Senior Human Resources Management Opportunities Panel (Campaign ID 17185009) in 2018.

| Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer & Counsellor appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 1 |

| Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210)(Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 1 | 0 | n/a |
| Counsellor Assignments | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| No. of Principal Officer & Counsellor appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202)(Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 1 | 6 |

Emigrant Support Services

122. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has contacted his Australian counterpart to discuss the recent statistics of over 600 Irish citizens being asked to leave Australia due to invalid visas and other reasons; his views on this information; if there is a campaign planned by the Irish Embassy in Australia to inform Irish citizens of their obligations in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41949/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Embassy of Ireland in Canberra, as well as the Consulate General in Sydney, work very closely with the Irish community in Australia to ensure that Irish citizens have access to suitable practical and consular support.

Through the Emigrant Support Programme the government provides funding to four groups in Australia that offer support and advice to Irish citizens regarding visa and other immigration issues. These are: the Irish Support Agency (Sydney), the Irish Australian Support Resources Bureau (Melbourne), the Claddagh Association of Western Australia (Perth) and the Irish Australian Support Association of Queensland (Brisbane).

Many thousands of Irish people have lived and worked in Australia in recent years. The vast majority of these build happy and successful lives there and help to foster the strong people-to-people ties between our two nations.

I am aware of recent media reports that a number of Irish citizens have been expelled from Australia since 2016 due to visa issues. Visas for Australia are a matter for the Australian authorities, and as such I have not contacted my counterpart in this regard. It is the responsibility of all Irish citizens in Australia to comply fully with the legal requirements necessary to obtain and retain a visa.

Officials at my Department, including at the Embassy of Ireland in Canberra, the Consulate-General of Ireland in Sydney and the Honorary Consulate in Perth will continue to monitor the situation and to offer appropriate support to Irish citizens.

Northern Ireland

123. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has met the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland recently to discuss reconvening

the Northern Ireland Assembly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41950/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since the Assembly elections of March 2017, the Irish and British Governments, as co-guarantors of the Agreement, have worked tirelessly to support and facilitate the parties in their efforts to form a new power-sharing Executive.

Unfortunately, to date, it has not proved possible to reach an agreement on the formation of an Executive, despite intensive engagement. The absence of the Executive also means that that North South Ministerial Council cannot meet.

I am currently engaging with Secretary of State Bradley on how both Governments can most effectively secure the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement. I met with Secretary of State Bradley in Dublin on 17 September and again in Belfast last week on 8 October.

Both Governments are continuing to engage with all of the political parties to seek a way forward to get the Institutions up and running again. All parties have re-affirmed their commitment to operating the devolved institutions and have provided views on their key concerns and issues.

In the period ahead, I believe a new political process is required to get beyond the current impasse and secure the necessary agreement between the parties on operating the devolved institutions again.

I do not underestimate the way to go in achieving that, but I firmly believe that a resolution is possible and that the calls from across all sections of the community in Northern Ireland for the devolved institutions to operate will be heeded.

The Government will continue to do everything in its power, in accordance with its responsibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, to secure the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Agreement.

North-South Implementation Bodies

124. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the allocation in 2019 to North-South bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41951/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In this jurisdiction, responsibility for the North South Implementation Bodies is exercised by several of my Government colleagues: the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (InterTrade Ireland), the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Waterways Ireland and the Language Body which comprises Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency), the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission - Loughs Agency); the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (the Special EU Programmes Body); and the Minister for Health (the Food Safety Promotion Board). Tourism Ireland Ltd. is the responsibility of the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

I do not have direct responsibility for any of the North South Implementation Bodies established under the British Irish Agreement or Tourism Ireland Ltd, or for allocations made to those Bodies.

The North South Implementation Bodies and Tourism Ireland, all of which operate on an all-island basis, are funded jointly by the Administrations, North and South, on the basis of an agreed contribution ratio, which varies from Body to Body, and decisions concerning the Bodies are taken jointly by the relevant Ministers North and South in the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

At present, in the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive, it is not possible for the NSMC to meet and to bring the Government and Executive together to oversee ongoing North South work and further develop cooperation, as provided for under the Good Friday Agreement. Notwithstanding the current political situation, the North South Implementation Bodies continue to carry out their important public functions in line with their mandates and to deliver economic and social benefits for people across the island.

Allocations to the Bodies are matters for the Ministers that I have listed, and full details of the allocations for 2019 will be set out in the Revised Estimates Volume.

Brexit Issues

125. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his regional meetings on Brexit; if he is satisfied with the uptake on the various schemes being provided to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41952/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since my appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in June 2017 I have overseen and co-ordinated a sustained intensification of Brexit preparedness and contingency planning across Government.

As part of these efforts, the Government is organising “Getting Ireland Brexit Ready” public information events around Ireland to inform and advise about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures and resources that the Government has put in place.

The first regional public event was held in Cork on Friday, 5 October, with last Friday’s event held in Galway. Two further events will take place over the coming weeks in Monaghan (19 October) and Dublin (25 October). To date these events have been very well attended with strong participation from the public and business communities.

These events bring together a dozen Agencies and their parent Departments – the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - under one roof to inform and advise both citizens and businesses about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures and resources the Government has put in place.

A suite of measures were introduced in Budget 2018 to support companies preparing for Brexit. Given that these schemes are ongoing, Departments with line responsibility for those schemes are best placed to provide updates on participation in those schemes.

In addition to the measures and supports introduced in Budget 2018, the Government introduced a range of Brexit Readiness measures in Budget 2019.

These measures will protect Ireland from the negative economic impact of Brexit and include the fund of a €2 billion Rainy Day Fund with €1.5bn from ISIF and €500m in 2019 capital funding, increased staffing across state agencies and key embassies, and a new €300m long-term Future Growth Loan Scheme partnership to provide 8-10 year loans between the Depart-

ments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation & Agriculture, Food and the Marine (which is in addition to Budget 2018's €300m short-term SME loan scheme).

Passport Applications Administration

126. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when a passport will issue to a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay in issuing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41984/18]

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 before issuing a passport to a person, the Minister must be satisfied as to the identity of the person.

Under the Act, the Minister may require an applicant to provide such information or documents as required to establish his or her identity.

On 1 October 2018 the Passport Service wrote to this applicant with an update on their application.

Emigrant Support Services

127. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the grants provided to sports and cultural clubs in the United States of America over the past ten years; the details of these clubs; the amount received by year; the criteria for grant applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42062/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Emigrant Support Programme has been in operation since 2004. In the period to date over €34 million has been allocated to organisations in the United States of America. Most of the grants for 2018 have been announced but decisions on a small number of grants have yet to be finalised and these will be communicated to the organisations involved in the coming weeks.

The Deputy has enquired specifically as to the amount of money allocated to sports and culture clubs in in America over the past ten years. The total amount provided in grants in these specific areas in the United States of America, including the amounts granted to date in 2018, is €6,147,839. A detailed breakdown of the individual grants made will be sent separately to the Deputy by my office.

Information on Emigrant Support Programme grants for the United States and for all other countries is uploaded on the Department's website annually and may be found at the following link: <https://www.dfa.ie/global-irish/support-overseas/emigrant-support-programme/previous-funding/>

Good Friday Agreement

128. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the Good Friday Agreement. [41067/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The

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

The Government's firm position is that the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements must be implemented in full, and this is reflected in the programme for partnership Government.

Since the Assembly elections of March 2017, the Irish and British Governments, as co-guarantors of the agreement, have worked tirelessly to support and facilitate the parties in their efforts to form a new power-sharing Executive. Unfortunately, to date, it has not proved possible to reach an agreement on the formation of an Executive, despite intensive engagement. The absence of the Executive also means that that North South Ministerial Council cannot meet.

I am currently engaging with the Secretary of State, Karen Bradley on how both Governments can most effectively secure the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement.

In the period ahead, I believe a new political process is required to get beyond the current impasse and secure the necessary agreement between the parties on operating the devolved institutions again. I do not underestimate the way to go in achieving that, but I firmly believe that a resolution is possible and that the calls from across all sections of the community in Northern Ireland for the devolved institutions to operate will be heeded.

A meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference took place on 25 July to discuss issues of mutual interest to the Irish and British Governments, in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement. The conference discussed legacy issues, security co-operation, east-west bilateral issues and political stability in Northern Ireland. A date for the next meeting of the conference is currently being considered.

Regarding the UK decision to leave the European Union, the Government is determined to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts, and the gains and benefits of the peace process, are protected for people on the island of Ireland, North and South. The Government appreciates the solidarity and support which has been shown by all of our EU partners in respect of Ireland's unique issues and concerns and is continuing to engage intensively in the article 50 process, to ensure the protection of the Good Friday Agreement.

In terms of outstanding commitments, the Government continues to support a statutory basis for the Irish language in Northern Ireland, as envisaged under the St Andrews Agreement. Respect for linguistic diversity and the Irish language are important elements of the Good Friday Agreement.

As reflected in the programme for partnership Government, the Government also remains supportive of, and continues to advocate for, the advancement of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The continued value of a bill of rights in the context of Brexit was one of the themes which emerged from the all island civic dialogue sectoral on human rights under the Good Friday Agreement which the Government convened in February 2017.

A North South consultative forum is a further important outstanding element envisaged under the Good Friday Agreement, and the Government has continued to pursue this, including by maintaining the issue on the North South Ministerial Council in recent years.

The Government views as a solemn responsibility our role and mandate as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement. We will spare no effort to fulfil our duty as co-guarantor, including to seek the effective operation of all of its institutions, ensure that the agreement is protected

in the context of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and working for the implementation of outstanding commitments. The Government will continue this work, in co-operation with the British Government and engaging with all of the political parties in Northern Ireland.

Overseas Development Aid

129. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the estimated ODA/GNI target in view of budget 2019 and the increased allocation to overseas development aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42250/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland's international development assistance programme and to its place at the heart of foreign policy. For 2019, the Government has allocated almost €817 million for Official Development Assistance, ODA. This level of allocation represents an increase of approximately €110 million – or 16% on the revised 2018 budget allocation.

The total amount of ODA which Ireland will invest during 2019 is now the highest since the financial crisis, a mark of the restoration of the economy. 2019 is the fifth consecutive year the Government has increased allocations to ODA. By comparison, in 2015 the ODA allocation amounted to just under €650 million.

In his budget speech, the Minister for Finance said that “at 0.31 per cent of GNI*, this level of assistance represents a clear statement that this Government and the Irish people will not be found wanting in addressing some of the major humanitarian crises and development challenges our planet faces”. The ODA/GNI* % depends on the allocation to total ODA and forecasted GNI*. Despite the increase in ODA allocation over the last few years, the strong performance of the Irish economy and the resulting growth in GNI levels can have a significant dampening effect on the ODA/GNI %.

Brexit Expenditure

130. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the moneys allocated in budget 2019 to his Department for Brexit related matters; the way in which these moneys will be spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42251/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Budget 2019, published last week, continues the process of ensuring that Ireland's economy remains competitive and resilient and ready to deal with the challenges of Brexit.

In my Department, an additional €18 million has been allocated, primarily for Brexit-related expenditure, in 2019 under Vote 28. Having already posted additional senior personnel to Berlin, Paris, London and Brussels, this will enable us to continue to strengthen our teams in other key EU capitals including The Hague, Warsaw, Madrid and Rome, as well as other parts of our European network.

Further funding is being earmarked for the Passport Service, which has seen a notable increase in demand for Irish passports from Irish citizens in Northern Ireland and Great Britain since the UK voted to leave the EU. Over 20% of total passport applications for 2017 came from these jurisdictions with more than 82,000 applications being received from Northern Ireland and almost 81,000 from Great Britain. This represented increases of 20% and 28% respec-

tively on 2016 applications.

Additional funding is also being made available to support essential reconciliation work being carried out by civil society in Northern Ireland and across the island of Ireland – work that is more urgent because of Brexit and the continuing absence of a Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly.

Our Vote 28 allocation will also help us to begin delivering on our ‘Global Ireland’ vision of an expanded international footprint for the post-Brexit world. This expanded presence will extend our support to Irish businesses in search of new markets.

That’s why we will be opening offices in Mumbai, Frankfurt and LA, and new embassies in Chile and Colombia in 2019. It will also help us sustain close relations across the UK after Brexit, with a new Consulate in Cardiff next year.

In 2019 we will also take forward work on a new Embassy and Ireland House in Tokyo that will project the very best Ireland has to offer in one location. This is a major development, one of the most complex that we have ever undertaken overseas and a signal of the potential and opportunities that we can tap into in the Irish-Japanese relationship.

This strengthened support for trade diversification is a crucial component to our Brexit response. In 2019, this will also include stepped-up preparations for Expo 2020 in Dubai - a major platform for Ireland internationally in a region with huge trade and investment potential for Ireland.

Finally, the Government’s Getting Ireland Brexit public information campaign is an important ongoing whole of Government initiative in helping prepare citizens and businesses for Brexit. As part of this wider campaign, the Government is organising “Getting Ireland Brexit Ready” public outreach events around Ireland.

The inaugural event was held in Cork on Friday, 5 October, with last Friday’s event held in Galway. Two further events will take place over the coming weeks in Monaghan, on 19 October, and Dublin, on 25 October.

The events bring together a dozen Agencies and their parent Departments – the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - under one roof to inform and advise citizens and businesses about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures and resources the Government has put in place.

Middle East Issues

131. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the disappearance and possible assassination of a person (details supplied) in Turkey; the steps Ireland is taking to ensure the Saudi Arabian and Turkish authorities carry out a transparent investigation of the disappearance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42343/18]

132. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); if he will raise the case of the suspected murder of this person by agents of the Saudi regime with his Saudi counterpart; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42344/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 132 together.

I am aware of media reports of the case of the disappearance of this person as raised by the Deputies. If these reports are proved correct, they are extremely concerning.

I support calls for an urgent and comprehensive investigation of the disappearance of the person in question, and for calls that this investigation be fully supported by the Saudi Arabian authorities. We call on the Saudi Government to be fully transparent about the results of any investigation into this case.

My officials have expressed my concerns about this matter, and communicated Ireland's full support for an investigation, to the Saudi Ambassador to Ireland.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

133. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which the €110 million increase in overseas development assistance will be spent; the programmes that will receive part of the €45 million increase in Irish Aid; and the type of spending that makes up the rest of the €65 million increase in ODA spend. [42345/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): For 2019, the Government has allocated almost €817 million for official development assistance, ODA. This level of allocation represents an increase of approximately €110 million – or 16% on the revised 2018 budget allocation.

Of this, €544.9 million will be managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose Vote 27 – International Co-operation – is known publicly as Irish Aid. The allocation to Vote 27 has been increased by €44 million, or almost 9% on last year's allocation. This will be taken into account in the detailed programme budget planning cycle for Irish Aid in 2019 that will take place before year end. Part of this allocation will be used to meet recent commitments made at the UN General Assembly including increased allocations to education in development, to humanitarian assistance and to peace building.

A further estimated €272 million will be managed through other Government Departments and Ireland's share of the EU Development Co-operation Budget. This represents an increase of €65 million on 2018.

By far the largest component of this element of ODA is our share of the EU development cooperation budget which has grown significantly over the past few years and will continue to do so in 2019. In addition the Department of Finance will oversee Ireland joining the African Development Bank in 2019.

There are also increased allocations to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine who manage Ireland's partnerships with the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Other programmes receiving increases are managed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, and the Revenue Commissioners.

Passport Applications Administration

134. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which a passport application can be made by a person (details supplied) in a country

in which there is no Irish consulate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42448/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service offers a range of channels for submission of passport applications by Irish citizens, at home and abroad.

In this particular case, the applicants' guardians should contact the Irish Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to arrange for the submission of the relevant documentation to authorise the consent of guardians for these passport applications.

All applications must comply with the terms of the Passports Act, 2008

Contact details for the embassy can be found here: <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/saudi-arabia/contact-us/>

Overseas Development Aid

135. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when the review of the White Paper on Ireland's international development policy will be completed and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42542/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Government has committed to publishing a new White Paper on Ireland's international development policy. The intention is to publish the document before the end of the year.

The development of the new policy is being led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in close consultation with other Departments. While the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade leads on Ireland's bilateral development programme at least one third of Ireland's ODA is provided by other Government Departments.

A comprehensive internal and external consultation process to help develop the new policy, in line with the public consultation guidelines published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has now concluded. This process included a preliminary consultation paper, following which submissions were received from across Government and the Embassy network. A series of workshops took place involving invited external experts and the support of consultants to facilitate detailed discussions.

Building on this input, a public consultation element was launched on 12 July. Over 185 substantive written submissions were received in response to a public consultation paper. Another 14,000 emails expressing support for the aid programme were received. "Townhall" meetings were held in Cork, Galway, Sligo and Limerick, with the public consultation phase ending on 2 October with the final public meeting in Dublin.

The various inputs received are now being synthesised and together with research, analysis and assessments of the wider global environment will be used to develop the new policy.

Departmental Staff Data

136. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in his Department and in bodies under his aegis appointed to the principal officer grade arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41865/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that since 7 July 2015 six staff members have been promoted to Principal from internal competitions as follows:

| Year | Male | Female |
|--------------|------|--------|
| 2015 | 0 | 0 |
| 2016 | 3 | 0 |
| 2017 | 0 | 1 |
| 2018 to date | 1 | 1 |

In addition three staff were promoted to Principal from open competitions and assigned to my Department and a further eleven staff transferred out to other Departments on promotion to Principal.

All appointments comply with the “Recruitment and Selection Policy - Guidelines in the Department of Finance” and are conducted in accordance with the code of practice published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments to ensure:

- Probity (a morally just, honest process is carried out with integrity)
- Appointments are made on merit
- An appointments process is in line with best practice
- A fair appointments process is applied with consistency
- Appointments are made in an open, accountable and transparent manner.

Of the 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department, 15 have not appointed staff to the Principal Officer grade from internal competitions since 7 July 2015. It should be noted that most of these bodies do not employ staff in civil service grades.

The two remaining bodies are the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. Since 7 July 2015, the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General has appointed three staff to the level of Deputy Director of Audit (Principal Officer level) from internal competitions. These three appointments were made in 2015.

Ten appointments to the grade of Principal Officer have been made in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners from internal competitions since 7 July 2015. Three were appointed in 2015, two each in 2016 and 2017 and three have been appointed to date in 2018.

Excise Duties

137. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the annual increases in the retail price of different categories of packets of 20 cigarettes since 1990; the portion of the increase related to taxes; the portion of the increase due to price rises by the tobacco industry, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41923/18]

138. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue raised from tobacco product tax by product type in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41924/18]

139. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the clearance data for roll-your-own tobacco products cleared from tax warehouses in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and

to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41925/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 to 139, inclusive, together.

In response to Question No. 137, I am advised by Revenue that the available information is the tax changes and the trade increases to the most popular price category, MPPC, for a 20 pack of cigarettes during the period 1990 to date. The information is set out in the following table and is displayed in cents.

| Budget Day | Pre-Budget MPPC | Tax Increase | Post-Budget MPPC | Excise Duty | Total Tax (inc VAT) | Trade increase during year |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 31-Jan-90 | 251.41 | - | 251.41 | 137.7 | 185.25 | |
| 01-Mar-90 | 251.15 | -4.83 | 246.33 | 136.75 | 182.84 | -0.26 |
| 30-Jan-91 | 253.95 | 12.70 | 266.64 | 148.18 | 198.08 | 7.62 |
| 29-Jan-92 | 272.99 | 20.32 | 293.31 | 169.64 | 220.55 | 6.35 |
| 24-Feb-93 | 294.58 | 12.70 | 307.28 | 178.14 | 229.31 | 1.27 |
| 26-Jan-94 | 313.63 | 10.16 | 323.78 | 189.70 | 245.95 | 6.35 |
| 08-Feb-95 | 332.67 | 15.24 | 347.91 | 191.22 | 249.00 | 8.89 |
| 23-Jan-96 | 352.99 | 12.70 | 365.68 | 215.09 | 278.58 | 5.08 |
| 22-Jan-97 | 370.76 | 8.89 | 379.65 | 216.01 | 280.35 | 5.08 |
| 03-Dec-97 | 374.57 | 12.70 | 387.27 | 222.48 | 300.19 | -5.08 |
| 02-Dec-98 | 392.35 | 6.35 | 398.70 | 239.10 | 308.31 | 5.08 |
| 01-Dec-99 | 405.05 | 63.49 | 468.53 | 292.67 | 373.99 | 6.35 |
| 01-Jan-01 | 477.42 | - | 477.42 | 297.61 | 377.18 | 8.89 |
| 05-Dec-01 | 487.58 | 12.70 | 500.28 | 310.10 | 393.47 | 10.16 |
| 04-Dec-02 | 521.00 | 50.00 | 571.00 | 355.28 | 454.38 | 20.72 |
| 03-Dec-03 | 587.00 | 25.00 | 612.00 | 378.90 | 485.11 | 16.00 |
| 01-Dec-04 | 625.00 | - | 625.00 | 381.28 | 489.75 | 13.00 |
| 07-Dec-05 | 635.00 | - | 635.00 | 383.11 | 493.32 | 10.00 |
| 06-Dec-06 | 655.00 | 50.00 | 705.00 | 428.09 | 550.44 | 20.00 |
| 05-Dec-07 | 715.00 | 30.00 | 745.00 | 454.64 | 583.94 | 10.00 |
| 14-Oct-08 | 755.00 | 50.00 | 805.00 | 497.75 | 637.46 | 10.00 |
| 07-Apr-09 | 810.00 | 25.00 | 835.00 | 519.23 | 666.98 | 2.30 |
| 09-Dec-09 | 845.00 | - | 845.00 | 521.05 | 670.58 | 10.00 |
| 01-Oct-10 | 855.00 | - | 855.00 | 522.88 | 671.27 | 10.00 |
| 06-Dec-11 | 865.00 | 25.00 | 890.00 | 545.35 | 699.81 | 10.00 |
| 01-Jan-12 | 890.00 | | 910.00 | 548.95 | 719.12 | 1.68 |
| 05-Dec-12 | 920.00 | 10.00 | 930.00 | 557.50 | 731.40 | 10.00 |
| 01-May-13 | 940.00 | - | 940.00 | 558.38 | 734.15 | 10.00 |
| 16-Oct-13 | 940.00 | 10.00 | 950.00 | 566.50 | 744.14 | - |
| 01-Apr-14 | 960.00 | - | 960.00 | 567.37 | 746.88 | 10.00 |
| 14-Oct-14 | 960.00 | 40.00 | 1,000.0 | 599.88 | 786.87 | - |
| 13-Oct-15 | 1,000.00 | 50.00 | 1,050.0 | 640.52 | 836.86 | - |
| 01-May-16 | 1,080.00 | | 1,080.0 | 643.28 | 845.23 | 30.00 |
| 16-Oct-16 | 1,050.00 | 50.00 | 1,130.0 | 684.02 | 895.32 | |

| Budget Day | Pre-Budget MPPC | Tax Increase | Post-Budget MPPC | Excise Duty | Total Tax (inc VAT) | Trade increase during year |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 01-May-17 | 1,150.00 | | 1,150.0 | 685.92 | 900.96 | 20.00 |
| 10-Oct-17 | 1,150.00 | 50.00 | 1,200.0 | 726.56 | 950.95 | - |
| 01-May-18 | 1,220.00 | | 1,220.0 | 728.37 | 956.50 | 20.00 |
| 10-Oct-18 | 1,220.00 | 50.00 | 1,270.0 | 769.01 | 1,006.49 | - |

*Figures included in the table may be subject to rounding and a degree of estimation, in particular for earlier years.

I am also informed by Revenue that an analysis of the incidence of duty and VAT per packet of 20 cigarettes from 2003 to 2017 is available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/excise/receipts-volume-and-price/excise-duty-vat.aspx>.

In relation to question No. 138, I am advised by Revenue that the revenue raised from Tobacco Product Tax for the period 2003 to 2017 for cigarettes and other tobacco products is available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/excise/receipts-volume-and-price/excise-receipts-commodity.aspx>. A breakdown of the receipts for other tobacco products is available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/excise/receipts-volume-and-price/excise-other-tobacco.aspx>.

Receipts for 2018 (up to September 2018) are provided in the following table. These figures are provisional and may be subject to revision.

| Year | Cigarettes | Fine Cut Tobacco | Cigars | Other Smoking |
|---------------|------------|------------------|--------|---------------|
| €m | €m | €m | €m | |
| 2018 (to Sep) | 235.0 | 40.5 | 3.0 | 2.0 |

In response to question No.139, I am advised by Revenue that clearance data for “roll your own” tobacco products, Fine Cut Tobacco, for the years 2003 to 2017 are published on the Revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/excise/receipts-volume-and-price/excise-volumes-commodity.aspx>. The provisional clearances for the period January to August 2018 are 150,294 kg.

Revenue Commissioners Data

140. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb tobacco smuggling in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41926/18]

142. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb the illegal importation of psychoactive substances since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41928/18]

143. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number and total weight of psychoactive substances seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41929/18]

144. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number and total weight of narcotic drugs seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41930/18]

145. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb the illegal importation of narcotic drugs since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41931/18]

146. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of illegal firearms seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41932/18]

147. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb the illegal importation of firearms since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41933/18]

148. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of illegal bullets seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41934/18]

149. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb the illegal importation of bullets since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41935/18]

150. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of offensive weapons seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41936/18]

151. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the funding provided to curb the illegal importation of offensive weapons since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41937/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 140, and 142 to 151, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of seizures by Revenue of psychoactive substances, narcotic drugs, illegal firearms and offensive weapons is set out in the following tables.

I am advised by Revenue that firearms, offensive weapons and bullets are recorded as a single category in their records of seizures and that it would not be practicable given the overall volume of seizures and the period involved, to provide disaggregated data for particular elements of that category.

I am also advised by Revenue that it is a fully integrated tax and customs administration and that it is not possible to disaggregate the resources deployed at any given time to detect and prevent the smuggling of particular types of objects or commodities. I understand Revenue is satisfied that, having regard to its overall level of resources, it has the resources to tackle smuggling of the kinds to which the Deputy refers. I remain open to discussing with Revenue any requirements that they may have about resources in the future to maximise their effectiveness in combatting smuggling.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of seizures by Revenue of psychoactive substances, narcotic drugs, illegal firearms and offensive weapons is set out in the following tables.

Drugs

| Year | | Cannabis (Herbal & Resin) | | Cocaine & Heroin | | Amphet- amines, Ecstasy & Other |
|------|--------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
| | No. of Seizures | Weight (KG) | No. of Seizures | Weight (KG) | No. of Seizures | Weight (KG) |
| 2017 | 1,066 | 3,100 | 136 | 27 | 4,862 | 565 |
| 2016 | 1,222 | 940.7 | 134 | 171.7 | 4,641 | 565.3 |
| 2015 | 1,024 | 626 | 92 | 95.4 | 3,710 | 655.8 |
| 2014 | 505 | 672.9 | 72 | 1,049.2 | 5,581 | 475.3 |
| 2013 | 724 | 600.1 | 116 | 51.1 | 5,690 | 340.8 |
| 2012 | 1,814 | 1,477 | 85 | 469 | 6,307 | 183 |
| 2011 | 2,378 | 1,384.88 | 65 | 153.26 | 6,630 | 1,063.17 |
| 2010 | 1,353 | 265.78 | 50 | 38.61 | 5,332 | 226.81 |
| 2009 | 2,174 | 3,446 | 40 | 34 | 6,001 | 456.33 |
| 2008 | 2,456 | 3,655.67 | 78 | 1,615.27 | 4,133 | 126.98 |
| 2007 | 2,049 | 1,820.85 | 66 | 1,640.69 | 643 | 901.47 |
| 2006 | 1,381 | 156.57 | 64 | 61.641 | 78 | 473.33 |
| 2005 | 1,077 | 3,963.92 | 48 | 63.349 | 98 | 373.009 |

Illegal Firearms and Offensive Weapons (data provided for years for which comparable data is available)

| Year | Number of illegal firearms / offensive weapons |
|------|--|
| 2017 | 835 |
| 2016 | 1,786 |
| 2015 | 4,702 |
| 2014 | 346 |
| 2013 | 2,443 |
| 2012 | 522 |
| 2011 | 1,220 |
| 2010 | 224 |
| 2009 | 1,162 |
| 2008 | 654 |
| 2007 | 1,777 |

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

141. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of cigarettes seized by customs in each year since 2005, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41927/18]

152. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the sum saved in each year since 2005 due to successful tobacco seizures in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41938/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 141 and 152 together.

Regarding question No. 141, I am advised by Revenue that the number of cigarettes seized by Revenue in each year since 2005 is set out in the following table.

| Year | Quantity (million) |
|-------|--------------------|
| 2005 | 51.3 |
| 2006 | 52.3 |
| 2007 | 75.5 |
| 2008 | 135.2 |
| 2009 | 218.5 |
| 2010 | 178.4 |
| 2011 | 109.1 |
| 2012 | 95.6 |
| 2013 | 40.8 |
| 2014 | 53.4 |
| 2015 | 67.9 |
| 2016 | 44.6 |
| 2017 | 34.2 |
| 2018* | 50.9 |

*to 30 September 2018

Regarding question No. 151, Revenue has confirmed that the Excise Duty and VAT payable on tobacco seized in each year since 2005 is as outlined in the following table.

| Year | Total Tax (Excise Duty & VAT) €million |
|-------|--|
| 2005 | 12.9 |
| 2006 | 14.8 |
| 2007 | 20.8 |
| 2008 | 40.2 |
| 2009 | 76.2 |
| 2010 | 56.9 |
| 2011 | 35.7 |
| 2012 | 35.9 |
| 2013 | 16.2 |
| 2014 | 23.2 |
| 2015 | 28.0 |
| 2016 | 19.2 |
| 2017 | 16.3 |
| *2018 | 24.9 |

*to 30 September 2018

Questions Nos. 142 to 151, inclusive, answered with Question No. 140.

Question No. 152 answered with Question No. 141.

Tax Settlements

153. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance if the tax affairs of a person (details supplied) will be determined in view of the fact that the ability of the business to tender effectively is being affected; the rationale behind the decision to set the rate of RCT at 35%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41983/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the discussions referred to in my response to the Deputy's previous Question on this matter (Question No. 139 of 18 September 2018) are still ongoing.

Revenue has confirmed that once the outstanding issues are fully clarified and resolved it will be possible to review the 35% RCT rate.

Tax Clearance Certificates

154. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) is unable to obtain tax clearance from the Revenue Commissioners. [42002/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that there is no record of an application by the person concerned for tax clearance.

There is a real-time online facility available to facilitate applications for tax clearance – the system can be accessed via ROS (business customers) or MyAccount (PAYE and non-ROS customers).

In certain circumstances, applicants can apply for a Tax Clearance Certificate by completing a TC1 Application Form which can be obtained from their local Revenue office or by downloading from the Revenue website. Completed forms must be submitted to the Collector-General's Office, Sarsfield House, Francis Street, Limerick.

Finally, Revenue has drawn attention to the fact that a person's tax affairs must be in order, including that any tax returns due have been filed with Revenue, before tax clearance will be provided.

Further information, as may be required by the person concerned, can be obtained through Revenue's Helpline at 01 738 3663.

Living City Initiative

155. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance if there is some leeway under the living city initiative for a pre-1915 property just outside the catchment area at the gate of the house whose owners are anxious to refurbish it. [42004/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to qualify for tax relief under the Living City Initiative, the property must be located wholly within a "special regeneration area". This condition is provided for by s. 372AAB (1) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 which provides as follows:

"qualifying premises" means a relevant house - (a) the site of which is wholly within a special regeneration area,"

I am advised by Revenue that a property that is located outside the special regeneration area cannot qualify for relief under the scheme.

VAT Rate Increases

156. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if food and beverages served in sports facilities will be subject to VAT at the 9% rate or the 13.5% rate in the context of budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42088/18]

157. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if food and beverages served in local authority and commercial golf clubs will be subject to VAT at the 9% rate or the 13.5% rate; if same is the case in respect of member owned golf clubs in view of the fact that visitor green fees attracted the 9% rate up to this date and in member owned courses green fees were VAT exempt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42089/18]

158. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if food and beverages served in local authority and commercial sports clubs will be subject to VAT at the 9% rate or the 13.5% rate; if same is the case in respect of member owned sports clubs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42090/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 156 to 158, inclusive, together.

The supply of food and drink for human consumption in the premises of all sporting organisations, irrespective of whether the organisation is operated by a local authority or by a sports club that is members owned or commercial in nature, is liable to VAT at the same rates that apply in other locations such as restaurants or hotels.

The 9% VAT rate was retained in respect of the provision of facilities for taking part in sporting activities whereas the rate of VAT on food that is supplied in the course of catering will increase from 9% to 13.5% from 1 January 2019.

Supplies of alcohol, bottled waters, soft drinks, sports drinks and vegetable juices are liable to VAT at the standard rate in all circumstances in the course of catering. All other beverages, including fruit juices, supplied with a meal in the course of catering, are currently liable to VAT at the 9% rate but will increase to 13.5% from 1 January 2019.

VAT Rate Application

159. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce VAT on food supplements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42124/18]

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) relating to the VAT treatment of food supplements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42262/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 159 and 165 together.

Issues of clarity and consistency relating to the VAT rating of health food supplements arise from the fact that a small selection of food supplements have historically been applied at the zero rate of VAT by concession of the Revenue Commissioners since the introduction of VAT in 1972. The majority of food supplements, however, are charged at the 23% standard VAT rate.

The expansion and diversification of the food supplement market since 1972, has led to a significant growth in the number and variety of food supplement products which do not qualify

for the Revenue concession. The Revenue Commissioners have received a large volume of requests for confirmation of the VAT treatment on a broad range of food supplements in recent years, leading to compliance concerns and calls for fiscal neutrality.

The Revenue Commissioners has engaged with industry representatives on the matter and one solution would be to legislate to apply a reduced VAT rate to all food supplements as the VAT Directive does not permit the application of the zero rate to food supplements.

Property Tax Review

160. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Finance if he has read the LPT review group report in full in the context of his budget 2019 speech; if the report will be published; the timeline for the implementation of recommendations or changes to LPT in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42171/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The report of the review of the LPT is currently being finalised in conjunction with the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform, Housing Planning and Local Government, the Taoiseach and the Revenue Commissioners. I will of course, carefully consider the conclusions and recommendations of the report when it is presented to me. The report will also be published.

The purpose of the review is to inform me in relation to any actions I may recommend to Government concerning the LPT having regard to, *inter alia*, the residential property revaluation date which will arise on 1 November 2019. Any material changes would, of course, require legislation in order to enable the Revenue Commissioners to have the necessary administrative and technical arrangements in place in relation to LPT liabilities for 2020 and beyond.

Tax Agreements

161. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Finance the progress in discussions with the Brazilian authorities to remove Ireland from a blacklist of tax havens; his views on the length of this process; his further views on the potential damaging effect this has on Ireland's international reputation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42215/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There has been ongoing engagement between Irish and Brazilian officials at every possible opportunity at official, political and diplomatic level, on the issue of Ireland being included on the Brazilian tax list.

It has been raised with the Brazilian Finance Minister on numerous occasions. The Finance Ministry's position has been that it is a matter for the Revenue Secretary.

Minister of State Joe McHugh TD travelled to Brazil as part of the "Promote Ireland" Programme for St Patrick's Day this year. Minister McHugh engaged directly with the Head of the Brazilian Revenue Service in a meeting specific to this matter. During September, Minister of State Pat Breen TD travelled to Brazil as part of a trade mission. Minister Breen raised the question of Ireland's tax listing, with the Undersecretary General for Trade Promotion, Investment & International Cooperation who assured the Minister that the Brazilian Foreign Ministry were aware of Ireland's concerns on this issue and would again raise the question within their system.

The Brazilian authorities have made clear Ireland has been included on the Brazilian list solely due to having a standard corporate tax rate below 17%.

We have continued to make the case that it is inappropriate to include Ireland on the list on the basis of our longstanding 12.5% corporation tax rate. We have pointed out our views that focusing on headline rates is flawed but Brazil have maintained their position.

Department of Finance officials and officials from the Revenue Commissioners continue to actively support the Irish Ambassador to Brazil in our efforts to seek Ireland's removal from the Brazilian list.

Motor Insurance Costs

162. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance the status of plans to tackle the issue of high rates of car insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42226/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the Cost of Insurance Working Group undertook an examination of the factors contributing to the cost of motor insurance to identify what short, medium and long-term measures could be introduced to help reduce the cost of insurance for motorists and businesses.

The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017, containing 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions. The Report contains an Action Plan, setting out the agreed timelines for implementation, and also a commitment that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The Working Group has published six such updates to date, most recently on 30 August. It shows that, in total, of the 56 separate applicable deadlines within the Action Plan set to the end of Q2 2018, 44 relate to actions which have now been completed. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing". Officials in the Department of Finance are now working to collate the progress updates for the Seventh Progress Update Report and it is expected that this work will be finalised in the coming weeks.

It is envisaged that the implementation of all the recommendations cumulatively, with the appropriate levels of commitment and cooperation from all relevant stakeholders, should achieve the objectives of delivering fairer premiums for consumers and a more stable and competitive insurance market.

In this regard, it should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for September 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by almost 22% since peaking in July 2016. I appreciate that these figures represent a broad average however we have to recognise that these are the same figures that showed the large increase that many commentators regularly reference. Therefore, I think it has to be recognised that the overall trend currently is downward, which is to be welcomed.

Tax Rebates

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if and when a refund of income tax will be made in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42242/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As I noted in my response of Question 29262-18, Revenue wrote to the person in question requesting a number of clarifications.

Revenue has confirmed to me that it has not yet received any reply from the person, includ-

ing in respect of a reminder letter that recently issued to them. Revenue has assured me that it will carry out a full review of the person's tax situation as soon as they provide the requested information and will process any refund that may be due to them.

Tax Code

164. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Finance if he will equalise the life assurance exit tax and the DIRT tax in the interest of long-term savers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42261/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Policy choices with respect to changes in taxation were made in the context of the financial resources available to me. Thus the option available for amending the rate of life assurance tax in the context of Budget 2019 had to be considered in the context of competing demands for other taxation changes.

I have focused much of the resources available to me for a taxation package in Budget 2019 on changes to income tax and USC which I consider is of benefit to a wider subset of the population. In light of this, I decided not to amend the rate of life assurance tax on this occasion.

Question No. 165 answered with Question No. 159.

Budget 2019

166. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Finance the additional carry-over cost in 2020 of the tax measures introduced in budget 2019; the cost by tax measure, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42271/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can advise the Deputy that the carryover to 2020 of tax measures introduced in Budget 2019 is estimated to be in the region of €51 million. It is important to point out that the exact impact of carryover will be reviewed as part of the normal Budgetary process, as there are several moving parts to be considered, such as economic growth, take up of various schemes and specific tax relevant factors, which could impact on the expected return from the measures. A summary of these measures and their impact is set out in the following table.

| Tax-Head | Carryover effect €m |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Income Tax/USC | -67 |
| VAT | 92 |
| Excise Duties | 28 |
| Capital Acquisitions Tax | -1 |
| Corporation Tax | -1 |
| Total | 51 |

*The carryover is calculated as the difference between the effect on a full year and that on 2019.

Tax Data

167. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue paid in each of the past five years as a result of the CGT exit tax rate of 33%; the number of compa-

nies it applied to as previously provided for in sections 627 and 628 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997; the estimated revenue which would be raised if the new regime was applied at 33% rather than 12.5%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42272/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of Ireland's commitment to implementing the Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive (ATAD), in Budget 2019 I announced the introduction of a new ATAD-compliant exit tax regime, with effect from Budget night. The ATAD exit tax regime will tax unrealised capital gains at a rate of 12.5% where companies migrate or transfer assets offshore such that they leave the scope of Irish tax. The tax operates by deeming a disposal of the asset to take place at the time of exit and applying the exit tax charge on any unrealised gain.

This new exit tax replaces a previous, more narrowly-focused exit tax charge which was introduced in 1997 as a proportionate anti-avoidance measure to counter a number of identified tax avoidance transactions that were used to take chargeable assets outside the charge to Irish tax prior to disposal. The provisions were designed to influence behaviour, i.e. to prevent the avoidance behaviour identified, rather than to serve as a tax raising measure and I understand from Revenue that they have been effective in this regard.

The new ATAD-compliant exit tax is a broad-based measure and it is expected that in time it will give rise to Exchequer revenue. However, as this will only arise in cases where an asset, which has increased in value while held by a company in the State, is transferred out of the charge to Irish tax without an actual disposal, an estimation of the future yield would require predicting changing asset values, in addition to projections as to future restructuring of companies. As any such estimate at this point would be highly theoretical, no specific provision was made in the Budgetary arithmetic for future exit tax yield, and equally it would not be possible to estimate the change in revenue if an alternate tax rate were to be applied.

Payments in respect of the new ATAD-compliant exit charge will be separately identified in the relevant tax returns so it will be possible to monitor receipts from the new charge in future.

Mortgage Interest Relief Data

168. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Finance the reason for the difference between the projected full year cost if the 100% mortgage interest relief for landlords of minus €18 million as detailed in page 4 of the budget 2019 tax policy changes report and the figure of minus €44 million detailed by him in the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 81 of 21 June 2018. [42302/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the figure of €44 million provided in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 81 of 21 June 2018 related to an increase from 80% to 100% deductibility in respect of interest on loans used in the purchase, improvement or repair of rented residential property. The figure of €18 million detailed in the documentation for Budget 2019 relates to an increase from 90% to 100% deductibility in respect of such loans.

The rate of allowable deductibility was increased to 85% on 1 January 2018 and was due to increase to 90% on 1 January 2019, therefore the cost of the acceleration of the full relief from 90% to 100% is the cost referred to in the Budget 2019 publications.

Furthermore, the estimate of €44 million was based on tax returns for 2015 which were the latest returns available at the time. The estimate of €18 million is based on tax returns for 2016. There has been a year-on-year decrease in total declared interest expenses of approximately

20% from 2015 to 2016.

Fiscal Data

169. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the available fiscal stance after annual contributions to the rainy day fund each year to 2023 gross, that is, before pre-committed expenditure and demographics and so on and net, that is, after pre-committed expenditure and demographics and so on, based solely on the expenditure benchmark ignoring the MTO; the projected general Government balance and the structural Government balance in each of the years based on the projections announced on budget day, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42303/18]

170. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the available fiscal stance after annual contributions to the rainy day fund each year to 2023, gross, that is, before pre-committed expenditure and demographics and so on, if Ireland were to run a structural balance of -0.5%, that is, adhere solely with the MTO; the projected general Government balance and the structural Government balance in each of the years based on the projections announced on budget day, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42304/18]

171. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the available fiscal stance after annual contributions to the rainy day fund each year to 2023, gross, that is, before pre-committed expenditure and demographics and so on, if Ireland were to run a structural balance of 0%, that is, adhere solely with the MTO; the projected general Government balance and the structural Government balance in each of the years based on the projections announced on budget day, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42305/18]

172. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the available fiscal stance after annual contributions to the rainy day fund each year to 2023, gross, that is, before pre-committed expenditure and demographics and so on, if Ireland were to run a structural balance of 0.5%, that is, adhere solely with the MTO; the projected general Government balance and the structural Government balance in each of the years based on the projections announced on budget day, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42306/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 to 172, inclusive, together.

At present, the fiscal rules - both the structural balance rule and, especially, the expenditure benchmark rule - are not well-suited to guide budgetary policy, given our position in the economic cycle. I highlighted this in the Summer Economic Statement and I note that the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, in its pre-Budget statement, also highlighted this issue.

Essentially, the problem boils down to the fact that full allocation of ‘fiscal space’ would lead to a repeat of pro-cyclical budgetary policies that would threaten the living standards of Irish people. Pro-cyclical budgetary policies should be avoided; this is especially true when we are facing serious issues such as the exit of the UK from the European Union (and a non-negligible possibility of a ‘disorderly’ exit).

With this in mind, the more important framework for guiding fiscal policy is ‘fiscal stance’ - what is right for the economy at a particular point in time, so as to support sustainable, incremental improvements in public services and living standards.

The correct ‘fiscal stance’ can only be ascertained once account is taken of the position in the economic cycle. If the economy is operating at full capacity, then it would be incorrect to

adopt an expansionary budgetary policy. On the other hand, if there is spare capacity in the economy, then it may be appropriate to use tax and expenditure policy to help absorb the spare capacity.

Given the many issues facing the economy and the heightened level of uncertainty (such as what form the UK's exit from the EU will take), it is only possible to assess the appropriate fiscal stance on a year-to-year basis at present.

Tax Code

173. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance if the budget €50,000 limit on benefit-in-kind exemption for electric vehicles will apply retrospectively to vehicles purchased prior to budget day. [42369/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Benefit in kind is chargeable where, by reason of employment, a car or van is made available (without a transfer of ownership) to an employee and the car or van is, during the tax year, available either for that individual's private use or to his or her family or household.

In Finance Act 2017, I provided an exemption from benefit in kind in relation to electric cars and vans provided to an employee in the tax year 2018. In Budget 2019, I announced that the exemption from benefit in kind would be extended until 31 December 2021, and that a cap of €50,000 on the value of an electric car or van that can be fully relieved from benefit in kind will be imposed. Therefore, where the original market value of the electric car or van exceeds €50,000, the benefit in kind charge will be calculated in the usual manner but by reference to the amount in excess of €50,000.

As benefit in kind is calculated for each tax year during which the vehicle is made available, this cap will apply to all electric cars and vans made available to employees in the tax years 2019 to 2021, where the original market value of the vehicle exceeded €50,000.

Departmental Legal Cases

174. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if the State paid a financial settlement to a person (details supplied) as a result of legal action the person took in 2009 against a number of Irish persons with regard to their activities in the Seychelles. [42466/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In the time available my Department has not been able to ascertain whether or not any financial settlement was paid by the State in respect of the case raised. I will arrange for further investigation and will revert in writing, as soon as possible, to the Deputy with the result of those investigations.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

175. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the number of employees working in the large cases division in the Revenue Commissioners. [42482/18]

176. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the number of employees tasked with auditing tax compliance of high wealth individuals in the large cases division. [42483/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 175 and 176 together.

I am advised by Revenue that as part of a structural realignment process that is ongoing at present, they have established two national Large Case Divisions, one for large corporates and one for high wealth individuals. This realignment has a particular focus on ensuring that appropriate resources are applied to tax and duty risk in line with Revenue's Statement of Strategy 2017 – 2019.

The staffing of the original Large Cases Division which was focused on large corporates and high wealth individuals had a total of 253 wholetime equivalent (wte) staff. Following realignment the two Divisions will have over 320 wte staff by the end of 2018.

The staffing of the element of the original Large Cases Division which was focused on high wealth individuals had a total of 64 wte staff. Following realignment the Division will have c. 100 wte staff by the end of 2018.

I am advised by Revenue that it has also established a new Medium Enterprises Division to deal with the tier of cases, both corporate and high wealth individuals, just below Large Cases. This Division will have c. 380 wte staff by the end of 2018.

The Large Cases High Wealth Individuals Division, in addition to the work on high wealth individuals is responsible for pensions and tax avoidance work. I am advised by Revenue that it is anticipated that the approximately 25 staff currently tasked with profiling high wealth individuals and related entities and carrying out a programme of risk-based compliance interventions which include audits will increase to approximately 55 by the end of 2018.

Public Sector Pensions

177. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the increase scheduled in public service pensions from October 2018 will be issued without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41740/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to advise the Deputy that in January this year my Department issued DPER Circular 02/2018 authorising pension increases to qualifying public service pensions of certain public service pay increases, and giving guidance on the implementation of those pension increases. The pay increases involved are those covering the 2018 to 2020 period under the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA), as legislated for in the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The pay increase of 1% of salary on 1 October 2018 is the second such increase, the first, also 1%, having come into effect on 1 January 2018.

The principle of pay parity underlies the pension increases sanctioned in the Circular. This means that pay increases agreed as part of the PSSA are to be passed on to pension recipients to bring the salary on which their pension is based up to the current salary of those still serving after the pay increases are applied. It is important to note that not all pension recipients will be due these increases. This is because of protections in place (known as 'grace periods') for public servants retiring after the application of pay cuts under the FEMPI legislation, whereby their pensions were calculated using the higher pay rates that were in effect prior to the application of the pay cuts.

It is a matter for the large number of public service pension payroll managers in the various sectors of the public service to implement Circular 02/2018. I understand that work is underway

to apply the pay increases I have mentioned to those qualifying pensions in payment that have not yet benefitted from such increases, and that this will include the calculation and payment of arrears as appropriate.

Garda Station Closures

178. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the reopening date of a Garda station (details supplied) which was announced in 2016; the date it is due to be opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41904/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Programme for Government included for the re-opening of a number of closed Garda Stations (6) throughout the country, including Rush Garda Station, Co. Dublin. The Office of Public Works has undertaken an assessment of all the Stations identified in this 'pilot programme of Station re-openings', and based on the Garda Síochána 'brief of requirements' received, has advised them on the works required and indicative costs involved.

On 15 August 2018, OPW issued a "Notice to Quit" to the then Licensee of the building, and received vacant possession of this building by the end of September 2018.

The OPW is currently engaged in the deliberative process with An Garda Síochána in finalising the required works to meet their brief of requirements. At the last site meeting held on 10th October 2018, several matters were agreed and some reviews and clarifications were sought prior to a final sign-off.

Once full agreement and sign-off is achieved, OPW will proceed with the procurement of works to be undertaken, and which is expected to be completed over the coming months.

Garda Station Closures

179. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress to date in reopening Bawnboy Garda station, County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42540/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Programme for Government included for the re-opening of a number of closed Garda Stations (6) throughout the country, including Bawnboy Garda Station. The Office of Public Works has undertaken an assessment of all the Stations identified in this 'pilot programme of Station re-openings', and based on the Garda Síochána 'brief of requirements' received, has advised them on the works required and indicative costs involved.

The deliberative process between An Garda Síochána and the OPW to finalise the Bawnboy Station proposals is on-going. Once this is concluded and Garda sign-off achieved, the OPW will progress with the necessary Planning Application (Part 9) and the procurement of works required to re-open the station.

Garda Divisional Headquarters

180. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the provision of a new Garda district headquarters in Bailieborough, County

Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42541/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A Planning Application for this development commenced on 31 August 2018, under Part 9 of the Planning and Development Regulations. The period of public consultation ended on 11 September 2018. It is expected that this process will be concluded shortly.

At this point in time it is not possible to give a definitive completion date for the construction of the new Station until i) the Planning process, ii) the required Public Procurement process and iii) Contract Award are complete.

Departmental Staff Data

181. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in his Department and in bodies under his aegis appointed to the principal officer grade arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015 by year. [41866/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions

| Year | | No. |
|-------------------------|---|-----|
| 2017 | Department of Public Expenditure and Reform | 5 |
| | Office of Government Procurement | 3 |
| Bodies under the aegis: | | |
| 2015 (from 7th July) | Office of Public Works | 1 |
| | | |
| 2018 (to date) | Office of Public Works | 1 |
| | Office of the Ombudsman | 1 |

Departmental Staff Data

182. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition for principal officer and the 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service; the number appointed from the principal officer, higher, interdepartmental competition by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41868/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, Government departments and offices have delegated sanction to recruit staff up to the Principal Officer grade provided they stay within their pay allocation/agreed numbers.

Departments and offices also need to take cognisant of the sequences, agreed with the staff side, with regard to the manner in which recruitment and promotions occur.

Sequences are monitored by my department on a quarterly basis and the following information has been provided by each department and office.

| Department Name or Office Name: | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 39 | 69 | 82 | 54 |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 13 | 33 | 41 | n/a |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments (Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 7 | 14 |
| No. of Principal Officer (Higher) appointments arising from DPER Circular 13/2017 | n/a | n/a | n/a | 7 |

Drainage Schemes Status

183. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has plans to carry out cleaning and dredging works on the river in Drumconrath village, County Meath. [41885/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995. The river referred to by the deputy forms part of the Glyde and Dee Arterial Drainage Scheme for which the OPW has maintenance responsibility.

OPW channel maintenance work is currently ongoing in the area and is expected to be completed towards the end of October 2018.

Drainage Schemes Status

184. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has plans to carry out cleaning and dredging works on the River Borora in Moynalty village, County Meath. [41886/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Boyne catchment drainage schemes completed under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945. The Borora River referred to by the deputy forms part of the Boyne Arterial Drainage Scheme. Maintenance works are scheduled on this river in 2020. If there are specific issues of maintenance to be addressed, the local community should contact the OPW regional office in Newtown, Trim, Co. Meath.

Freedom of Information Legislation

185. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which and with whom responsibility lies for investigations regarding a breach of section 52 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41996/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Per section 43(3) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) is independent. I am therefore not entitled to comment on the manner in which the OIC has exercised its functions in any particular set of circumstances.

Section 52 of the 2014 Act creates a criminal offence in relation to the deliberate destruction or alteration of records with an intent to deceive while these same records are the subject of an FOI request.

It may be appropriate in the first instance to raise an alleged breach of section 52 with the organisation concerned, and to provide any evidence to support the allegation. The body itself may be best placed to initiate an investigation into relevant matters, if there is a sufficient evidential basis for it to do so. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the organisation may be entitled to take actions including appropriate disciplinary steps, or if warranted to refer the matter to An Garda Síochána for further investigation.

Alternatively, were the OIC to find evidence of a breach of section 52 in the course of a review, it would be entitled to refer the matter to An Garda Síochána for further investigation. However, I should again emphasise that owing to its statutory independence the question of whether or not it is appropriate to take this step in a particular case is a matter solely for the OIC to determine. The 2014 Act does not confer a role on the OIC to bring or prosecute criminal proceedings in relation to a breach of section 52.

Finally, given that a contravention of section 52 is a criminal matter, it could be raised directly with An Garda Síochána. Any evidence of the alleged breach could also be provided. Again, it would be a matter for An Garda Síochána to take such steps as are appropriate in the circumstances, having regard to the available evidence.

Freedom of Information Legislation

186. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the avenues open to a person when the Office of the Information Commissioner releases a decision on a review which contains mistakes or inaccuracies that could have impacted on the decision; if there is an option to appeal other than the High Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41997/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Freedom of Information Act 2014 provides that a formal decision by the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) is conclusive and binding on all parties concerned, including the public body, the requester, as well as any third parties. The OIC is independent in the performance of its functions, and has extensive powers to make necessary inquiries and obtain copies of records for the purposes of a review. In order to ensure the effective operation of the FOI system, it is important that the OIC must be entitled to bring finality to its reviews when satisfied that it is appropriate to do so. Where a party to a review is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal to the High Court on a point of law, which is the appropriate means by which to challenge a decision of the OIC. It should also be noted that there is nothing to prevent a requester from making further FOI requests for any additional records that have not already been released to them.

Drainage Schemes Status

187. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the plans proposed to clean a river (details supplied); if same will be arranged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42057/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Office of Public Works (OPW) is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995.

A two kilometre stretch of the river, referred to by the deputy, forms part of the Duleek (Nanny) Arterial Drainage Scheme for which the OPW has maintenance responsibility. In 2017 the OPW carried out maintenance work on that part of the channel.

The local authority also has maintenance responsibility for a significant extent of this river, as a Drainage District.

Decentralisation Programme Data

188. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 66 of 9 October 2018, the costs incurred by the programme over the 2003 to 2011 period for the number of staff that relocated; and the costs estimated to be incurred if the total number of 10,000 staff had relocated. [42076/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware the Government announced on 17 November, 2011 that the Decentralisation Programme which was introduced in 2003 should not be continued in the light of the budgetary and staffing outlook.

Initial costings of the Decentralisation Programme estimated at a gross cost of approximately €900m in respect of procuring sites and office accommodation for the Programme.

A 2009 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) includes an audit of property management under the decentralisation programme.

The report identified capital expenditure of €289.4 million on property, including sites, and recurring costs (leases) of €7 million as at April 2010.

Dublin property disposals were €356m and leases with an annual value of €10m over the same period were surrendered.

Non-property costs in the order of €30m were incurred, including the OPW's spend on dedicated staffing for the programme.

Money Laundering

189. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the action taken by the State in its dealings with a bank (details supplied) in view of its acknowledgement of being involved in money laundering. [42097/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A Framework Agreement for the provision of Government Banking Services was established in June 2018 following a competitive tendering process. The successful tenderer has published a report on its internal investigation into money laundering at one of its operations. Remaining cognisant of

the responsibility to conduct business in line with applicable laws, rules and regulations, my officials have been in touch with the bank in respect of this matter. In the event that circumstances arise that would warrant the exclusion of any tenderer from a Framework Agreement, contract terms and conditions provide for such steps to be taken as may be necessary.

State Properties

190. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 145 of 20 March 2018, the position regarding refitting Government buildings (details supplied) in County Wexford to enable consolidation of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42128/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Commissioners of Public Works continues to work with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to see if the building can be reconfigured to free up enough space to meet the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's full requirement for Enniscorthy.

Customs and Excise Controls

191. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 144 of 20 March 2018, the position regarding works to consolidate the Revenue Commissioners' customs terminal accommodation (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42129/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): This project is currently being examined in the wider context of the requirements from all State agencies operating in Rosslare Europort.

Budget Measures

192. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the projected additional carry-over cost in 2020 of the spending measures introduced in budget 2019; the cost by measure and Department in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42273/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Table 7 on page 43 of Expenditure Report 2019 provides an estimate of €311 million in respect of the full-year impact of certain Budget 2019 current expenditure measures in the areas of Social Protection, Education, Health, Housing and Justice. These costs are also set out in the following table.

| Departments | Additional Impact in 2020 (€m) |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Employment Affairs and Social Protection – Gross Cost of Social Protection Package | 135 |
| Education – Funding for New Measures | 26 |
| Justice – Funding for Garda Reform, including recruitment | 50 |

| Departments | Additional Impact in 2020 (€m) |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Health – Funding for New Measures | 55 |
| Housing – Gross Cost of Housing Assistance Payments | 45 |
| Additional Costs in 2020 | 311 |

These costs relate to measures that will be implemented in 2019 and as such will be impacted by the actual cost and timing of implementation. Consequently, these costs, and any other carryover costs that may arise in other areas, including as noted in the Expenditure Report costs in relation to Brexit related staff costs in areas including Revenue and Agriculture, will be re-examined for their impact on the overall expenditure and fiscal position during 2019 as the Budget plans are implemented. Any changes to carryover estimates made on foot of reassessment will be set out in the Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2019. As stated in the Expenditure Report, carryover costs must be met from unallocated resources in 2020 or from savings or reprioritisation. For this reason, these costs have not been allocated on a Departmental basis.

State Properties

193. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 91 of 23 November 2017, 68 of 17 January 2018 and 187 of 21 March 2018, the status of lands at a location (details supplied) for which Fingal County Council has sought a deed of waiver to transfer the land to its ownership; the timeframe for his Department to make a decision and respond to the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42347/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Under Section 28(2) of the State Property Act, 1954, land vested in or held in trust for a body corporate immediately prior to its dissolution, (other than land held by such body in trust for another person) becomes property of the State in the person of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The interest acquired by the Minister is described as a defeasible interest as it may be defeated by restoration of the company up to 20 years after dissolution.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has the discretion, under Section 31 of the State Property Act 1954, to waive property that has devolved to the State under Section 28, if he believes it is proper to do so having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

As the Deputy is aware an application for waiver of the property referred to has been made by Fingal County Council. Processing of waiver applications can be complex and take some time to conclude. This waiver application is not just in respect of the piece of property referenced here; and this has contributed to the length of time this is taking to conclude. Fingal County Council provided further documentation at the beginning of this month (October 2018) in support of their application and this is currently being reviewed by the Chief State Solicitor's Office. I am informed that this application is now at an advanced stage and that a decision can be made shortly.

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

194. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [41750/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Since the establishment of An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta within my Department, significant progress has been made in relation to the development of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and commencement of its implementation. The objective of the Scheme is to allow participating schools to seek to achieve Gaeltacht School Recognition over a 5 year period on the basis of the implementation of specific language-based criteria, including the implementation of a total-immersion approach and the development of action plans by schools.

In April 2017, all primary and post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas were invited to participate in the Scheme. The Scheme has been welcomed by Gaeltacht communities and well-received in Gaeltacht schools. This is evident from the high participation rates in the Scheme. 106 or 80% of primary schools and 28 or 96% of post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht have opted to participate in the Scheme.

To encourage participation in the Scheme by schools, a comprehensive information pack outlining the benefits of immersion education and bilingualism was sent to schools for dissemination to school communities, including parents and teachers. The information pack was developed by the Gaeltacht Education Unit in my Department in collaboration with An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), Gaeloideachas, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Following the submission and review of each participating school's action plans for improvement by An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, schools participating in the Scheme were eligible to access a number of additional resources from September 2018. These resources include access to a grant to purchase Irish-medium teaching resources, additional language teaching hours, additional continuing professional development delivered by COGG and additional Inspectorate support.

The number of additional language support hours allocated to schools participating in the Scheme from September 2018 was based on the enrolment figures recorded in the previous year, which is in line with Department norms. Schools at primary level were given the option to combine their additional language support hours with other schools to form clusters, which would allow for the creation of a temporary part-time teaching post that would be shared by the schools in the cluster. Initially schools were advised that the combined hours must equal 25 hours to create the shared teaching post, however, a number of schools applied to form clusters with a combined total of less than 25 hours. Having reviewed all applications received on a case by case basis my Department made the decision to approve these clusters also. This decision was made in the context of the challenges relating to the recruitment of teachers by schools in remote Gaeltacht areas and in the interests of the implementation of the Scheme and the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in general.

Circular 0021/2018 also highlights that the allocation of additional language support hours will be reviewed in 2019.

School Staff

195. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review an appeal by a school (details supplied) under the exceptional accommodation difficulties to allow an additional teacher to be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41751/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to schools is published annually on the Department's 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 process includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. Circular 0010/2018, “Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2018/19 School Year” provides details for schools wishing to make an appeal. It is open to Boards of Management to assess the criteria which best applies to their school and submit an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

The Primary Staffing Appeals Board will meet for the final time this week to consider staffing appeals for the 2018/19 school year.

The Department received a staffing appeal from the school referred to by the Deputy last week. Following clarification that this week’s appeal meeting will deal with the current year’s staffing allocation, the school has withdrawn its appeal and advised the Department that it will submit an appeal in respect of staffing for the 2019/20 school year when the staffing arrangements for next year are published in early 2019.

Departmental Records

196. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will release all documentation, including internal departmental emails, regarding the purchase of a stadium (details supplied) ; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41761/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Since the sale of the stadium was closed, public access to records on the purchase of the stadium has been provided via the provisions of the Freedom of Information legislation. The information requested by the Deputy was released under the provisions of Freedom of Information on 24 August 2018 in response to two requests.

My Department publishes details of FOI requests on its FOI disclosure log. The general procedure is that this log is updated approximately 8 – 10 weeks after a response to an FOI request has issued. The reason for this time lapse is to allow for an appeal to a decision. In this instance, as the information was released on 24 August (just over 7 weeks ago), the details were due to be added to the published disclosure log very shortly in accordance with normal procedures.

However, in the interests of transparency I have asked my Department to expedite the inclusion of these two requests on the published FOI disclosure log this week and also to publish the records themselves later with other relevant material.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

197. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the accuracy of using an application and Eircodes as the measurement benchmark for assessing eligibility for the non-adjacent rate of student maintenance grant in which the practical evidence of a clocked drive of the distance proves that the measurements by the application using Eircodes to be inaccurate (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41764/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The student to which the Deputy refers was assessed under the terms of the 2017 Student Grant Scheme. As per Article 27 (3) of the 2017 Scheme, maintenance grants are payable at either the adjacent or non-adjacent

rate. The Awarding Authority determines the rate applicable in respect of an eligible student in line with the Scheme and the accompanying Department of Education and Skills Guidelines.

The adjacent rates of maintenance grant is payable in the case of students whose normal residence is 45km or less from the approved institution which he or she is attending, where the distance is measured as the shortest non-tolled direct route from the student's residence to the institution. The non-adjacent rate of maintenance grant is payable in all other cases.

In the assessment of the application from the student in question, the awarding authority assessed the distance from her normal residence to the relevant higher education institution as under 45km and awarded the applicant the special rate of maintenance grant (adjacent rate).

The student appealed the decision to the SUSI appeals officer and subsequently to the statutorily independent Student Grants Appeals Board who both upheld the decision of the awarding authority. The student has exhausted the appeals process provided for in the Student Support Act 2011.

On a general point, the student grant scheme is published annually and the terms of each scheme, including enhancements which improve the efficiency of the scheme in terms of accuracy and reduced processing times, can change over time. While some students who were assessed under older schemes may have benefitted from the application of rules that applied at a particular point in time, this should not be seen as an indicator that similar outcomes will be arrived at for students assessed under more recent schemes.

Special Educational Needs

198. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the powers of special educational needs organisers, SENOs, with regard to the allocation of special needs assistant, SNA, resources; if these powers include the ability to remove resources from a school if another school has been allocated additional hours; if his Department records these reductions in resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41797/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

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

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

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

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

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

Third Level Admissions Entry Requirements

199. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to planned changes to University College Dublin's admission deadlines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41831/18]

206. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department was notified by UCD of its change in admissions policy whereby 30 September was announced as the final cut-off date for its courses. [41887/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 and 206 together.

The Department was not made aware of the change of policy by UCD, in imposing a deadline of 30 September for acceptance of new entrants.

Schools Building Projects Status

200. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the date for the build of the new replacement school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41833/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) – Detailed Design.

The outcome of the pre-qualification process for the main contract has been notified to contractors who expressed interest in tendering for this project. Feedback and issues arising from same is currently being dealt with by the Design Team. When this process has concluded the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

The project is currently profiled to commence construction in Q3 2019. However, the Department has advised the school that if the project is in a position to commence construction earlier in 2019, the Department can facilitate this.

Schools Site Acquisitions

201. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a lease has been signed for the site for the new build for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41834/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, my Department is in the process of acquiring the site for a new school building for the school referenced. The conveyancing process is well advanced and every effort is being made to expedite the process. The legal transaction when complete will transfer full ownership of the site in question to the Minister, and is not a lease agreement.

While conveyancing is being completed the architectural planning process for the new

school is advancing. It is not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

Departmental Legal Costs

202. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost in legal fees relating to a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41835/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Departmental Staff Data

203. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41843/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Department of Education and Skills Internal Principal Officer Promotions

| Year | Number |
|------|--------|
| 2015 | 0 |
| 2016 | 2 |
| 2017 | 0 |
| 2018 | 6 |

There was only one internal promotion within a DES aegis body: 2016 confined competition promotion within the Higher Education Authority.

Departmental Staff Data

204. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41856/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is set out as follows.

| Department or Office Name: | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |

| Department or Office Name: | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 1 | 1 | n/a |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 0 | 2 |

Departmental Funding

205. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding his Department contributes to medicines research and development annually; the budget holders, for example, the Irish Research Council, responsible to his Department; the extent of its funding allocations for medicines research and development; the principles which guide this funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41884/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Competitive research funding available from my Department is managed by the Irish Research Council. It has a broad remit to support and enhance human capital development, in particular at postgraduate and early stage postdoctoral levels. The Council -

- funds excellent research within, and between, all disciplines, and in doing so to enhance Ireland's international reputation as a centre for research and learning

- supports the education and skills development of excellent individual early-stage researchers and cultivates agile independent researchers and thinkers, while offering a range of opportunities which support diverse career paths

- enriches the pool of knowledge and expertise available for addressing Ireland's current and future needs, whether societal, cultural or economic and deliver for citizens through collaboration and enabling knowledge exchange with government departments and agencies, enterprise and civic society

The Council does not operate quotas for individual disciplines. Funding is awarded based on excellence, which is determined on the basis of independent peer review in an open, objective and transparent manner. Therefore, funding for medicines research would vary each year depending on standard of proposals.

The Council also operates funding schemes under which non-academic bodies participate in research projects. Under some of these schemes, the partner organisations make financial contributions towards the award (Enterprise Partnerships Scheme and the Employment Based Programme). No disciplinary prioritisation applies under these schemes, and awards are based on excellence.

I am arranging for information on such research to be collated by the Council and I will forward this to the Deputy.

Question No. 206 answered with Question No. 199.

Ministerial Meetings

207. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has met the

schools secretaries division of a union (details supplied) recently; and his plans to meet with it. [41888/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): To answer the Deputy's question, my officials formally meet with FÓRSA Trade Union officials on an on-going basis as parties to a number of industrial relations fora. This includes a long-standing dedicated forum established under a Labour Relations Commission recommendation (now comprehended by the Workplace Relations Commission) whereby my officials meet bilaterally with FÓRSA officials four times a year on specific issues that affect their members, including issues related to school secretaries. Outside of the aforementioned formal industrial relations channels, my officials also have regular informal engagements with FÓRSA officials on various matters as they arise in Education Sector workplaces where their members are employed.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses Fees

208. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason charges of over €3,000 have recently been imposed on asylum seekers residing in direct provision centres by the Cork Education and Training Board in respect of PLC courses; the basis for applying such charges in view of the fact that no charges were previously applied; if other further education institutes have applied the charges; the details of those that have; the number of students from whom the charges have been sought; and if the decision will be reviewed in view of the exceptionally limited income profile of this cohort of students. [41920/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Access for eligible international protection applicants to the majority of further education and training programmes is free of charge, but international fees continue to apply for Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programmes and higher education courses.

Arrangements in relation to payment of international fees for international protection applicants have not changed since 2001. PLC colleges are responsible for collecting the fee.

More broadly, the Government decision to opt in to the EU (recast) Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/22/EU) has given international protection applicants, who have been waiting 9 months or more for a first instance recommendation, access to all aspects of further education and training. While this modifies some of the earlier arrangements regarding access, it does not change the situation regarding the payment of the international fee for PLC programmes.

My Department announced last month the continuation of the Pilot Student Support Scheme for those in the international protection system for the 2018/19 academic year. This pilot scheme was first introduced in 2015/16, and provides supports, including meeting any fee costs, in line with the current Student Grant Scheme. The scheme applies to eligible students pursuing PLC programmes and undergraduate courses. To qualify for the scheme, applicants need to have spent 5 years in the Irish school system and have completed the leaving certificate.

Enrolment numbers in relation to academic year 2018/19 are not yet available. However, The number of learners who indicated that they were international protection applicants on commencement of PLC programmes in September 2017 for the academic year 2017/2018 was 19, as reported by the PLC providers.

State Examinations Commission

209. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a tender (details supplied) was withdrawn and a project did not proceed as planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41943/18]

210. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a tender (details supplied) was challenged; if so, the grounds on which it was challenged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41944/18]

211. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are legal proceedings pending with regard to the tender in respect of the implementation of an electronic marking system; if so, the basis for these proceedings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41945/18]

212. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a tender document; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41946/18]

213. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action that will be taken against public officials regarding the cancellation of a public procurement competition (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41947/18]

214. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reissue a tender for the implementation of an electronic marking system; when this is likely to happen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41948/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 to 214, inclusive, together.

The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Schools Site Acquisitions

215. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a site for a school (details supplied) will be purchased and publicly announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41964/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, the school to which she refers is included in my Department's 6 year construction programme. The acquisition of a suitable site is required to facilitate this project.

With the assistance of officials in Fingal County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding for the acquisition of school sites a number of site options were identified. These were comprehensively assessed and a preferred site option has been identified. Negotiations with the landowner in respect of the proposed acquisition of this site are currently ongoing. The Deputy will appreciate that negotiations on school site acquisitions can be complex and price is only one of multiple aspects which need to be agreed. Nonetheless, officials are working to bring matters to a conclusion at the earliest possible date.

Due to commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally, the Deputy will appreciate that I am not in a position to provide further details at this time but I can confirm that

the school patron is being kept appraised of developments in respect of the site acquisition process.

In the interim the school is based since September 2018 at the former Institute of Horology property, Mill Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 on a temporary basis.

Schools Site Acquisitions

216. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made with regard to locating a permanent site for a school (details supplied); if Dublin City Council has been directed to actively engage with landowners with a view to securing such a site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41965/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department has agreed to acquire a permanent site for the school in question. The acquisition is currently progressing through the conveyancing stage.

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 kept informed of progress.

School Transport Applications

217. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of school transport for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41986/18]

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.

In the 2017/18 school year over 117,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, were 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.

A service has been sanctioned to cater for the pupil referred to by the Deputy. Bus Éireann has confirmed that they will be in contact with the parents to advise them of the arrangements.

School Services Staff

218. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if correspondence regarding school secretaries will be responded to (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42055/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Though schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in primary and secondary schools, where staff employed on these schemes are paid directly by the Department, these schemes have been largely phased out and have been superseded by the more extensive capitation grant schemes.

Under these schemes, the majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools in the Free Education Scheme now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services. Within the schemes, it is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs.

My Department has recently made significant efforts to improve the pay of school secretaries who are employed using capitation grant assistance. In 2015 my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries on negotiations and agreed to enter an independent arbitration process on the issue. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. Following the arbitration process, grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff is being improved on a phased basis between 2016 and 2019 in order to enable schools to implement the arbitration outcome.

In December 2017, my Department published circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator's recommendations.

Circular 0078/2017 is available at https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf.

Circular 0079/2017 is available at http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079_2017.pdf.

The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator's recommendation applies.

Apprenticeship Programmes

219. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider re-establishing the type of apprenticeship courses previously delivered through the former CERT in view of the serious skills shortages in many areas, particularly the hospitality area. [42063/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT) was a training organisation specifically for the hospitality sector under the remit of Fáilte Ireland. There are currently no plans to re-establish a dedicated training organisation for the sector but rather to deliver the required education and training through the mainstream higher and further education and training sectors.

In 2015 the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) carried out a study on the future skills needs of the hospitality sector including skill needs for chefs and cooks. The objective was to assess demand arising within the sector in Ireland including hotels, restaurants, bars, canteens and catering over the period to 2020. The aim was to ensure that there will be the right supply of skills to help drive domestic hospitality sector business and employment growth. Key findings within the report related to the high replacement/exit rates in the sector which has implications for the ongoing skill requirements of the sector and also with regards to staff retention, including education and training, and workplace conditions and remuneration.

The Study assessed skills demand at all NFQ levels, with a particular focus on career progression opportunities for those at lower skilled levels to help fill anticipated job openings.

The report provides a set of recommendations designed to address the skills requirements of the sector over the period to 2020, including the need to establish a National Oversight and Advisory Group, comprising of key hospitality stakeholders, to provide a forum for on-going collaboration to support the needs of the sector and oversee implementation of the EGFSN recommendations.

The oversight group was established in 2016, and was mandated for two year period. The group was chaired by the Irish Hotels Federation and identified five priority areas for progress on which significant progress has been made:-

- Promoting careers in the sector
- Audit of hospitality related courses and facilities in both HE and FET
- Development of apprenticeship and traineeship programmes
- Launch of a dedicated skillnet for the hospitality industry
- Making employment connections – DEASP/Jobsbridge etc

The group has published its report on the audit of both higher and further education courses providing a high level of analysis of the data available that shows the numbers of courses, enrolments and awards in the Hospitality sector to enable the Group to determine how it might address the skill sets required by the sector and to aid it in identifying gaps in the provision of courses.

Arising from this Government's commitment to expand apprenticeship and traineeship education, there are now two apprenticeships in the hospitality sector operational, a Commis Chef Apprenticeship and a Chef de Partie Apprenticeship with industry leadership from the Restaurants Association of Ireland and the Irish Hotels Federation. A further two apprenticeships in the culinary area are in development, a Sous Chef apprenticeship which is expected to get underway later this year and an Executive Chef apprenticeship which will be rolled out in 2019. A Bar Manager apprenticeship is also in the early stages of development.

In 2015 a new Career Traineeship initiative was initiated by SOLAS in collaboration with the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and enterprise to develop a more effective model of work-based learning, primarily at NFQ levels 4 and 5, incorporating best national and international research and practice. Networks have been created to facilitate partnerships between ETBs and employers to identify training needs, design training programmes, recruit learners and deliver training on and off the job. There are currently three hospitality traineeships available with further traineeships in development.

A Restaurant and Hospitality Skillnet was established in 2017 and, along with the Taste 4 Success Skillnet, will address skill needs in the sector. There were also almost 5,500 beneficiaries in 2017 of further education and training in the food and beverage and tourism areas.

School Textbooks

220. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to inaccuracies in certain textbooks being used for the junior certificate history syllabus; and the person or body responsible for same. [42064/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Apart from a small number of prescribed texts at post-primary, determined by the NCCA, the decisions on which textbooks

to use in primary and post-primary schools are taken at school level. My Department does not generally approve, commission, sponsor or endorse educational textbooks.

Textbooks are commissioned and published by educational publishers, and schools select their books from those available from a number of publishers. The Irish Educational Publishers Association meet with the NCCA in order to discuss the content of the curriculum and to be made aware of any requirements in the curriculum.

The only requirement from the Department, on any resource used in a school, is that it covers the curriculum. Ultimately, the decision on which text, if any, most appropriately covers the curriculum, rests within the school itself.

Any issues regarding the accuracy of texts should be raised with the school management and the publishers.

Ministerial Travel

221. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for an education promotional mission to China. [42065/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Our next Education Trade Mission to China will be led by the Minister for Skills, Innovation, Research and Development, John Halligan TD, from 18 to 24 October 2018.

During this mission, the Minister will visit Beijing, Wuhan and Fuzhou. He will meet with relevant Government Ministers, Provincial leaders, Chinese State Agencies, higher education institutions and will speak at the Beijing International Education Expo.

The objective of this mission is to deepen and enlarge the already strong and growing relations between Ireland and China in education and research – embracing links at the level of Government, official and private agencies and institutions of education and research.

The Government’s Education Strategy 2016-2020 aims to support the development of global citizens through Ireland’s high quality international education system, by attracting talent from around the world to our education institutions and by enhancing partnerships and collaboration with partner institutions and Agencies in key countries. One of the key objectives of the strategy is to increase global links by succeeding abroad; the Minister’s visit to China will further this strategy on an international level. Internationalisation of education brings direct financial benefits to Ireland, and also creates links and relationships between Ireland and many partners at individual, institutional and international level that will bring further engagement and economic activity in the future.

Apprenticeship Programmes

222. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which the shortage of apprentices in the mechanical and electrical trades can be addressed; his views on pre-apprenticeship courses in those areas; and the extent of such courses. [42066/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Apprenticeship is a demand driven educational and training programme which aims to develop the skills of an apprentice in order to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. Consequently, the number of apprentices being registered in a sector is determined by employers in

that sector. My Department and SOLAS are committed to supporting the registration of apprentices across all apprenticeship programmes, including in both of these sectors. Electrical related apprenticeship registrations increased from 522 in 2013 to 1,705 in 2017 which represents an increase of 226% during the period and in the mechanical (motor) sector new registrations increased from 485 to 673, an increase of 39% during the same period.

My Department is engaging with SOLAS on a review of pathways to apprenticeship, which will be published in the near future. Work is also underway in relation to pre-apprenticeship provision and I am informed by SOLAS that they are currently engaged with key stakeholders in considering relevant pathways and opportunities for pre-apprenticeship initiatives, including in the craft trades.

Departmental Correspondence

223. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a reply will issue to correspondence sent to a person (details supplied) that has been acknowledged as received on a number of occasions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42091/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has recently responded to the correspondence in question.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that the property referred to in the detail supplied is owned by the local Education and Training Board. My Department has requested the ETB, as the property owner, to liaise directly with the community group relating to this matter.

Interdepartmental Meetings

224. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the dates on which the interdepartmental committee to examine the way in which existing State services can best meet the needs of residential institution survivors has met; the name of the chairperson of the committee; and the date on which the final report of the committee is due to be published. [42151/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The first meeting of the inter-Departmental committee will be held on 5th November and will be chaired at Assistant Secretary level by Ned Costello. The dates of future meetings, work plan and a likely publication date for the final report will be discussed at this meeting.

Schools Building Projects Status

225. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of new buildings for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42160/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that a project for the school in question is included in my Department's Capital Programme to primarily replace existing temporary accommodation with permanent accommodation.

The Project Brief is being finalised and the Department will be in further contact with the school in relation to the next steps at the earliest opportunity.

Schools Building Projects Status

226. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of new buildings for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42161/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

Following the replacement of the consultant architect, the Design Team has reviewed the previous Stage 2b documentation and is upgrading the detail to NZEB standards. An acoustic report has been commissioned and on receipt and review of that report, the Design Team will finalise the detailed design for preparation of the tender documents.

The Design Team anticipates submitting the Stage 2b Report to my Department in January 2019. Upon receipt and review of the Stage 2b submission, my Department will revert to the Board of Management regarding the progression of the project.

Schools Building Projects Status

227. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of new school buildings for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42162/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, a building project to provide permanent accommodation for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

In this regard, the schedule of accommodation for the new school has been finalised and has recently issued to the school authorities for their observation.

School Accommodation

228. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding providing a new classroom at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42182/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that my Department recently received correspondence from the school referred to by the Deputy seeking a review of their application for additional accommodation. The matter is currently being considered and my Department will be in further contact with the school authority on the matter at the earliest opportunity.

Schools Building Projects Status

229. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeline for the completion of a new extension at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42187/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major school building project 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. All statutory approvals have been secured. The Design Team is currently in the process of completing the Stage 2(b) report which will be submitted through the Board of Management to the Department.

Upon completion and receipt of the Stage 2(b) submission the project will then be authorised to complete pre-qualification of Contractors. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete.

When pre-qualification is complete the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

A letter issued from the Department to the school and its Design Team in March 2018 outlining the projected timeframe for progression of this project to tender and construction stage and the steps involved.

Special Educational Needs

230. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the procedure the principal and board of management of a school (details supplied) must follow to slightly amend the building plan at no extra cost to include a second ASD unit. [42234/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for approving special classes.

As the Deputy may be aware, the NCSE sanctioned one special class at the school, commenced September 2018. In that regard, my Department approved an application to provide permanent accommodation to facilitate this class.

Should the NCSE approve a further special class unit in the school referred to, it would be open to the school to submit an application for additional accommodation should there be a deficit of accommodation.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

231. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for a SUSI grant by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if consideration will be given to the special circumstances in the case with a view to granting the person the maximum payment. [42256/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service complements the established channels provided by SUSI which include online

application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

With regard to the appeal process, if an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe.

Physical Education

232. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to the introduction of physical education in primary schools; his plans in regard to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42266/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): All schools are required to deliver physical education as part of the curriculum. Primary schools are required to deliver a minimum of 1 hour per week while post primary schools are required to deliver a minimum of 2 hours per week.

Healthy Ireland, A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 is the national framework for whole of Government and whole of society action to improve the health and well-being of people living in Ireland. The Framework identifies a number of broad inter-sectoral actions, one of which commits to the development of a plan to promote increased physical activity levels. The National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) was published in 2016 and contains a range of measures to promote physical activity across society, including in the education sector.

My Department has a number of action under the NPAP as follows:

- Raise awareness among schools, particularly Primary schools, of opportunities to educate through physical activity
- Develop guidance to support schools adopt and implement policies that promote the well-being of their communities under the Get Active! Framework
- Extend the Active School Flag programme
- Fully implement the Physical Education curriculum for all primary and post-primary pupils to meet Department of Education and Skills guidelines
- Evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education in a sample of primary and post-primary schools annually
- Develop and provide a programme of continuous professional development in physical education
- Promote the assessment of PE by facilitating teachers and students in managing the assessment dimension of senior cycle physical education through the development of an App (for phones/tablets) and to trial the App with a number of schools.

- Conduct the LifeSkills Survey every three years
- Include children and young people in the development and implementation of programmes in which they are involved.
- Include the promotion of physical activity in children, including through play, as an integral component of education and training programmes that lead to qualifications in early childhood care and education.
- Evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education in a sample of primary and post-primary schools annually
- Raising awareness among schools, particularly Primary schools, of opportunities to educate through physical activity

I am progressing these commitments according to the timelines laid out in the National Physical Activity Plan.

State Examinations Commission

233. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of qualified teachers versus the number of third level students who do not have recognised teaching qualifications and who were engaged by the State Examinations Commission to mark State examination papers in each specific subject area for the junior certificate and leaving certificate examinations in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42320/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

School Accommodation

234. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to capacity problems in a school (details supplied) with demand currently exceeding capacity; his plans to address this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42324/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department received an application from the school referred to for additional accommodation.

In that regard, my Department has requested additional information from the relevant Education and Training Board. Once received my Department will carry out a technical site visit at the school to determine the works required.

In the interim, my Department has approved temporary accommodation to meet the immediate needs of the school.

Skills Shortages

235. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is tak-

ing to address the skills shortages experienced by many companies across all sectors, for example, the majority in information technology, life sciences and construction; the actions being taken to deal with severe skills shortages in the economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42329/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The education and training system at all levels has a number of strategies in place to ensure we meet existing and future skills demands in the workplace. Among those strategies are the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.

In addition, recently announced in the Budget, a major new Human Capital Initiative is to be established within the National Training Fund to allocate €300 million from the Fund's surplus, over the period 2020-2024 to meet the future skills needs of the economy and provide additional investment at levels 6-8 in higher education. This investment will underpin the provision of additional capacity across the higher education sector to meet the priority skill needs of enterprise, to drive regional jobs growth and development, and support key economic sectors in responding to the challenges of Brexit.

Apprenticeship Programmes

236. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to bring young persons out of unemployment through development of and access to apprenticeships to support young persons with fewer opportunities and qualifications in view of recent figures released by the National Youth Council that show thousands of young persons aged 26 years and under have been unemployed for a year or more; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42330/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): This Government is committed to doubling the number of people on an apprenticeship programme by 2020 and expanding the apprenticeship model into new sectors of the economy. Arising from our two calls for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 and 2017 sixteen new apprenticeships have now been developed in a range of new occupations, including financial services, engineering, ICT, hospitality, logistics and accounting. Further new apprenticeships will get underway later this year and throughout 2019 in a variety of sectors including construction, engineering, horticulture and agriculture.

As well as developments in new apprenticeships, as the employment and economic situation continues to improve, we have seen strong growth in registrations across the craft trades nationally also with 4,508 new registrations in 2017, which represents a 20% increase on 2016. The upward trend continues this year with 3,504 new registrations recorded at the end of September, 7% ahead of the same period last year.

In addition, as set out in the Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland, SOLAS is currently reviewing pathways to participation in apprenticeship in a range of underrepresented groups, including the groups referred to by the Deputy. The review will identify any barriers that may exist to participation in an apprenticeship programme. The purpose of the review is to ensure that our national apprenticeship system is more reflective of the range and diversity of our population, more inclusive of diverse backgrounds and abilities and that apprenticeship opportunities are more readily accessible to all. The review will result in the publication of actions in this area in the coming weeks, along with the background research.

School Accommodation Provision

237. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Kinsealy, Malahide and Portmarnock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42449/18]

244. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Kinsealy, Malahide and Portmarnock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42456/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 237 and 244 together.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Kinsealy, Malahide, and Portmarnock are located in the Malahide-Nevinstown and Portmarnock school planning areas.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.gov.ie and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

I wish to advise the Deputy that in September 2014, a new multi-denominational primary school was established to serve both of these school planning areas.

School Accommodation Provision

238. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Swords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42450/18]

239. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Donabate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42451/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 238 and 239 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including three new schools to be established in the Swords and Donabate areas as follows:

- A new 8-classroom primary school to serve Swords South to be established in 2019;
- A new 8-classroom primary school to serve the Swords North to be established in 2019;
- A new 16-classroom school to serve the Donabate school planning area to be established in 2020.

This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Consideration is given to the possibility of providing for increased demand in an area through extending the capacity of existing schools by way of a building project or temporary accommodation where there is a short-term requirement or extensions to existing schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Departments website, www.education.ie, and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

School Accommodation Provision

240. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Balbriggan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42452/18]

246. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Balbriggan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42458/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 240 and 246 together.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Balbriggan is located in the Balbriggan school planning area.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.

gov.ie and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

In September 2014, Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, a new 700 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage An Foras Pátrúnachta, was established to serve the Balbriggan school planning area. In addition, in September 2016, Bremore Educate Together Secondary School, a new 700 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school, was also established to serve this school planning area.

School Accommodation Provision

241. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Rush; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42453/18]

243. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Lusk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42455/18]

248. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Rush; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42460/18]

249. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Lusk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42461/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 241, 243, 248 and 249 together.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Rush and Lusk are both located in the Rush & Lusk school planning area.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, *www.education.gov.ie* and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

As the Deputy may be aware, in September 2013, Lusk Community College, a new 1,000 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board, was established to serve this school planning area.

School Accommodation Provision

242. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of primary school places in Skerries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42454/18]

250. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Skerries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42462/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 242 and 250 together.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Skerries is located in the Skerries school planning area.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.gov.ie and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

Question No. 243 answered with Question No. 241.

Question No. 244 answered with Question No. 237.

School Accommodation Provision

245. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Swords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42457/18]

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

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). A new 1,000 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board to serve the Swords school planning area was established in September 2018.

This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools. The current status of large-scale projects, including those in Swords, being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.gov.ie and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

Question No. 246 answered with Question No. 240.

School Accommodation Provision

247. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the shortage of secondary school places in Donabate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42459/18]

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

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools. The current status of large-scale projects being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's

website, www.education.gov.ie and this is updated monthly. A list of large scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

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.

Questions Nos. 248 and 249 answered with Question No. 241.

Question No. 250 answered with Question No. 242.

Schools Establishment

251. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of the two new primary schools for Swords, County Dublin, as announced in April 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42469/18]

252. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of the new primary school for Donabate, County Dublin, as announced in April 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42470/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 251 and 252 together.

As the Deputy is aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years. This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the current and future need for primary and post-primary school places across the country. This announcement included a new primary school for Donabate and two new primary schools for Swords: one in North Swords and one in South Swords.

The current focus for my Department is to prioritise the 17 schools opening in 2019 so that patrons can be appointed and accommodation solutions put in place as soon as possible. My Department has appointed a Project Manager to assist with this work and potential interim accommodation solution options have been identified for the majority of the 17 schools.

My Department's Design and Build Programme will be the main delivery mechanism for providing permanent accommodation for the 42 new schools. A procurement process is currently underway to facilitate the appointment of a Project Manager who will assist my Department in the provision of permanent accommodation for the new schools to be established from 2020 onwards.

A patronage process is ongoing in respect of the four post primary schools due to open in 2019 and I expect to make an announcement shortly in this regard. A patronage process for the primary schools due to open in 2019 will commence shortly thereafter.

I wish to advise the Deputy that a site currently in my ownership in Mooretown, Swords has recently been granted planning permission in respect of the provision of permanent accommodation for Swords Community College. This planning permission also provides for a primary school on this site and it is intended to locate the new primary school announced for North Swords on this property.

A site identification process in respect of the new primary schools announced for South Swords and Donabate are currently underway. 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 is examining all potential suitable site options, including appropriately zoned sites, to serve the relevant area.

A decision regarding the location of the schools in South Swords and Donabate will be made at the earliest possible date.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

253. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the pupil teacher ratio and class sizes are progressing in the desired manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42485/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, our plan to make Ireland's education and training service the best in Europe by 2026. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes. This builds on the Budget 2018 measure which provided a one-point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

The latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratios show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.3:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2017/18 school year. Average class sizes at primary level improved from 24.9 to 24.5 in the same period.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

254. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the degree to which adequate special needs classes are available in all areas throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42486/18]

273. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which facilities for children with autism or Asperger's syndrome continue to remain available and accessible at primary and second level throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42505/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254 and 273 together.

This government is committed to ensuring every child with special educational needs has the opportunity to fulfil their full potential.

Funding for special education provision in 2018 will amount to some €1.75 billion, up 43% since 2011 and equivalent to 18.7% of the gross overall current allocation for education and

training.

The Department's policy is to provide for the inclusive education of children with special educational needs, including Autism (ASD), in mainstream school settings, unless such a placement would not be in the best interests of the child concerned, or the children with whom they will be educated.

The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter, in the first instance, for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools and it does not maintain details of waiting lists in schools.

Accordingly, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) advises parents to seek to enrol their child by applying in writing to the school/s of their choice as early as possible. Where parents have been unsuccessful in enrolling their child in a school for the 2018/19 school year, they should update their local SENO to inform the planning process.

The greater proportion of children with special educational needs attend mainstream class, where they may access additional supports if required.

Some students with special educational needs, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there and placement in a special class is an option for them. Special classes are resourced to cater for six pupils with complex educational needs arising from their diagnosis and as such are staffed with a reduced PTR and Special Needs Assistant support.

Special school placements are provided for other students with very complex special needs who wouldn't manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.

The NCSE is responsible, through its network of Special Needs Organisers, for the development and delivery and co-ordination of education services to children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special class and special school placements.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of special classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,459 across the country now which includes 1,196 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes. 160 of the special classes are new classes for 2018/19 school year. The network of ASD classes includes 131 ASD early intervention classes, 743 primary ASD classes and 322 post-primary ASD classes in mainstream schools.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie in county order.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need from year to year, and where special provision is required it is planned and provided for.

The National Council for Special Education has published Guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools which contain information on setting up and organising special classes, including information on resources which may be provided to schools to establish special classes and are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

My Department has acknowledged that in recent years the establishment of special class provision in some schools and communities has been challenging.

As the Deputy may be aware, I signed a Commencement Order on the 4th of October bringing a number of sections of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018 into operation.

The commencement order will provide the Minister for Education and Skills with a power, after a process of consultation with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the board of management and the patron of the school, to compel a school to make additional provision for the education of children with special educational needs. This power will come into effect on Monday 3rd December 2018.

I have asked the NCSE to engage with the education partners and finalise the procedures in advance of this date. This new power will build on the work which has been done in recent years to facilitate schools to open special classes.

My Department will continue to support the NCSE in opening special classes in areas where there is an identified need.

Schools Building Projects Status

255. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to indicate the position in regard to the completion of a campus (details supplied); if the timescale remains on target; when the project is likely to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42487/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm to the Deputy that arrangements to complete the project to which he refers remain on track. The current works programme indicates a re-tendering of the project to pre-qualified contractors towards the end of this year with a view to having a contractor back on site to enable the completion of the project by June 2020.

Schools Building Projects Status

256. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various school bundles promised for County Kildare at primary and second level remain on target in terms of the relevant development phases; if he remains satisfied in respect of the projected completion dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42488/18]

260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Naas, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42492/18]

261. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Maynooth, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42493/18]

262. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42494/18]

263. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Leixlip, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42495/18]

264. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Celbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42496/18]

265. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which a review has taken place in respect of the provision of primary and post-primary facilities by way of new buildings or extension of the existing building at primary and post-primary level in Clane, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42497/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 256 and 260 to 265, inclusive, together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects, including those in County Kildare, being delivered under the school building programme may be viewed on my Department's website, www.education.ie, and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

I also wish to advise the Deputy of the announcement earlier this year of plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019-2022), including 4 new schools to provide additional school capacity in County Kildare. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country. The four year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

The Government remains committed to delivering on existing projects on the school building programme as soon as possible. I am satisfied that the €8.4 billion investment available under the National Development Plan (2018-2027) will enable us to modernise and transform our school infrastructure in the years ahead.

Schools Establishment

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to further Educate Together schools requested in County Kildare; the extent to which provision has been made or will be made in the respective areas that have indicated a demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42489/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy will be aware, I have announced new plans aimed at accelerating the provision of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment to reach 400 such schools by 2030.

I would point out that the previous model of patronage divestment yielded only a very limited number of schools for transfer to multi-denominational patrons (11 since 2013). I believe that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system.

While these new structures are being introduced, my Department will continue to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including Leixlip.

As the Deputy will be aware, I recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new

schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including:

- a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Leixlip school planning area,
- a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Maynooth school planning area,
- and a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Naas school planning area.

This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies, including Educate Together, and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron and language of instruction, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

Schools Building Projects Status

258. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the various schools affected by a contractor (details supplied) are progressing towards completion and available for the intake of pupils and students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42490/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The following table sets out the current position in relation to the schools affected by the collapse of the building contractor referred to by the Deputy.

| County | Roll No. | School | Type of project | Original planned Completion date | Revised planned Completion date |
|-------------|----------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Dublin City | 20047O | Gaelscoil Bharra, Cabra | New 8 classroom school | 07/09/2017 | School ready for occupation on 1/9/17, some ground works still to be completed |

| County | Roll No. | School | Type of project | Original planned Completion date | Revised planned Completion date |
|---------|----------|---|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Laois | 20270R | Portlaoise amalgamation, (St Paul's, Sacred Heart & Scoil Mhuire) Portlaoise Rd, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. | New Schools - 3 existing schools amalgamating into 2 new schools - Two new 24 classroom schools with a combined GP Hall. | 12/04/2016 | Jnr School ready for occupation on 9/6/17 - Snr School ready for occupation on 29/8/17, some ground works still to be completed |
| Offaly | 72560C | Tullamore College | Demolition of the existing single storey secondary school buildings and their replacement with a 7,076m ² part single part two storey school building to provide accommodation for 675 pupils | 29/06/2016 | School ready for occupation on 27/2/17, some ground works still to be completed |
| Wexford | 12372G | New Ross Jnr & Snr Schools, Castlemoyle | 2 new 18 classroom schools each with a 2 classroom ASD Unit | 15/06/2016 | Schools ready for occupation on 25/01/17, some snags/defects still to be rectified |
| Wicklow | 70740M | Arklow Community College, Coolgreaney Rd, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. | New school to cater for 710 pupils | 17/06/2016 | School ready for occupation on 23/12/15, some ground works still to be completed |

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| County | Roll No. | School | Type of project | Original planned Completion date | Revised planned Completion date |
|---------|----------|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Cork | 71050P | St Colman's College, Midleton, Co Cork | Extension of 5,640sqm including ASD Unit PE Hall to provide accommodation for 1000 pupils | 10/02/2017 | School should be ready for occupation Sept 2019 |
| Cork | 70990M | Coláiste an Chraoibhin, Fermoy, CO Cork | Extension of 3,845 sqm including ASD Unit PE Hall to provide accommodation for 850 pupils | 15/12/2016 | School should be ready for occupation Sept 2019 |
| Kildare | 70700A | Maynooth Post Primary School, Maynooth | Replacement school for 1000 pupils | 18/05/2019 | School should be ready for occupation June 2020 |
| Kildare | 76193Q | Maynooth Community College, Maynooth | New 1000 pupil with a shared Sports Hall with Maynooth Post Primary School | 18/05/2019 | School should be ready for occupation June 2020 |
| Carlow | 70420R | Tyndall College | 1000 pupil school | Q1/2018 | School should be ready for occupation by end of 2018/early 2019. |
| Carlow | 76514K | Carlow Institute of Further Education | 1000 pupil school | Q1/2018 | School should be ready for occupation by end of 2018/early 2019. |
| Meath | 64410F | Eureka Secondary School, Kells | 800 pupil school | Q1/2018 | School should be ready for occupation by end of 2018/early 2019. |
| Wicklow | 70821M | Coláiste Raithin, Bray | 450 pupil school | Q4/2017 | School ready for occupation on 31/08/2018 |
| Wicklow | 07246U | Ravenswell Primary School, Bray | 24 Classroom School | Q4/2017 | School ready for occupation on 18/09/2018 |

| County | Roll No. | School | Type of project | Original planned Completion date | Revised planned Completion date |
|---------|----------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Wexford | 63660A | Loreto Secondary School | 900 pupil school | Q4/2017 | School ready for occupation on 23/08/2018 |

Schools Building Projects Status

259. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to the development of a school (details supplied); if the plans have advanced sufficiently to ensure the availability of the facility as and when required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42491/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

The project is at stage 2b of the architectural planning process. When stage 2 b has been approved, the next stage is tendering for a contractor. My Department expects to be able to approve the project to move to the tender stage shortly.

My Department will meet the interim accommodation needs of the school pending the delivery of its new building.

Questions Nos. 260 to 265, inclusive, answered with Question No. 256.

Schools Facilities

266. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of extra facilities at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42498/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that my Department is in receipt of an application for major capital funding from the school referred to by the Deputy.

I wish to advise that my Department has made contact with the school authorities to advise that immediate accommodation deficits, including the replacement of prefab accommodation, can be dealt with under the Additional School Accommodation scheme. In that context the school has been advised to submit an application to my Department for the replacement of prefabs.

My Department will process the application once received and revert to the school with a decision.

Schools Facilities

267. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the existing facilities at a school (details supplied) remains adequate; his plans to meet the upcoming requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42499/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has no record of receiving an application for funding for improved facilities from the school in question.

It is open to the school authorities to make an application for additional accommodation through the Additional School Accommodation scheme where an accommodation deficit is identified. Any application received will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as possible.

School Patronage

268. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which patronage issues affecting various schools throughout County Kildare have progressed in accordance with plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42500/18]

269. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the degree to which patronage of various schools throughout the country has been resolved in line with expectations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42501/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 268 and 269 together.

Regarding the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process, as the Deputy will be aware, I developed this new process, in order to provide more multi-/non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment for 400 such schools by 2030.

There are two Phases to the new process – the Identification Phase and the Implementation Phase.

The Identification Phase is currently underway in 16 areas nationwide. Each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) has selected an initial pilot area within its functional area, in which it considers, based on census data and local knowledge, that there exists a demand for more diversity in educational provision. Surveys of parents of pre-school children have been carried out in these areas by the relevant City/County Childcare Committee on behalf of the ETBs. ETBs, having analysed the survey results, draw up comprehensive reports on the position in relation to each of the 16 pilot areas. This forms the basis of discussions with the most prevalent patron/landowner in the area (the Catholic Bishop in most cases) concerning the transfer of patronage of an existing school(s) to meet that demand. The response by the landowner/patron to any identified demand for greater diversity is included in the report prepared by the ETB for submission to my Department, which will subsequently publish the reports.

Following the publication of the first round of reports, the Schools Reconfiguration process will move into the Implementation Phase. This Phase involves consultation with local school communities on accommodating demand for diversity by transferring patronage of an existing school to a new multi-/non-denominational patron. Draft protocols for the Implementation Phase are at an advanced stage of development and consultation with Catholic Church representatives is ongoing.

In relation to Kildare specifically, a town/area in County Kildare has not been identified for survey as Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board has chosen to survey Bray in Co. Wicklow as part of this initial roll-out. A second round of town selections and surveys of pre-school parents will be organised by ETBs when the outcomes of the initial round of pilot

surveys have been assessed and any necessary adjustments made in the Schools Reconfiguration process.

I believe that this new Schools Reconfiguration process, which involves the transfer of live schools, has the potential to significantly increase patronage diversity in our school system.

Teacher Data

270. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which extra teachers have been deployed at primary and second level throughout County Kildare in line with requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42502/18]

271. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which extra teachers have been deployed at primary and second level throughout the country in line with requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42503/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 and 271 together.

Teacher allocations to all schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. The criteria for the allocation of posts are published on the Department website.

Budget 2018 provided for a 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 came into effect in the current school year.

The 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, our plan to make Ireland's education and training service the best in Europe by 2026.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes.

Schools Establishment

272. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding to the provision of a Gaelcholaiste in north County Kildare; the extent to which plans are proceeding as expected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42504/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): 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 Gaelcholaiste would be established.

As part of the Major School Building Projects announcement in November 2015 and in view of the continued support for an independent Gaelcholaiste, it was confirmed that a Gaelcholaiste to serve the North Kildare area will open in 2019, subject to the continued viability of the

Irish-medium Aonad at Maynooth Community College.

KWETB and An Foras Pátrúnachta are working through the practical arrangements to facilitate the establishment of the Gaelcholáiste and my Department will continue to work closely with them in this regard.

Question No. 273 answered with Question No. 254.

School Guidance Counsellors

274. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to improve the career guidance service throughout second level education; if he anticipates an improvement in the short and medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42506/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019, provides for a Career Guidance Review that would include recommendations on changes to improve the existing career guidance tools and career information for post-primary/further education/higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland. The independent review which began earlier this year will be completed shortly and I look forward to seeing the findings and recommendations in the final report on the review.

School Therapy Services

275. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which speech and language therapy continues to be available to pupils with a specific requirement in north County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42507/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Speech and Language Therapy Services are under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Health and the service is provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). Questions in relation to the provision of speech and language therapy services should therefore be referred to the Department of Health and the HSE.

The Deputy will be aware, however, that 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.

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

75 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.

In total therefore 150 settings will participate in the demonstration project.

The list of the participating schools and pre-schools, including those in Kildare, has now been published on my Departments website.

Children who require speech and language therapy services and who are not attending one of the pilot schools will continue access services from the Health Service Executive.

Children who are attending pilot schools and who receive therapy supports from the HSE will also continue to access such services. The in-school therapy model is designed to supplement, not to replace existing services.

The model will be that of inter professional collaboration with therapists and school staff working together to identify needs, plan interventions, and monitor progress and supporting school staff and parents to delivery indirect interventions, on a supervised basis.

It will be designed to provide for a clinical Speech and Language Therapy service delivery model of Specialist, Targeted and universal supports in line with best practice for pupils which will see them receiving supports along a continuum of provision depending on the extent or severity of needs of the child/pupil.

Considerations in relation to the extension of the service to other areas or Counties, or to extend the service nationally, will be taken following an evaluation of the existing informed pilot phase.

Third Level Quality Assurance Compliance

276. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which third level education requires ongoing assessment and updating in line with best practice internationally in order to ensure the ability of graduates to compete internationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42508/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Third level education is constantly evolving in accordance with emerging best practices and national priorities to ensure that graduates, and the institutions themselves, are best placed to meet the needs and demands of the global marketplace. The Higher Education System Performance Framework articulates the expectations from the system across all areas of activity and from across Government. The HEA engages with HEIs on their performance against these domains through a process of strategic dialogue and through the use of performance funding. The new Framework covers the period 2018 - 2020. The promotion of 'excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high-quality student experience' is one of the 7 'key system objectives' in the System Performance

Framework, and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning supports the implementation of best international practice ensuring that opportunities for better practice are identified, mainstreamed and shared under the guidance of the Higher Education Authority and sectoral representative bodies.

Quality assurance procedures are in place within HEIs in accordance with Guidelines as set out by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). An Annual Institutional Quality Assurance Report is submitted to QQI which outlines the institutions cycle of internal reviews along with links to published review reports. These internal reviews comprise of any or all of regular periodic reviews of study programmes; quality reviews of academic, administrative and service departments; unit-based reviews of schools, faculties and colleges and thematic reviews of institution-wide issues. QQI has also established a Policy for the Cyclical Review of Higher Education Institutions, which takes place on a periodic scheduled basis.

Ireland is in the top 5 positions in Europe in terms of participation and in the top 10 positions in terms of educational attainment. The participation rate of 18-20 year olds in higher education has grown from 20% in 1980 to a current level of 58%. Ireland has one of the highest rates of 30-34 year olds with higher education attainment in the OECD with over half of 25-34 year olds having completed higher education.

Budget 2019 continues the Government's process of reinvestment in Higher Education, building on the progress made in Budgets 2017 & 2018. Budgets 2018 & 2019 have made provision for 5,600 additional Higher education student places. The Government has secured a total package which provides for €57.4 million of additional expenditure in Higher Education in 2019. As part of Budget 2019, the Government committed to increasing the National Training Fund levy by a further 0.1% in 2019 to 0.9%, and by a further 0.1% in 2020. Additionally a new Human Capital Initiative has been announced as part of budget 2019. This will involve investment of €300m over the 5 year period 2020-2024, with €60m being made available in each of those years. This investment will be funded by the NTF surplus. There is also a significant ramping up of Government investment on the capital side of the higher education sector and over a 10 year period, investment of some €2.2 billion is envisaged. To complement and underpin the additional investment in Higher Education a number of strategic reforms measures are also being undertaken by my Department.

Technological universities will provide an opportunity to drive regional development and provide more opportunities for students, staff, enterprise and local and regional communities. They will have a significant reach, impact and influence regionally, nationally and internationally. Ireland has a strong track record, too, in research and innovation, and Irish researchers have been very successful under Horizon 2020's highly competitive international funding stream.

Ireland is 11th in global scientific ranking for overall quality of scientific research. This is an impressive trajectory from a position of 48th just 13 years ago. Our global rankings for individual subject areas further demonstrate that we continue to play an important role in global R&D. Ireland is now 1st in Animal and Dairy, 1st in Immunology, 2nd in Nanotechnology and Agricultural Sciences. Ireland remains 1st in the world for knowledge diffusion and 10th in the Global Innovation Index.

School Transport Eligibility

277. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a bus ticket for a child (details supplied) attending a school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42531/18]

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.

In the 2017/18 school year over 117,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, were 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.

Bus Éireann has advised that a ticket will issue this week to the child referred to by the Deputy .

Immigration Controls

278. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reorganise immigration in Dublin Airport such that domestic travellers and travellers originating within the common travel area do not have to queue to pass through passport control; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42208/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There is no requirement for citizens of either jurisdiction to carry passports when travelling within the Common Travel Area (CTA). However, it is the case that airline carriers in many instances require their passengers to have a passport in possession before allowing them to board the aircraft. As such, this is not an immigration requirement.

Unlike the operational practices at some UK airports, there is generally no segregation of arriving passengers at Irish ports of entry to the State. Consequently, Immigration Officers performing immigration control duties at airports in the State do not know where passengers have travelled from when such passengers present at immigration control desks.

It is therefore necessary for Immigration Officers to establish where passengers have arrived from, and in order to do this, an Immigration Officer may ask passengers questions with a view to establishing their nationality and port of embarkation. Once satisfied that a person is a citizen of the CTA and that such person has travelled from the United Kingdom, the Immigration Officer will make no further requirement of that person.

The organisation of the infrastructure for arrival of aircraft at Dublin Airport has developed over many years and any changes to it is a matter for the Dublin Airport Authority. My officials are not aware of any such plans in this regard.

State Claims Agency

279. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the ongoing delay with a claim for compensation lodged with the State Claims Agency in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42467/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the role of the State Claims Agency includes management of personal injury and property damage claims brought against certain State authorities.

I understand that the State Claims Agency is managing the claim referred to by the Deputy on behalf of An Garda Síochána.

I am assured by the State Claims Agency that it is in regular contact with the persons referred to in connection with their claim submitted earlier this year, and that it will notify them further when its investigations are complete.

Leave to Remain

280. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a dispute between the IPO and GNIB is preventing registration of a number of persons granted permission to remain under the International Protection Act 2015; the steps he will take to ensure this matter is resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41780/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am assured there is no dispute between the International Protection Office (IPO) and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

The IPO, GNIB and the Policy Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department liaise closely in relation to the granting, notification and registration of permissions to remain in the State.

Recently, the bodies have worked together to develop new processes for the granting of such permissions within a single procedure, under the International Protection Act 2015.

A new registration procedures paper sets out clearly the registration process and will assist Registration Offices throughout the country with registering these permissions. I am further informed that any temporary difficulties which may have arisen with the roll-out of the new process have been resolved. The requirements with regard to registration as set out in section 9(2) of the Immigration Act 2004 remain unchanged.

Departmental Staff Data

281. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41847/18]

282. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41860/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 281 and 282 together.

The following tables outline the promotions to the grade of Principal Officer as a result of internal competitions held in my Department since July 7th 2015 and open Principal Officer competitions in 2015 and 2017 run by the Public Appointments Service.

Figures are also included in respect of Department of Justice and Equality Prison Service civilian staff.

I have asked the agencies under the aegis of my Department to reply directly.

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Department or Office Name: Justice and Equality | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| No. of appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 7 |
| No. of appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 1 | 6 | 9 | n/a |
| No. of appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202(Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 0 | 5 |

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Department or Office Name: Irish Prison Service (civilian staff) | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| No. of appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| No. of appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| No. of appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202(Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 0 | 0 |

Note: these figures do not include staff at PO level recruited via the Interdepartmental PO mobility scheme introduced in 2015 under the Civil Service Renewal Programme.

Sexual Offences Data

283. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to bring the SAVI II scoping group report to Cabinet for consideration by the end of November 2018. [41893/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the expert Scoping Group has completed a draft report considering the availability of data and making recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland and emerging trends. A further piece of technical work is now being completed so that proposals can be brought to Cabinet in the coming weeks.

I can assure the Deputy that once the report has been considered by Government I intend to make an announcement to outline the way forward in relation to this issue.

Garda Deployment

284. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the priority outcomes from the implementation progress review of phase 1 of the nationwide roll-out of An Garda Síochána divisional protective services units. [41894/18]

285. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the locations of the phase 2 divisional protective services units rolled out in 2018; the remaining phases

of the nationwide roll-out of such units in all Garda divisions; the location and number of personnel to be attached to each unit; and if the necessary accommodation is in place in each. [41895/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 284 and 285 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner has responsibility to manage and control generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment, training and appointment of its members and civilian staff. I, as Minister have no function in such matters.

As the Deputy will be aware under the Modernisation and Renewal Programme for An Garda Síochána, 2016-2021 Divisional units of Garda National Protective Services Bureau are being rolled-out in two phases, supported by the Garda National Protective Services Bureau. Phase One has now been completed, with Divisional Protective Services Units established in three Divisions, in the DMR West, Cork City, and Louth Division, where 2 Sergeants and 10 Gardaí were identified for allocation to the Divisional Unit.

Following a review of the Pilot, additional Divisional Protective Services Bureaus are now in the process of being established in DMR South Central; Waterford; Kerry; Kilkenny/Carlow; Limerick and Galway Garda Divisions before the end of Q4, 2018. It is intended that Divisional Protective Services Bureaus will be established in all remaining Garda Divisions before the end of 2019.

I am informed by the Commissioner that this initiative is being managed collaboratively between the Garda National Protective Services Bureau and each Divisional Officer. The pilot will inform the full roll-out to each Garda Division, by assessing and evaluating the Units initially selected including with reference to for example geographical size and population profile.

The Commissioner has further informed me that all Garda personnel receive training in the investigation of incidents considered domestic abuse, in all its forms, with additional training provided to Gardaí selected for duties as detectives. Similarly, additional and more specific training has been developed by the Director of Training with the senior management team at the Garda National Protective Services Bureau for the training to be provided to personnel selected for duty with the Divisional Protective Services Units, which have commenced in the three Garda divisions, DMR West, Cork City and Louth. Induction training has been provided for the personnel selected for these Units, with a briefing being provided to all relevant State Agencies and NGOs.

The Policing Authority submitted their Fifth Progress Report to me in June. This report was partly focused on providing an update on the implementation of the recommendations contained within the Garda Inspectorate's report Changing Policing in Ireland, including the roll out of the pilot Divisional Protective Services Units. It is positive to note that the Policing Authority's engagement with organisations that work with victims, as well as the recent Garda Inspectorate Report on Child Sexual Abuse, evidence the anticipated improvement in services for victims arising from the roll out of the Protective Services Units. In addition, it is to be welcomed that the Policing Authority has received positive feedback that the pilot PSUs have resulted in improved levels of service to victims and increased operational effectiveness in dealing with crimes of that nature.

The Deputy will also be aware that the recently published Commission on the Future of Policing report sees the establishment of Divisional Protective Services Units as a significant move in the right direction towards ensuring that services to victims' rights are further embed-

ded in the organisation's processes.

Budget 2019 provides an unprecedented level of public funding of €1.76 billion for An Garda Síochána in 2019. This includes an increase in the Garda capital allocation from €61 million to €92 million in 2019, a 50% increase. This will facilitate investment of around €65 million in ICT, a further €10 million investment in the Transport Fleet and €17 million in the Building Programme. This clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

Garda Civilian Staff Recruitment

286. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of civilians recruited to An Garda Síochána in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41908/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who has responsibility to carry on and manage and control generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment, training and appointment of its members and civilian staff.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that as of 12 October, 282 civilians have been recruited to An Garda Síochána in 2018. This excludes another 6 staff who have been recruited on secondment. Some of these civilian staff were recruited to backfill existing vacancies, some were to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí to frontline duties and others were to fill newly created civilian posts to fill skill gaps across the organisation.

The Deputy will be aware that as part of the Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána, the Government has agreed an overall vision for a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. The projected 4,000 civilians represents a medium-term target of 20% of the Garda full-time workforce comprised of civilians. This target will be achieved through a twin-track approach of firstly, a "civilian by default" policy to be adopted in relation to the filling of all new posts other than operational policing posts and for non-operational policing posts that become vacant and, secondly, the redeployment of Gardaí to policing roles where their skills can be used to best effect with the backfilling of these roles by suitably qualified civilians where necessary. The Garda Inspectorate identified some 1,500 posts held by Gardaí that could be examined for suitability for civilian staff.

Progress is being made in relation to civilianisation. Since the beginning of 2017 approximately 300 new civilian posts have been sanctioned by the Policing Authority with the consent of my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The bulk were to address critical skills gaps and capacity issues with a proportion sanctioned to make a start on the redeployment of Gardaí to policing duties.

The most recent overall figure provided to me by the Commissioner indicates that, as at 31 August 2018 approximately 2,330 civilians were employed in An Garda Síochána. I am encouraged that the number of civilians working in An Garda Síochána continues to advance however it is clear that the pace of civilianisation needs to increase. I note that the Report of the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland recommends the return of Gardaí to front line policing and the need for visible policing. My Department has consulted with the Garda Commissioner with regard the recommendations within the Report and I await his proposals

including how he will increase the pace of civilianisation and the redeployment of Gardaí to main stream policing duties.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

287. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the recent reports on the possibility of an asylum centre closing before Christmas; his plans for same; the way in which the 225 residents of a centre (details supplied) were informed; when his attention was drawn to the fact that the company that owns the property was withdrawing its service; his further plans to relocate these families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41954/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): My Department was informed by the contractor for the centre, by letter received on 3rd October 2018, that they will not be seeking to renew the contract which expires in December.

Residents at the centre were all formally informed by personal letter delivered last Friday morning, 12th October 2018, that it had not proved possible to secure an extension of the contract to 30th June 2019 and that unfortunately the centre would close when the contract comes to an end on 3rd December 2018.

Notwithstanding this, we will continue to work with those residents of the Towers who are still in the protection process in order to identify alternative accommodation from within the accommodation portfolio of my Department. The Department has commenced the process of identifying additional capacity both by way of the public procurement competition referenced above and an advertisement placed in the national press seeking expressions of interest in providing accommodation on an emergency basis for persons in the protection process.

My aim is to limit, to the greatest extent possible, the disruption to families and to residents relying on Dublin-based services. The Reception and Integration Agency is working on contingency plans to facilitate school going children, currently living in the centre in question, to continue in their current schools for the current school year. However, the Reception and Integration Agency is very constrained by the current demands for its accommodation and by the absence of bed capacity within its system.

Considerable work has been done to support residents with status to move out of accommodation centres and to secure permanent accommodation.

My Department also provides funding to NGOs on accommodation issues affecting those who have been granted permission to remain, including the approximately 60 such persons affected in this instance. In particular, funding was granted to the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Peter McVerry Trust under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Ireland 2017 - 2019 for the PATHS project (Providing Asylum-seekers in Transition with Housing and Support). In addition, funding has been granted to South Dublin County Partnership for a two year housing and integration programme, a key part of which is to assist residents who have received permission to remain, to access housing supports. Officials from my Department have been liaising with South Dublin County Council in relation to the particular situation arising in Clondalkin.

Road Traffic Legislation

288. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of

discussions of the high level task force on quads and scramblers which his Department is participating in with the Dublin local authorities; the number of times it has met; the initial recommendations it is bringing forward; if it is recommending legislative changes regarding Garda seizure powers; if the task force is considering recommendations regarding legislation providing for a minimum age of ownership, registration and effective deterrents for when they are used in non-legal situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41967/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that the task force has met on two occasions to date, on 21 June and 13 September 2018. The next meeting will take place on 14 November 2018.

My Department has consulted with a considerable number of Government Departments and public bodies over the past number of months to identify a number of relevant pieces of legislation, which have been brought to the attention of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), to determine whether any legislative amendments are necessary to assist in curbing activity insofar as scramblers and quad bikes are concerned, without giving rise to any unintended negative legislative consequences.

While the high-level task force has not adopted any formal legislative recommendations, I am advised that it has given consideration to the issues raised in the Deputy's question, and these discussions have informed the aforementioned correspondence with the OAG.

With particular regard to a minimum age of ownership, I would emphasise that the supply of mechanically propelled vehicles to persons under the ages of 16 and 17 (depending on the vehicle) constitute offences in accordance with section 30 of the Road Traffic Act 2004.

I will be happy to provide the Deputy with a further update on this matter at a later stage.

Domestic Violence Services Funding

289. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason there is no programme for perpetrators of domestic abuse in counties Monaghan and Donegal; the steps he will take to rectify same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41975/18]

290. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding allocated to domestic violence perpetrator programmes in each county in the past five years. [41976/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 289 and 290 together.

Cosc, the national office in this policy area, is currently supporting and overseeing the implementation of a uniform national domestic violence intervention programme under the Second National Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, 2016-2021. The roll out of this programme, entitled the Choices Programme, began in 2017.

Choices is now being delivered across the State by the following three organisations working with men who engage in domestic abuse and in providing support to their partners/ex-partners; MOVE Ireland (MEND), South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (SEDVIP) and the North East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme (NEDVIP).

Prior to this, these organisations were running separate types of domestic abuse intervention programmes locally with funding support provided by Cosc.

Currently, the Choices programme, which includes a number of different components including one to one work, group work and partner support work, is being delivered in 18 site locations across the State. Details of this are provided in the table.

I can advise the Deputy that funding under this programme is not allocated on a county by county basis. As the work of programme co-ordinators under the Choices programme does not operate on a county basis it is not possible to provide a county by county breakdown of its costs.

Details of the funding provided by Cosc to the respective service providers in delivering intervention programmes over the period sought is enclosed.

It is proposed that over the lifetime of the National Strategy the Choices programme will be introduced to additional locations. This matter is being examined by the existing service providers in partnership with Cosc.

Other options in the further development of this work, such as the provision of one to one supports are also being explored in cases where group programmes may not be immediately viable.

Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme Organisation Funding

| - | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 (to end of September) |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------------|
| MOVE Ireland | €179,986 | €210,000 | €360,000 | €402,000 | €395,000 | €375,000 |
| South East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme | €188,250 | €231,042 | €259,539 | €278,000 | €272,215 | €289,620 |
| North East Domestic Violence Intervention Programme | €23,477 | €22,682 | €23,000 | €24,000 | €23,494 | €27,100 |
| Total Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes | €391,713 | €463,724 | €642,539 | €704,000 | €690,709 | €691,720 |

Choices Domestic Abuse Intervention Programme October 2018

| Choices Programme Location | Service Provider | Contact details |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Galway | MOVE | 085-8748108 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Sligo | MOVE | 085-8748108 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Midlands (Athlone) | MOVE | 085-8748108 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Cork | MOVE | 086-6044047 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Dublin city centre | MOVE | 086-4149591 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Dublin Tallaght | MOVE | 086-4149591 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Dublin Swords | MOVE | 086-4149591 www.moveireland.ie/ |

| Choices Programme Location | Service Provider | Contact details |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Meath | MOVE | 086-4149591 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Limerick/Clare | MOVE | 086-4149613 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| North Tipperary | MOVE | 086-4149613 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Kerry | MOVE | 086-4149613 www.moveireland.ie/ |
| Carlow/ Kilkenny | MEND | 086-8751131 http://mend.ie/ |
| South Tipperary | MEND | 087-9156632 http://mend.ie/ |
| Waterford | MEND | 086-8167798 http://mend.ie/ |
| Wexford | MEND | 086-1075449 http://mend.ie/ / |
| Laois/Offaly | MEND | 087- 4597626 http://mend.ie/ |
| Kildare | MEND | 051-878866 http://mend.ie/ |
| Louth | NEDVIP | 042 9359755 |

Domestic Violence

291. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a statutory requirement for a domestic homicide review to take place into the care received by a woman murdered during pregnancy or up to one year postpartum. [41977/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There is no statutory requirement for a domestic homicide review to take place into the care received by a woman murdered during pregnancy or up to one year postpartum. I have written to the Garda Commissioner with regard to domestic homicide reviews and will I correspond with the Deputy when I receive a response.

Garda Deployment

292. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda personnel attached to the serious sexual assault and domestic violence Garda unit in County Louth; the stations in which they are based; when this facility will be operational; and the services offered. [41978/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and Units and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that the allocation of Gardaí is continually monitored and reviewed taking into account all relevant factors including crime trends, demographics, and security assessments relating to the area in question so as to ensure optimal use is made of Garda human resources.

The Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021 envisages a range of actions to be implemented by State, voluntary and community sector organisations aimed at preventing and responding to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. An Garda Síochána is committed to supporting this strategy, and in March 2015 a number of Garda units were brought together to leverage their experience and expertise in investigating serious crimes against the person including sexual offences to form the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) led by a Chief Superintendent.

The GNPSB is a specialist team dedicated to making sure each and every complaint relating

to child protection, human trafficking, domestic and sexual violence is thoroughly investigated and handled correctly. In addition, the GNPSB is responsible for working with other agencies to manage sex offenders in the interest of community safety.

As part of the Garda Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 Protective Services Units (PSUs) are to be established in every Garda Division with specially trained staff on a phased basis. I am advised by the Commissioner that Phase 1 involved the establishment of Units in three Divisions the Dublin Metropolitan Region West, Cork City, and the Louth Division over a 12-month period on a pilot basis. These units mirror the responsibilities held by the GNPSB and ensure a consistent approach to domestic abuse and sexual crime. The PSUs work with the Garda Victim Service Offices in their area to ensure that the needs of victims are adequately catered for.

I am informed by the Commissioner that there is one Sergeant and five Gardaí assigned to the Louth Divisional PSU which is based in Castlebellingham Garda Station. I am further informed that it is expected that additional resources will be allocated to this unit shortly.

Domestic Violence

293. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the County Louth serious sexual assault and domestic violence unit has met with local services such as an organisation (details supplied); and if not, if it will be considered. [41979/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested the information from the Garda Commissioner and will correspond to the Deputy when I receive a response.

Garda Data

294. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda personnel attached to the national domestic homicide team; and the number of cases this team reviewed in each of the past five years. [41980/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I have requested the information sought from the Garda Commissioner and I will write to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Garda Support Services

295. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if stress interventions and-or counselling sessions are mandatory following traumatic incidents involving gardaí at work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42007/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I know the Deputy will

agree that we should never underestimate the dangers the men and women of An Garda Síochána face and the traumatic incidents they encounter in the course of their duty. The Government is committed to supporting the work of An Garda Síochána and to ensuring that the organisation is properly resourced to carry out its important role in protecting our communities.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána including the provision of employee welfare supports.

I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is committed to ensuring that members exposed to workplace stress receive the appropriate organisational response and in that regard there are a variety of supports in place for Garda members.

I am informed by the Commissioner that following on from traumatic incidents at work, the interventions and counselling provided are not mandatory for members of An Garda Síochána however there is support available and offered in the aftermath of such incidents.

The Garda Employee Assistance Service is available to members of An Garda Síochána and supports them in managing and resolving personal and work-related difficulties. All employee assistance officers, and in the region of 250 of the peer supporters, are trained in critical incident stress management which is an intervention designed to prevent or mitigate psychological reactions to a critical incident. This intervention is delivered with the support of a mental health professional when required. Where necessary the services of the Occupational Health Department, headed by the Chief Medical Officer of An Garda Síochána, are made available to assist Garda personnel deal with stressful and extremely difficult situations in the workplace. This Service is staffed by a team of specialist occupational healthcare professionals supported by an administration team. The Service is dedicated to supporting the employees of An Garda Síochána to maintain their health and well-being in order to carry out their duties safely and effectively.

A 24/7, 365 day Independent Helpline and Counselling Service is available to all staff within An Garda Síochána. This service is available for both work and personal difficulties. The service is not mandatory and is self-referral. Each member of the organisation may avail of six free sessions of counselling per year and an additional two will be provided if clinically approved. All appointments and consultants are arranged directly between the Service Provider and the staff member.

Since 1994 a Peer Supporter Programme has been in operation within An Garda Síochána to help Gardaí cope with the effect of a traumatic incident in the workplace. I am informed that the programme has been found to be very helpful in assisting Garda members in the aftermath of a traumatic incident. The programme is delivered by over 850 Garda who are trained as peer supporters and are available in all Garda Districts to assist colleagues in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic incident. Following a traumatic incident, a peer supporter will contact the members concerned and offer support. In the event that the peer supporter deems it appropriate, they may refer the member to the Garda Employee Assistance Service.

The recently published Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland report recognises that policing is an unusually stressful job and recommends that An Garda Síochána requires mandatory counselling for Gardaí following a traumatic incident such as attending a bad traffic accident or crime scene.

My Department is currently analysing the Report and my officials are engaging in consultations with An Garda Síochána, the policing oversight bodies and the relevant Departments, in order to inform my substantive response and high-level implementation plan that I intend to

bring to Government by December.

Garda Data

296. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí absent due to stress related illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42008/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate the Garda Commissioner is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that sickness absences are recorded on the Sickness Management Absence System under the following categories:

- Ordinary illness
- Occupational injury/illness arising from duty
- Critical illness.

I am further informed there is currently no specific sub-category on the Sickness Absence Management System for the recording of absences due to work related stress and it is not possible to collate the information in the manner requested by the Deputy.

Garda Promotions

297. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of candidates who failed to progress in the past two garda to sergeant competitions who had the decision reviewed and-or appealed; and the number of these decisions overturned on review. [42009/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Appointment to the rank of Sergeant is a matter for the Garda Commissioner under section 14 of Garda Síochána Act 2005. I am advised by the Commissioner that a competition recently concluded for promotion to the rank of Sergeant with the aim of bringing the number of Sergeants up to the full strength as agreed under the Employment Control Framework. In that regard I am pleased that Budget 2019 provides funding for an increase in the strength of the Sergeant rank of 110 to 2,110 under the ECF. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions will be fully considered when assigning successful candidates from this competition.

I have sought the specific information requested by the Deputy from the Commissioner and I will write to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Immigration Status

298. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the options available to a person (details supplied); the steps the person can now take to regularise the person's status with a view to having the ability to work to support the person's children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42013/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was initially granted permission to remain in the State, on a stamp 4 basis, on 19 March, 1997. This permission was subsequently renewed with the latest permission granted up to 31 May, 2020.

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 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 Question 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.

Proposed Legislation

299. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if legislation that would allow clauses to be put in house purchase contracts that would protect buyers should their bank approval lapse before the build is complete will be considered (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42054/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that I am not in a position to comment on individual cases. In addition, the question relates primarily to consumer or contract law and, as such, does not fall within my area of responsibility.

In relation to the conveyancing of property, by way of general information, the position is that the payment by a purchaser of a deposit on entering into a contract for sale of a property is normally required by the conditions of sale. The deposit is usually regarded both as a part payment of the purchase price of the property and as a security for or a guarantee of performance of the contract by the purchaser.

As a general rule it has been well settled in case law that the vendor may retain (or forfeit) the deposit if the purchaser defaults on the contract (*Doyle v. Ryan* [1981] ILRM 375; *Draisey v. Fitzpatrick* [1981] ILRM 219). Equally, case law provides that the purchaser may recover the amount of the deposit, with interest, plus the cost of investigating the title of the property if the vendor defaults on the terms of the contract (*Dickie v. Wright* (1901) NIJR 128).

I understand that Condition 41 of the Law Society's General Conditions of Sale - which, invariably, form the basis for the contract under which a property is sold and purchased - contains express provisions regarding the issue of the retention of a deposit by a vendor.

The Deputy may also wish to know that, with regard to the overall issue of house purchase contracts, my Department has been informed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation that such contracts are subject to the Regulations that give effect to Directive 93/13/EEC on unfair terms in consumer contracts, principally the European Communities (Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts) Regulations 1995 (S.I. No. 27 of 1995). Contract terms are assessable for unfairness under the Regulations unless they are individually negotiated between the seller and the consumer, or they relate to the definition of the main subject matter of the contract or the adequacy of the price as against the goods or services supplied insofar as these terms are in plain, intelligible language.

Given the possible implications for purchasers of not being able to meet the terms of any contract for sale, it is clear that prudent prospective purchasers should seek expert and indepen-

dent legal advice before signing a binding contract for the purchase of a property.

Garda Station Closures

300. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address concerns regarding reports of the closure of a Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42096/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, including responsibility for the formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda stations, taking into account crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure that the best possible use is made of these resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that Nobber Garda Station forms part of the Navan Garda District in the Meath Division. I am advised by the Commissioner that the Garda strength of the Meath Division on the 31 August 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available was 315, of whom 104 members are assigned to the Navan District and 3 members are assigned to Nobber Garda Station. There are also 15 Garda Reserves and 29 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 Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that there are no plans to close Nobber Garda Station.

Ministerial Correspondence

301. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a reply to a letter sent on 16 August 2018 (details supplied) will issue; the reason for the delay in replying to this letter despite reminders seeking a reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42132/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I regret the delay in dealing with this issue. I can inform the Deputy that a reply to his representations will issue from my office in the coming days.

Garda Stations

302. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a reply to a letter sent to him initially on 3 May 2018 (details supplied) will issue; the reason for the delay in replying to this letter despite reminders seeking a reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42133/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for operational decisions in respect of the effective and efficient use of resources available to An Garda Síochána, including Garda stations. In addition, future use of the buildings which were formerly Garda stations, closed in

the Garda District and Station Rationalisation Programme, is a matter for the Office of Public Works. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

I regret the delay in responding to the Deputy's correspondence, however, in light of the matters raised, it was necessary to consult with the relevant stakeholders in particular the Garda authorities and the OPW. I can assure the Deputy that a response will issue in the very near future.

Legal Services Regulation

303. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person who has purchased a property is entitled to get access to the conveyancing file specific to that transaction from the solicitor; if the solicitor is not responding to requests for this information the course of action open to the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42186/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): While it would not be appropriate for me to comment in relation to a particular case, it is my understanding that if a solicitor is not responding to requests made by a client who wishes to take up a file, the client can lodge a complaint with the Law Society and the Society will make enquiries of the solicitor. It is also my understanding that subject to the payment of all outstanding fees by a client and the discharge of any undertakings relating to a file, the file is generally regarded as the property of the client. However, if a client has not discharged costs that are properly due, the solicitor concerned may exercise a lien over a file pending settlement of the account.

Under current law as set out in the Solicitors Acts 1954-2015, the Law Society of Ireland is the designated regulatory body for solicitors in the State. All regulatory and complaints handling procedures are conducted under that framework. The Society's web-site www.lawsociety.ie has a link on its home page which provides guidance on how to make a complaint about a solicitor.

Garda Stations

304. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expenditure, excluding salaries, on each Garda station in County Louth in the past five years; the requests made by the individual stations in County Louth for expenditure; the criteria by which funding was allocated to the relevant station and-or stations that received funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42209/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, it is the Garda Commissioner who is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote and as such is responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources at his disposal. The Commissioner is also responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it is received I will write directly to the Deputy.

Corruption Perceptions Index

305. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he or officials from

his Department have reviewed an index published by an organisation (details supplied) which listed Ireland 19th out of 180 states based on perceived levels of corruption; his views on the fact that there has been no notable change in the perception of corruption here between 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42228/18]

306. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to tackle corruption in the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42229/18]

307. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to tackle corruption in the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42230/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 305 to 307, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, a number of important initiatives have recently commenced and extensive legislation was passed in June with a goal of tackling corruption in all its forms, both in the private and public sectors.

Responsibility for anti-corruption

The responsibility to develop and implement anti-corruption policies does not rest with any one single body or Department in Ireland. The competence to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute corruption is spread across An Garda Síochána and a number of other agencies with a mandate to tackle corruption. These include tribunals of inquiry, commissions of investigation, inspectors, the Central Bank of Ireland, the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO), local authorities, the Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees on Members' Interests, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and its newly established Anti-Corruption Unit, the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB), the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE), the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Equally, legislative provisions to prevent corruption are manifold and not exclusive to my Department. For example, the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995, as amended by the Standards in Public Office Act 2001, addresses the ethical conduct of public officials and the lobbying of public officials is covered by the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015. The Standards in Public Office Commission is responsible for regulatory functions in relation to these statutes. Likewise, transparency and whistleblowing provisions are provided for via the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. Additionally, policy and procedures relating to public procurement are primarily the responsibility of the Office of Government Procurement. There are many further features to effective anti-corruption policy framework, including anti money laundering provisions, tax transparency, and the enforcement of company law.

International Commitments

I can reassure the Deputy that Ireland remains firmly committed to the fight against corruption, both domestically and internationally. Ireland is a party to a number of international agreements, including the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

As a party to these international agreements, Ireland has undergone numerous evaluations and remains subject to peer reviews under the review mechanisms associated with these international standards. Ireland has recently completed a review of its implementation of Chapters II and V of the UNCAC Convention.

Review of Anti-Corruption Structures

Mr James Hamilton, former DPP and Anti-Corruption expert, is chairing a Review of Ireland's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption structures. This review is an Action Point, assigned to the Department of Justice & Equality, contained in the Government's plan to tackle White Collar Crime, which was launched last November. The first meeting of the group took place on Monday, 24 September and is due to meet again next week.

Attendees included all bodies identified in the Terms of Reference as critical for this review, including all State bodies involved in the detection, prevention, investigation and prosecution of White Collar Crime. The Review Group includes officials from the Departments of Justice & Equality; Business, Enterprise & Innovation; Public Expenditure and Reform and Finance, An Garda Síochána, the DPP, the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, the Banking and Payments Federation, the Revenue Commissioners and the Central Bank.

At the first meeting the group discussed their working methods, defined the scope of the Review and the Chair sought position papers from a number of Members outlining their own areas of responsibility. The group also discussed the possibility of opening a public consultation, allowing individuals to make submissions to the group in writing, and in person, at a possible public meeting in early 2019.

The Review Group is due to report in June 2019.

Legislation

As the Deputy will be aware, the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act became law on 5 June 2018. This Act repeals the previous seven prevention of Corruption Acts dating back as far as 1889. However it is more than a consolidation, it represents a complete overhaul of the criminal law in this area and introduces a range of new offences. Most offences apply to both the public and private sector. An offence of trading in influence is introduced for the first time. The offence contained in section 7 is directed solely at the public sector and it relates to Irish officials doing certain acts in relation to their office or using confidential information for the purpose of corruptly obtaining a gift, consideration or advantage. Similarly, the new offence in section 18 is directed solely at the private sector and introduces a strict liability offence whereby a body corporate will be guilty if anyone directly connected with the body corporate commits a corruption offence with the intention of benefitting the body corporate. This offence is rebuttable but it will be up to the body corporate to prove it took all reasonable steps to avoid the commission of the offence.

The Act includes strong penalties to reflect the seriousness of the offence. Penalties include up to ten years imprisonment and a possible unlimited fine in the case of bodies corporate. The Act is a comprehensive, modern piece of legislation that responds to various recommendations made by the Mahon Tribunal, the OECD, the United Nations and from GRECO, the Council of Europe anti-corruption body.

Transparency International

The Deputy refers to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2017. The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. Ireland's score in 2017 was 74 out of 100 and, as the Deputy notes, this indicates little appreciable difference since 2016 in the perception of corruption in Ireland, according to this survey instrument.

It is important to note, however, that Ireland's score has improved significantly since 2012,

having risen 5 points on the Index's scale from 69 to 74. Further, Ireland ranks well above the global average of 43 and that of Western Europe – the highest ranking region in the index with an average score of 66.

Deportation Orders

308. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that deportation of a person (details supplied) may lead to a serious threat to his or her well-being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42239/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of Deportation Orders made on 15 September 2017.

As previously advised, this order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and to remain out of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

It is open to the person concerned to submit further representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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.

Protected Disclosures Data

309. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of departmental staff who have made a protected disclosure to him in 2018. [42268/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised that from 1 January 2018 to 30 September 2018 the Department has not received any Protected Disclosures from Departmental staff (Vote 24). I can also advise the Deputy that up until 1 July 2018 the Head of Internal Audit in my Department was designated as the Recipient for Protected Disclosures in the Irish Prison Service (Vote 21), and received Disclosures from six individuals in that regard in 2018. Since 1 July 2018, the Irish Prison Service has implemented a revised Protected Disclosures Policy, under which a Protected Disclosures Manager has been appointed, and provision made for external assessment and investigation of disclosures: <https://www.irishprisons.ie/protected-disclosures-policy-2018/>.

Magdalen Laundries Report

310. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions he has taken to implement recommendation No. 6 of the Magdalen commission report (details supplied). [42274/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am committed to honouring the commitments made to the Magdalen women. To date, 696 women have received ex-gratia payments from my Department at a cost of €26.2m.

In recommendation 6 of his Magdalen Commission Report, Judge Quirke - who devised the ex-gratia compensation scheme - refers to the issue of the various forms of memorialisation discussed with advocates and representative groups of the Magdalen survivors.

My officials had been engaging with their counterparts in Dublin City Council about a proposal to have a Magdalen memorial established as part of a significant commercial redevelopment on Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1, the original site of the Gloucester Street Magdalen Institution. In September 2018, Dublin City Councillors voted against that particular commercial development.

The issue of memorialisation was also considered at the 'Dublin Honours Magdalenes' event in June 2018. Over 200 former residents of Magdalen institutions attended this event at the Mansion House, with The President of Ireland also hosting the women at his official residence. Although the event was organised by a voluntary group, funding and logistical support were provided by my Department.

The event was in line with another of the recommendations of Mr. Justice Quirke. It provided an opportunity for the women to meet and exchange contact details and make known their views on a suitable memorial. I have asked the event organisers to provide a report on the outcome of those consultations and I will give careful consideration to the views of the Magdalen women when received.

Visa Applications

311. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of a visa application in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42276/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the visa applications referred to were refused by the Visa Office in Dublin on 16 April 2018. The decision, including the reasons for the decision, was communicated to each applicant.

Appeals were subsequently made by each applicant which were received in the Dublin Visa Office on 16 June 2018 and additional documents were provided on 16 July 2018. Appeals are processed in chronological order based on the date on which they are received. It is expected that these applications will be decided by early December 2018 given the current caseload.

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).

Community Policing

312. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of community gardaí in each division and district of the Dublin metropolitan region of An Garda Síochána; the population served in each area; and the comparable figures for each year of each of the past ten years. [42289/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations. That is why it is important to recognise that the role of a community Garda 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 and civil society including giving 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.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the population served by each Garda District is not readily available in my Department as the recording of the population by area is a matter for the Central Statistics Office.

The material is not compiled in such a manner as to allow me to provide you with the number of Community Gardaí in each district. By way of assistance the information in relation to the number of Community Gardaí by Division in each of the years from 2008 to 31 August 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available as provided by the Garda Commissioner, is available on my Department's website through the link:

www.justice.ie/en/JELR/005_Community_Garda_Strength_2008_to_31_August_2018.xlsx/Files/005_Community_Garda_Strength_2008_to_31_August_2018.xlsx.

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Assisted Decision Making

313. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the financial allocation from his budget for 2019 for the decision support service; when he expects the service to be fully operational; the envisaged timescale for the full commencement of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42346/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The 2019 Budget provides for an allocation of €3 million in the Justice and Equality Vote for the establishment of the Decision Support Service.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. The Act provides for the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission.

New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced.

A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service, together with the Director of the Decision Support Service, is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service and this work is ongoing.

The key preparations are being put in place under the oversight of the Steering Group to allow for commencement orders for the substantive provisions of the 2015 Act to be made when the Decision Support Service is ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. Ms Áine Flynn was appointed Director of the Decision Support Service on 2 October 2017. The Director is working in a very determined way to get the necessary staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations in place in order that the Decision Support Service can be up and running as quickly as possible. There are many complex strands to this work, including involvement of multiple organisations.

Every effort is underway to ensure that the Decision Support Service has all necessary capacity to open for business as soon as possible. While the DSS has been working towards being operational and ready for the commencement of the main provisions of the ADMC Act in early 2020, the situation will be kept under review as the preparatory work on implementation moves forward.

The commencement of Part 8 of the Act, which provides for a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives, is a matter for the Minister for Health.

Visa Data

314. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 158 of 9 October 2018, and in view of the fact that the information was requested 14 months ago, the date on which An Garda Síochána and/or the INIS will have completed same. [42357/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that the information requested is held by An Garda Síochána and the reply is being compiled by them. I will write to the Deputy as soon as the information is available.

Garda Misconduct Allegations

315. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an investigation into the inappropriate issuance of visas in exchange for cash by gardaí in counties Wexford, Longford and Limerick is under way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42358/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The allegations alluded to by the Deputy are concerning. As the Deputy is aware, allegations of wrongdoing are for the appropriate authorities to investigate. Those authorities are An Garda Síochána and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. I have no role in such investigations as they are operational matters for the authorities concerned. If the Deputy has information in relation to the alleged wrongdoing, it should be brought to the attention of the appropriate body.

I do not propose to comment any further on this matter.

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Staff

316. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the staffing levels in INIS offices now and at this time in 2017; if the level of resources available is contributing to delays being experienced in the processing of applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42520/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that as of 1 October 2018, there were 849 staff employed within INIS, equating to 812.67 full-time equivalents. This is a significant increase on the staffing levels as of 1 October 2017, at which point there were 782 INIS staff, equating to 747.86 full-time equivalents.

These staffing increases are being particularly targeted at business areas where processing backlogs have emerged.

As set out in the INIS Service Improvement Plan 2018-2020 (which is available at www.inis.gov.ie), it is planned for staff numbers to increase to circa 890 in 2018 to help eliminate backlogs and to deliver the service improvements in the plan.

In that regard, Budget 2019 included an increased allocation of €2.6m to the INIS budget, which includes additional funds to cover the full year cost of increased staffing levels, and to fund increased technological investment which will lead to greater processing efficiencies across all areas.

Garda Deployment

317. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí and reservists in each Garda station in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42544/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The information requested by the Deputy as provided by the Garda Commissioner is available on my Department's website through the link: www.justice.ie/en/JELR/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx/Files/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx.

www.justice.ie/en/JELR/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx/Files/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx.

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Garda Deployment

318. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí and reservists in each Garda station in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42545/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The information requested by the Deputy as provided by the Garda Commissioner is available on my Department's website through the link: www.justice.ie/en/JELR/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx/Files/002_Garda_Numbers_by_Division_District_and_Station_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx.

www.justice.ie/en/JELR/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx/Files/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_31_August_2018.xlsx.

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Departmental Staff Data

319. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in her Department and bodies under her aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41838/18]

320. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of persons appointed from panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41851/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 319 and 320 together.

Staffing levels in my Department and the bodies under its aegis reflect the requirement to manage the pay bill and staff numbers in accordance with Government pay policy; with resources deployed in the most effective and efficient manner as appropriate to business needs and key priorities at any given time. In this regard, my Department liaises directly with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) in relation to the filling of posts, while the bodies under its aegis are responsible for their own recruitment. In addition, my Department also conducts internal competitions for promotion to certain grades, including that of principal officer.

None of the bodies that come under my Department's remit have made any appointments to the grade of principal officer by means of internal competition since 7 July 2015, or through the PAS competitions specified by the Deputy.

The number of officers appointed to Principal Officer in my Department arising from the PAS competitions specified, and from internal competitions from 2015 – 2017, are set out in the table.

| Department Business, Enterprise & Innovation | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 2 | 3 | n/a |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 0 | 0 |

Departmental Funding

321. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of funding her Department contributes to medicines research and development annually; the budget holders, for example, Science Foundation Ireland or Enterprise Ireland, responsible to her Department; the extent of their funding allocations for medicines research and development; the principles which guide this funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41883/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): Science Foundation Ireland, IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland are three agencies of the Department that contribute significantly to medicines research and development. This funding is guided by Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) being an essential component in a company's ability to maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Companies and researchers that receive RDI grant support generate intellectual property and technical know-how in Ireland. Many of these RDI projects lead to manufacturing of new products, which further embed the companies in Ireland and, where relevant, increase the strategic importance of the Irish facility within the Global entity. This, in turn, contributes to the potential to increase employment in Ireland.

Information across the three agencies referenced above is not available in a format that allows for a definitive figure to be provided on "medicines research and development". However, the information provided below indicates that medical and pharma-related R&D forms a significant part of the R&D supported in each agency.

In 2017, IDA Ireland paid a total of €54,251,000 in RDI grants to its clients to undertake RDI across a variety of sectors, including Technology, Life Sciences, Medical Technologies and Engineering. Included in the above total is a figure of €13,900,000 which was paid to IDA Ireland clients in the pharma sector. Whilst some of this funding may be for drug research, it is not possible to confirm that all the funding is used exclusively for that purpose.

For the most part, Science Foundation Ireland does not ring-fence or pre-allocate funds for specific areas of research. SFI funds oriented basic research and applied research in all areas of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). All of the research funded by SFI undergoes rigorous international peer review. From time to time, the agency may run a competitive call in a defined research area where it has been identified that there is a specific gap in Ireland's capabilities or an identified opportunity or challenge which Ireland can and should address.

In 2017, SFI invested over €33,720,000 in research related to medicines research and development. The awards cover areas directly, and more remotely, relevant to medicines research including drug/medicines discovery, but mostly synthesis, formulation, processing technologies, delivery. Significant awards in the medicine research and development areas include the SFI Research Centres, SSPC and CÚRAM.

The Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC) SFI Research Centre led by University of Limerick, is a global hub of pharmaceutical process innovation and advanced manufacturing. SSPC leads the way for next generation drug manufacture and spans the entire pharmaceutical production chain from synthesis of the molecule, to the isolation of the material, and formulation of the medicine.

CÚRAM, SFI's Research Centre led by National University of Ireland in Galway, aims to radically improve health outcomes for patients by developing 'smart' medical devices and implants. CÚRAM's research programme focuses on innovative design, assessment and manufacture of medical devices and is driven by specialist researchers, clinicians and industry partners, ultimately translating research into clinical settings.

Finally, in 2017, Enterprise Ireland paid €5,000,000 in financial support to client companies to support medicine research and development. Enterprise Ireland also has a range of supports for collaborative projects with the Higher Education Sector. However, further analysis would be required to determine what share of this funding was allocated to medicines research and development.

Brexit Supports

322. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the uptake of the various schemes to allow businesses to prepare for Brexit in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42035/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The requested information is contained in the table.

| Scheme | Uptake (as at October 2018) |
|---|--|
| Brexit Loan Scheme | 262 applications received, 224 approved by SBCI, 38 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €8.5 million, as of 12 October 2018 |
| Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit | 2,962 Brexit Scorecards have been completed, which includes 204 LEOs clients, as at 15 October 2018 |
| Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant | 137 Be Prepared Grants have been approved |
| Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets | 113 projects have been approved under this initiative |
| Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding | 30 Agile Innovation projects have been approved |
| Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics | 8 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with approx. 590 in attendance |

| Scheme | Uptake (as at October 2018) |
|---|--|
| Enterprise Ireland Brexit “Act On Programme” – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience | 105 “Act on” Plans have been completed |
| Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period | 1,042 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved |
| Enterprise Ireland Irish Advantage Campaign – promotion of export campaign | The Irish Advantage export promotion campaign is active in 20 markets and 15 sectors |
| Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities | 293 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant |
| Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients | 192 LEO clients have participated in the programme |
| Local Enterprise Office Mentoring | 263 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit |
| Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/ Events | 3,925 Participants at the Brexit Information events |
| InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service | 2,350 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service |
| InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers | There have been 619 applications, with 514 approved and 105 pending. |
| Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland | It is anticipated the pilot scheme will open for the first call in late October 2018 |

Science Foundation Ireland Staff

323. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the criteria and qualifications required to sit on the Science Foundation Ireland oversight review panel; the make-up and format of the panel; the remit of the panel to consider the funding allocation 2019-2025; the reason for the necessity of an additional panel; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42170/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The first seven of SFI’s Research Centres were established in 2013. SFI undertook a pre-planned international review process at the four-year stage of these centres. As part of this, the seven Research Centres were invited to submit proposals for probable future funding.

The review process involved three key stages:

Firstly, a detailed written review was undertaken by different teams of international experts on the progress the individual SFI Research Centres had made and the proposals for future research outlined in the applications.

Secondly, the same international reviewers conducted an on-site review, and subsequently wrote a report with recommendations and scores.

Thirdly, and following the above, a separate International Oversight Review Panel was put in place to consider the individual reviews from the first two stages. The remit of the Oversight Panel was to ensure:

- Quality assurance;
- Fairness and consistency;
- Parity of practice across the seven Site Review Panels;
- Normalisation of the scoring;
- Ranking of the fundable applications.

This additional panel was put in place as a quality assurance measure, to ensure parity of practice across the seven Site Reviews. This was important, as the on-site panels reviewing the various Research Centres were comprised of different reviewers. The Oversight Panel was also requested to make a recommendation to the SFI Executive and Board on whether each centre should either receive additional new term funding, should not be funded for a new term, or should progress to an open competition, to be reviewed against other potential centre applicants in 2020.

Oversight Panel members of the highest calibre were selected. Each panel member was required to have strategic leadership roles within prestigious organisations such as national funding agencies and world leading universities.

The panel was made up of seven members, chaired by the Chancellor of a prestigious US university. The remaining six members were leaders from a number of UK and US universities and funding agencies. The Chair of the Oversight Panel also attended the SFI Board meeting in June 2018 when the Board discussed the Research Centre funding recommendations.

Brexit Issues

324. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she or officials from her Department have reviewed the Enterprise Ireland Brexit survey of its clients; her views on the results; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42216/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is in constant communication with Enterprise Ireland (EI), to ensure that the agency is effective and has the resources it needs to support businesses to scale, compete in global markets, and withstand the current uncertain economic climate.

As we move towards 2020, EI's focus for 2018 is to help clients build on the strength of their 2017 performance by supporting them to innovate, be competitive and to diversify their global footprint – key attributes required to be resilient to economic shocks, such as those emerging from any kind of Brexit.

When EI surveyed its clients in September 2017 the results indicated that 38% of clients surveyed had taken Brexit Actions. In May 2018, the figure had increased to 85% of all client companies surveyed. The survey reported that client companies are taking action in areas such as market diversification; developing strategic partnerships; improving operational com-

petitiveness, improving financial management, and strengthening business in the UK. This is a substantial increase, and demonstrates the effectiveness of EI's efforts to communicate the importance of preparing for Brexit.

To drive the building of resilience, EI has put an increased emphasis on market diversification, driving innovation, and improving competitiveness. In delivering on this, new supports have been introduced, others streamlined, and a Global Ambition campaign launched. In addition, EI has commenced national awareness and preparedness initiatives.

EI will continue to roll out Brexit Advisory Clinics. A clinic was held earlier this month, with three more scheduled to take place in Dundalk, Waterford and Limerick before the end of the year.

My Department, through EI, will continue to work with client companies to help them to scale, improve resilience and succeed in world markets. EI will also work with Government and non-Governmental stakeholders to support clients to overcome the challenges of Brexit and build on their ambitious strategies to sustain and create jobs throughout the country.

The Government's commitment to preparing the business community for Brexit can also be seen in the series of four "Getting Ireland Brexit Ready" seminars, which are being held this month around the country.

InterTradeIreland Funding

325. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of funding to InterTradeIreland in the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42217/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): InterTradeIreland (ITI) is co-funded by my Department and the Northern Ireland Department for the Economy. The breakdown of that annual joint funding over the period from 2013-2018 is set out in the following table.

The Government will be providing an additional €1 million in funding for ITI in 2019. These resources will enable the body to expand its key Brexit-related services and provide further support to companies seeking its assistance in preparing for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

| € | DBEI Funding | DfE Funding |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 2013 | 8,085,000 | 3,712,481 |
| 2014 | 7,761,983 | 3,807,909 |
| 2015 | 7,839,924 | 3,520,785 |
| 2016 | 7,560,000 | 3,549,861 |
| 2017 | 7,960,000 | 3,226,843 |
| 2018 (Projected) | 8,125,000 | 3,945,983 |

Brexit Supports

326. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports being offered to SMEs and start-up companies in view of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42218/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Brexit is undoubtedly the most significant challenge facing Irish enterprise in over 50 years. With less than 6 months to go, I was determined to deliver a budget with Brexit at its core, building on the many measures we have already introduced, and responding to the evolving needs of business.

The agencies under my remit have an extensive range of supports available to enable companies to both consolidate market share and continue to pursue new opportunities to grow their market presence within the UK. For 2019, I am allocating an extra €8m to the enterprise agencies and regulatory bodies under my Department, who work with firms at the coalface to develop their supports for business.

I also announced a longer term loan facility of up to €300m to support capital investment by business.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) supports include:

- A new Online customs Training Programme to be launched shortly to demystify customs procedures. This will be available to all exporters and importers.

- Brexit Advisory Clinics: The purpose of these clinics is to encourage companies to examine their potential exposure to Brexit, to complete the Brexit SME Scorecard and use the Be Prepared Grant to plan their strategic response to Brexit.

- Brexit Scorecard: An interactive online platform to self-assess exposure to Brexit under six business pillars.

- Be Prepared Grant: This grant offers SME clients a grant of up to €5,000 to assist them in preparing an action plan for economic shocks such as Brexit.

- The Agile Innovation Fund: giving companies rapid fast-track access to innovation funding, and up to 50% in support for product, process or service development projects with a total cost of up to €300,000.

- Market Discovery Fund - supports Enterprise Ireland clients research new markets for products and services.

- “Prepare to Export Scorecard”: The Scorecard helps Irish companies with global ambition to self-assess how prepared they are to start exporting.

- Brexit ‘Act On’ Programme: This funding is to support the engagement of a consultant to draw up a report with tailored recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and become more resilient.

- Strategic Consultancy Grant: This helps client companies to hire a strategic consultant for a set period to assist the company to develop and implement significant strategic initiatives.

- Operational Excellence Offer: Enables Irish companies trading internationally to develop or transform their wider business in order to compete more effectively.

- Irish Advantage Campaign: The aim of the #Irish Advantage export promotion campaign, is to stimulate awareness of Irish products and services and encourage buyers to source from Ireland.

In Budget 2019, I have allocated €1.25m for a Retail Online Scheme which will be launched by Enterprise Ireland shortly. The main objective of the Pilot scheme will be to support SMEs in the retail sector with a pre-existing online presence to develop and implement a more sophis-

ticated and strategic online trading offer with a view to increasing online business and customers both domestically and internationally.

I have also earmarked an additional €1.8m for the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland over the next 3 years. The proposed investment, again via Enterprise Ireland is intended to expand marketing and development programmes, which are currently being delivered on a smaller scale by DCCOI for Irish designers and makers. This will support enterprises to exhibit at international trade fairs, to develop partnerships with flagship retailers, and to develop e-commerce capacity. The aim is to assist the sector to develop and generate additional export sales and online revenue opportunities, increasing market diversification by client companies and underpinning sustainable growth.

The 31 Local Enterprise Offices play a pivotal role in supporting micro-enterprises, as they prepare for Brexit. I have allocated an additional €5m to enhance their programme of supports in 2019, up 22% on 2018.

I have also allocated an additional €1m in capital funding to InterTrade Ireland, an increase of 17.5%. This will allow them to step up their support for companies in the border region, North and South, who are particularly exposed to Brexit.

The Government's commitment to preparing the business community for Brexit can also be seen in the series of four "Getting Ireland Brexit Ready" seminars, which are being held this month around the country.

Enterprise Support Schemes

327. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the breakdown of funding to support the development of start-up businesses here in the past ten years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42220/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the state agency under my aegis with responsibility for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets.

A key focus of Enterprise Ireland's activity is supporting start-ups and the start-up ecosystem as illustrated by the following EI programmes and service level agreements:

- National Entrepreneurial Development Programme
- Competitive Start Fund (CSF)
- Innovative High Potential Start Ups (iHPSU) equity support
- €3m Regional Accelerator Scheme 2015 -2017
- Campus Incubator Scheme
- €175m Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013 -2018
- Service Level Agreement in place with the BICs (Business Incubation Centres)
- Service Level Agreement in place with Local Enterprise Offices to support micro-enterprise.
- New Frontiers Programme

In 2017, Enterprise Ireland:

- Supported 90 new innovative High Potential Start-Ups (iHPSU)
- Supported 91 new start-ups were approved an investment of 50,000 each through a series of call under the Competitive Start Fund.
- Invested in 63 female led start-ups.

The financial support provided by Enterprise Ireland to directly support start-ups via investment in iHPSU and CSF is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Financial support provided by Enterprise Ireland to directly support start-ups via investment in iHPSU and CSF

| Year | Innovative HPSU | Competitive Start Fund |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 2017 | €20,252,533 | €550,000 |
| 2016 | €18,462,051 | €950,021 |
| 2015 | €14,565,144 | €875,051 |
| 2014 | €19,931,290 | €1,425,000 |
| 2013 | €18,293,100 | €1,400,000 |
| 2012 | €17,671,737 | €1,125,000 |
| 2011 | €17,819,700 | €450,000 |
| 2010 | €17,391,905 | n/a* |
| 2009 | €17,792,481 | n/a* |
| Grand Total | €171,594,957 | €6,825,072 |

*note the CSF programme commenced in 2011.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for providing advice, and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own business.

LEO Priming grant data is the best indicator of Start-up support. The funding provided by the LEOs for Priming grant (Start-up) approvals is presented in the following table.

Table 2: Financial support provided by Local Enterprise Offices via Priming Grants

| | 2014* | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 1st of January to 30th September 2018 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Priming Grant Applications Approved Amount € | 7,693,176 | 7,630,910 | 7,038,130 | 6,431,905 | 4,916,617** |

* This is data for the full year which includes the County Enterprise Board period.

**As per the LEOs’ Grant Management Information System on 11 October 2018

It should be noted that following dissolution of the Community Enterprise Boards (CEBs) in 2014 and the subsequent establishment of the LEOs, an examination and reclassification of the former CEB client portfolio was undertaken by EI. This means that data prior to 2014 cannot be compared with data from 2014 onwards.

Enterprise Support Services Provision

328. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports offered to SMEs that wish to acquire more digital skills and e-commerce training; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42221/18]

329. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans in place to support SMEs in e-commerce in view of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42222/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 328 and 329 together.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the first-stop-shop front line service assisting in delivering business growth and jobs for the small & micro-enterprise sector. The LEOs are the first port of call for anyone who wishes to start or expand a business, in terms of advice, training, sign posting to other support providers and, in certain circumstances, grant support. The LEOs undertake a number of activities to encourage businesses to build their online presence and compete in the online market place.

The LEOs nationwide actively promote the Trading Online Voucher Scheme (TOVS) on behalf of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The TOVS offers matched financial assistance of up to €2,500, along with training and advice, to micro companies (10 or less employees) who want to establish an online presence for the first time, or who wish to expand a basic existing website to incorporate a more substantive online trading capacity. Since the start of the scheme in July 2014 to 30 June this year, over 4,100 micro enterprises have availed of TOVs.

The LEOs also offer a wide range of short training programmes to support their clients in building their online presence and to compete in the online marketplace. These programmes are focused on different elements which aim at maximizing outputs from investment in online trading such as:

- Marketing, focused mainly on development of an online/mobile marketing strategy;
- Social Media, with the majority of programmes focused on educating the client base on how to use the different social media platforms to support their business;
- eCommerce Sales Strategy, including how to convert website visits into sales; and
- Search Engine Optimization, including web analytics and video optimization for web.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) works with 5,000 manufacturing and internationally traded services companies, and building an online presence is part of the range of supports offered to those clients. EI has supported projects focused on developing innovative products on new product platforms for international markets. However, EI cannot support companies whose only function is in the area of sales/distribution.

Working closely with the Irish Internet Association, EI delivers a range of funded and advisory eCommerce supports for its clients to develop their online marketing capabilities, for example:

- ‘Marketing Funding Support’: under a Business Process Improvement Grant client companies can apply for grant support to plan and implement significant strategic e-marketing projects.

- ‘Measuring your Internet Marketing Maturity’: to help clients develop an understanding of their web presence and activity.

EI regularly organizes events which can connect clients with leading experts and inform them on best practice. Topics covered include Developing an Online Strategy; Online Localization for International Markets; Search Engine Optimization; Pay Per Click Marketing; Branding and Getting the Web Content Right.

EI also offers an Excel @ Export Selling Workshop Series which includes creating a digital marketing strategy. This workshop is aimed at senior management executives with responsibility for selling high value products and services into business-to-business markets.

In Budget 2019, I have allocated €1.25m for a Retail Online Scheme which will be launched by EI shortly. The main objective of the Pilot scheme will be to support SMEs in the retail sector with a pre-existing online presence to develop and implement a more sophisticated and strategic online trading offer with a view to increasing online business and customers both domestically and internationally.

I have also earmarked an additional €1.8m for the Design and Crafts Council of Ireland over the next 3 years. The proposed investment, again via EI, is intended to expand marketing and development programmes, which are currently being delivered on a smaller scale by DCCOI for Irish designers and makers. This will support enterprises to exhibit at international trade fairs, to develop partnerships with flagship retailers, and to develop e-commerce capacity. The aim is to assist the sector to develop and generate additional export sales and online revenue opportunities, increasing market diversification by client companies and underpinning sustainable growth.

Enterprise Support Services Provision

330. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department supports or runs information campaigns to encourage Irish businesses, SMEs and start-ups to apply for International Organization for Standardisation certification; if not, her plans to do so in the future in view of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42227/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) is the State body under the aegis of my Department with responsibility for developing, publishing and selling standards to meet Irish and European needs through consultation and consensus with stakeholders and interested parties. Standards aim to improve the performance of business and protect consumers by ensuring quality and safety.

The NSAI also provides a comprehensive certification service in line with current European and international practices, offering an objective assessment of the quality and/or safety of a product or service. Certification is recognised as an authoritative statement of conformity to applicable national and international standards.

As part of its activities in standards and certification, the NSAI has annual communication and awareness campaigns to promote and facilitate Irish business engagement in the international standardisation process and to obtain internationally recognised certification to a range of management, process and product standards. The campaign profile includes:

- Radio advertising,

- On-line advertising,
- Regional Roadshows for business,
- Attendance and industry events / conferences,
- Promotion through print and social media channels, and
- Online services such as “Your Standards Your Say”.

In addition, NSAI has established a dedicated Brexit unit in the Agency. This unit is developing a response to standardisation and certification matters for Irish industry post-Brexit. NSAI is also taking part in the Getting Ireland Brexit Ready workshop events.

Construction Industry

331. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if supports are available in regard to the adoption of new and emerging technologies in the construction industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42231/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The construction sector has a dual economic role – both as a sector in its own right, and as an input to wider socio-economic activity providing the housing, social and productive infrastructure required to sustain economic growth and competitiveness and attract foreign direct investment. This sector is highly labour intensive with a diverse range of occupations and has a high multiplier effect.

Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) are essential components in a company’s ability to maintain a competitive edge in the market. To support the adoption of new and emerging technologies in this sector, Enterprise Ireland (EI) provides a range of supports such as:

- Funding for in company RD&I, such as, the Agile Innovation Fund.
- Funding for companies to undertake collaborative RD&I with the Higher Education Sector such as Innovation Vouchers and Innovation Partnerships.
- Delivering innovation capability development through programmes such as Leadership for Growth and Excel at Growth workshops.
- The Technology Gateway Programme, which provides construction companies with access to expertise with Institutes of Technologies. The cluster can connect with over 300 industry researchers to provide solutions to sectors areas such as Construction.
- Technology Centers located throughout the country, which are organised to respond rapidly to industry defined needs and conduct market-relevant R&D in partnership with collaborating groups of companies.
- Two offers to support Building Information Modelling. These supports provide consultancy and training grants to become BIM enabled.

EI will continue to work with construction companies to support their adoption of new and emerging technologies to drive their innovation capability, market competitiveness and global footprint.

Recruitment Agencies Regulation

332. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 195 of 9 October 2018, the steps she can take to widen the legislation regarding licences in view of the fact that the current requirement is contingent on a business operating from a premises in the country at a time when the need of a physical premises has greatly diminished due to advances in technology. [42307/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): I take it that the Deputy's question relates to the licensing of Employment Agencies.

My Department has no plans to amend the Employment Agency Act 1971. As outlined in my reply of 9 October 2018 to the Deputy, the Employment Agency Act 1971 stipulates that if an employment agency has premises in the State, it must obtain a licence. In order to obtain a licence the premises must conform to the standards of accommodation prescribed by Regulations under the Employment Agency Act 1971 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work, Act 2005.

If an employment agency is operating from outside the State, the Employment Agency Act 1971, does not apply. An employment agency operating from outside Ireland, will be subject to the regulation, if any, of the jurisdiction in which it is located.

Ireland's comprehensive suite of employment rights legislation provides that employee protection extends to agency workers in Ireland, including agency workers posted to Ireland, who have entered into a contract of employment that provides for him or her being employed in the state or who works in the state under a contract of employment.

Departmental Budgets

333. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the 2018 and the new 2019 budget allocations as outlined in budget 2019 for the offices and agencies under the remit of her Department in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42394/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The distribution of exchequer funding allocations as per the 2018 Revised Estimates Volume for each Office and Agency under the aegis of my Department and as provided through my Department's Vote is set out in the table.

I would advise the Deputy that the funding provision to Enterprise Ireland covers two subheads on my Department's Vote, Subheads A7 and B4, which span general supports to indigenous firms and for research and development/innovation supports. The table shows the combined allocations of the two subheads.

The table does not capture other Exchequer funding being provided to Enterprise Ireland in 2018 through from the Votes of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment.

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland are also provided with funding from the National Training Fund (NTF).

The operations of a number of the enterprise agencies are also supported through the generation, retention and use of Agency Own Resource Income, which is subject to annual sanc-

tion by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The operation of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) is essentially self-financing from the fee generation received from personal injury claims.

The operations of the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission are part-funded through fees levied on certain activities provided to clients of both Agencies.

The funding provision to Inter-Trade Ireland is provided on a North-South basis and annual allocations are finalised in conjunction with the Northern Administration.

The Department also provides funding annually to the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) through Subhead A8 of my Department's Vote. The LEOs are also supported through funding provided via the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government Vote.

Insofar as the 2019 allocations for my Department's Offices and Agencies are concerned, the Expenditure Report 2019 set out the summary capital and current allocations for my Department in 2019. The gross allocation of €950.2million for my Department in 2019 as set out in the Report represents an increase of 9.1% on the Department's 2018 allocation of €871million and includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620million in 2019 and also an increase in our current funding from €316million to €330.2million next year. The distribution of the Department's 2019 capital and current expenditure as and between its Offices and its Agencies will be determined through the 2019 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process which will be conducted in the weeks ahead. It is expected that the Rev 2019 will be finalised and published in early December 2019.

2018 Revised Estimates Volume Allocations

| (i) Offices of the Department | 2018 Allocations |
|--|------------------|
| Companies Registration Office (including the Registry of Friendly Societies) | €7,875m |
| Employment Appeals Tribunal | €290k |
| Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement | €5,057m |
| Labour Court | €3,800m |
| Patents Office | €3,004m |
| Workplace Relations Commission | €14,014m |
| (i) Enterprise Agencies | |
| InterTrade Ireland | €8,125m |
| IDA Ireland | €180,780m |
| National Standards Authority of Ireland | €6,224m |
| Enterprise Ireland | €272,998m |
| Science Foundation Ireland | €177,565m |
| Health and Safety Authority | €19,275m |
| Competition and Consumer Protection Commission | €12,226m |
| Personal Injuries Assessment Board | €112k |
| Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority | €2,105m |

Brexit Supports

334. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the latest figures regarding the Brexit SME loan scheme launched in March 2018 for each item

(details supplied) up until the end of the third quarter of 2018, in tabular form. [42532/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Brexit Loan Scheme provides affordable working capital to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees that are or will be Brexit impacted and which meet the scheme criteria. The €23 million exchequer funding announced in the 2018 Budget (€14 million from my Department and €9 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) has been leveraged to provide a fund of up to €300 million over the lifetime of the scheme.

The scheme features a two-stage application process. First, businesses must apply to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to confirm their eligibility for the scheme. Businesses can use guidelines provided on the SBCI website to determine if they are eligible, and if so, to complete the eligibility form. As part of the process, businesses must submit a business plan, demonstrating the means by which they intend to innovate, change or adapt to meet their Brexit challenges. The SBCI assesses the applications and successful applicants receive an eligibility reference number.

Successful applicants can then apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers using their eligibility reference number. Participating finance providers are the Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and Allied Irish Bank. Approval of loans is subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

The figures in the following table are those up to 2 October 2018. The Department receives a report each quarter from the SBCI on the uptake of the scheme. A number of requested figures have not been included in this table as they pertain to the relationship between banks and their client SMEs and so are beyond the remit of these reports. Some questions requested the same information and have, therefore, been answered once.

| Requested Details (as at 02 October 2018) | Details |
|---|--|
| Number of businesses which have applied to the SBCI to confirm eligibility for the scheme | 240 |
| Number of businesses which have had their applications assessed by SBCI | 208 |
| Number of businesses which have not had their applications assessed by SBCI | 32 |
| Number of businesses which have had a successful application and received an eligibility reference number | 200 |
| Number of businesses which had a successful application and received no eligibility reference number | N/A |
| The number of businesses who did not have a successful application and received no eligibility reference number | 8 |
| List of current finance providers | Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and AIB |
| Number of SMEs which have progressed to sanction at finance provider level | 34 |
| Total value of loans progressed to sanction at finance provider level | €6.5m |
| Current interest rate for those in receipt of approved loans | Maximum interest rate under the scheme is 4% |

Departmental Agencies Funding

335. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the proposed current and capital allocation to each agency under her remit following budget 2019; and the allocation made in her Department and in each agency towards hiring new staff in tabular form. [42533/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Expenditure Report 2019 which accompanied the Budget 2019 Statement by my colleague the Minister for Finance set out my Department's summary capital and current expenditure ceilings for next year. The proposed gross allocation of €950.2million for my Department in 2019 as set out in the Report represents an increase of 9.1% on the Department's 2018 allocation of €871million and includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620million in 2019 and also an increase in our current funding from €316million to €330.2million next year. The Expenditure Report provided a summary of the new measures to be funded from our increased allocation in 2019. These new measures include additional funding to the Department, its Regulatory Bodies and its Enterprise Agencies to provide additional staffing and non-staffing related resources to meet the Brexit challenge, progress the Global Footprint Initiative and address a number of additional regulatory responsibilities.

The distribution of the additional funding provided in Budget 2019 as and between the department, its Enterprise Agencies and Regulatory Bodies will be determined through the 2019 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process which will be conducted in the weeks ahead. It is expected that finalisation and publication of the 2019 REV allocations will be made in early December 2019.

Brexit Supports

336. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will list each Brexit measure committed to in her Department following budget 2019; and the exact financial allocation for each such measure in tabular form. [42534/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Expenditure Report 2019 set out the summary capital and current allocations for my Department in 2019. The gross allocation of €950.2 million for my Department in 2019 as set out in the Report represents an increase of 9.1% on the Department's 2018 allocation of €871million and includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620 million in 2019 and also an increase in our current funding from €316 million to €330.2 million next year. The increased allocation being provided to my Department will enable me to roll out a number of initiatives in 2019. These initiatives which are fundamentally connected are focussed on Getting Business Brexit Ready, Regional Development and Innovation.

Insofar as the specific Getting Business Brexit Ready Initiatives are concerned, the new initiatives proposed to be funded in Budget 2019, which build upon the Brexit focussed initiatives in 2017 and 2018, include:

- the launch of the new €300m Future Growth Loan scheme which addresses a specific lack of availability of finance to businesses, particularly SMEs, of loan terms longer than 5-7 years
- €1m in additional funding for Intertrade Ireland which will enable it to meet the growing demand from businesses in border regions in its existing programmes, develop initiatives and support firms affected by Brexit

- €5m additional funding to the Local Enterprise Offices to enable them to expand the range of supports to indigenous enterprises across the various sectors to ensure that they are informed and have plans in place to manage the new trading relationships on the island and with the UK more generally, including the provision of a new customs training programme for all businesses, exporters and importers, to be rolled out in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland

- €8m additional for Enterprise Agencies, Regulatory Bodies and the Department to provide additional staffing and non-staffing related resources to meet the Brexit challenge and progress the Global Footprint Initiative.

However, the definitive financial allocation for each of the aforementioned initiatives will be determined as part of the 2019 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process which will be conducted in the weeks ahead. It is expected that Rev 2019 will be finalised and published in early December 2019.

As advised, the additional funding being provided to my Department in Budget 2019 will also allow me to roll out a number of new and important initiatives in the areas of regional development and innovation. These further new initiatives are complementary to the aforementioned Brexit specific initiatives and are also integral my Department efforts in Getting Business Brexit Ready. I would also advise the Deputy that aside from the additional resources secured through Budget 2019, my Department and its Agencies have, since the decision of the UK to leave the EU, continued to focus our existing resources on developing our response to the Brexit challenge.

Departmental Programmes

337. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the financial allocation to the new customs training programme following budget 2019. [42535/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Expenditure Report 2019 set out the summary capital and current allocations for my Department in 2019. The gross allocation of €950.2 million for my Department in 2019 as set out in the Report represents an increase of 9.1% on the Department's 2018 allocation of €871 million and includes an increase in our capital funding from €555m to €620 million in 2019 and also an increase in our current funding from €316 million to €330.2 million next year. The increased allocation being provided to my Department will enable me to roll out a number of Brexit specific initiatives in 2019.

In this context, I propose to increase the overall allocation to the LEOs by €5m to include provision for a new customs training programme for all businesses, exporters and importers, which will be rolled out in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland in all regions of the country. However, the definitive financial budget allocation for the LEOs will be determined as part of the 2019 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process which will be conducted in the weeks ahead. It is expected that finalisation and publication of the 2019 REV will be made in early December 2019.

Brexit Supports

338. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of funding that will be put into the future growth loan scheme to leverage additional moneys via the SBCI; the persons who will be eligible to apply to the €300 million

scheme; the criteria in this regard; if the scheme will be open to the self-employed and all companies regardless of firm size; when the scheme will open for applications; and the expected lending interest rate. [42537/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Future Growth Loan Scheme is being developed by my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in partnership with the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

Through a counter-guarantee from the EIF, the Future Growth Loan Scheme will leverage €62 million of Exchequer funding, of which 60% will be provided by my Department and the remaining 40% will be provided by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine over a five-year period to make a fund of up to €300 million available to eligible Irish businesses for terms of 8-10 years.

The scheme will feature a two-stage application process. Businesses will first apply to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to confirm their eligibility for the scheme. Successful applicants will then be able to apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers.

The scheme will be available to eligible Irish businesses, including those in the primary agriculture and seafood sectors, to support strategic, long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment. The eligibility criteria have yet to be finalised, but the scheme will be open to SMEs with an establishment or branch in Ireland. Sole traders will be eligible for funding under the scheme. Finance provided under the scheme will be competitively priced and have favourable terms, including the interest rate, with loans up to €500,000 unsecured.

The scheme is expected to launch in early 2019.

Disability Services Provision

339. **Deputy Peter Burke** 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. [42029/18]

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

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

Hospital Staff

340. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 242 of 25 September 2018, if social workers involved in clinical practice in a unit at a hospital (details supplied) between December 2016 and June 2017 were recent graduates or carrying out clinical practice in a trainee capacity. [42174/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff

341. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 242 of 25 September 2018, if psychologists involved in clinical practice in a unit in a hospital (details supplied) between December 2016 and June 2017 were employed in a locum role during that period. [42175/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff

342. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 242 of 25 September 2018, if psychologists involved in clinical practice in a unit in a hospital (details supplied) between December 2016 and June 2017 occupied the grade of clinical psychologist basic grade during that period. [42176/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Disability Services Provision

343. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate with the HSE when a new case co-ordinator will be appointed to a facility (details supplied); the timeline and the way in which they will communicate with the person regarding the issue; the duties of the case co-ordinator in assisting the person with finding accommodation in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41741/18]

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

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

Hospital Facilities

344. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the proposal for the construction of a fifth theatre in Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41742/18]

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

Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Charges

345. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing inpatient charges for cancer patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41744/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all persons ordinarily resident in the country are eligible, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services. The current public hospital statutory in-patient charge is €80 per day, subject to a maximum of €800 in any period of 12 consecutive months. All persons accessing public in-patient services in a public hospital are liable for the statutory public-inpatient charge, subject to a number of exemptions, including where a person is a medical cardholder. There are currently no plans to exempt further categories of patients from the public in-patient charge.

Hospital charges represent a nominal yet important contribution towards the cost of providing public hospital services. Any curtailment of this funding stream would put further pressure on the Exchequer and the taxpayer in order to maintain service levels.

In terms of the cost of abolishing the in-patient charge for the category of patient specified by the Deputy, I have referred this question to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Charges

346. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing inpatient charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41745/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2018 the HSE estimates that €23 million will be raised through the statutory in-patient charge, and a further €16m through the out-patient charge in Acute Hospitals.

A further €15m is estimated to be raised in the community sector.

Therefore it would cost approximately €54m to abolish these charges.

Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage

347. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if the drug refund scheme will be extended to include drugs prescribed outside the State for persons accessing IVF treatment abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41746/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for pricing and reimbursement for the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Assisted Human Reproduction Services Provision

348. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if fertility treatment will be offered to women with conditions such as endometriosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41747/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware, in October last year, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill based on the published General Scheme on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research. The introduction of legislation in relation to AHR and associated research is a priority for me and officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill.

In order to support the commencement of the legislation, officials in my Department are working with the HSE over the course of this year in developing a model of care for infertility to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Part of this work includes identifying policy options for a public funding model for AHR treatment. Once I have had the opportunity to consider these policy options I will bring a Memorandum to Government in relation to a model of care for infertility, including public funding for AHR treatment, for the Government's consideration. As such no specific decision has been made at this time in relation the parameters of any potential public funding model.

It should be noted that any funding model that may ultimately be introduced would need to operate within the broader regulatory framework set out in the AHR Bill and a model of care for infertility.

Currently, patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the HSE. Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE 'High Tech Liaison Officers'. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme. There is also a limited specialist AHR service available through the HSE, which provides funding for fertility preservation for cancer patients whose treatment is likely to impact on their future fertility.

Health Services

349. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41752/18]

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.

Infectious Diseases

350. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the development of a new sepsis screening tool (details supplied); if consideration is being given to utilise this new technology in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41758/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Clinical Effectiveness Com-

mittee (NCEC) in the Department of Health has published a National Clinical Guideline on Sepsis 'Sepsis Management, National Clinical Guideline No.6' which was accredited by the UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and is available on the Department of Health website. This guideline is currently being updated. As part of this updating process, the most recent international peer-reviewed evidence on the diagnosis and treatment of sepsis will be reviewed.

Ireland was a co-sponsor for the International Resolution on Sepsis, agreed at the World Health Assembly in 2017. A National Clinical Lead for sepsis has been appointed for Ireland. The HSE National Sepsis Programme produces an annual report on Sepsis outcomes, which is available on the HSE website.

Healthcare Policy

351. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asked the Minister for Health the annual funding provided by his Department to the EU, healthcare innovation in the State, innovation hubs and healthcare projects innovating new products in Ireland in each of the years 2013 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41760/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Recognising the importance of healthcare innovation, the Government in 2016 approved the establishment of a National Health Innovation Hub, which is known as Health Innovation Hub Ireland (HIHI). HIHI is a joint initiative between my Department and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

HIHI is a consortium led by University College Cork and comprising Cork Institute of Technology, National University of Ireland Galway & Trinity College Dublin. I officially launched HIHI in University College Cork in September 2016.

The aim of the initiative is to drive collaboration between the health service and the enterprise sector and the development and commercialisation of new healthcare technologies, products and services emerging from within the health service, and/or the enterprise sector. HIHI is built on the recognition that collaboration with enterprise can benefit patient care, patient pathways and outcomes.

The objectives behind the development of a Health Innovation Hub are:

- to allow healthcare companies to deliver commercial products and services more quickly by giving them appropriate access to the health service in order to test and validate and refine products in a real life environment.
- to allow the health service to find efficiencies and improvements (including to services and patient outcomes) by facilitating the HSE and hospitals to engage with innovative companies creating solutions to problems they face, and
- to support the adoption/commercialisation of new innovations developed by healthcare practitioners inside the healthcare service

HIHI has issued two calls, the first in 2016 and a second once which just closed in August 2018. I recently opened the second office of HIHI in St James Hospital, Dublin. Since its establishment HIHI has managed 200 company engagements, ran 25 studies in Irish healthcare settings, 72 companies receiving follow up support through HIHI. The recent HIHI call has shown a 46 % increase in applications to the HIHI national call aimed at companies, start-ups, SMEs compared with 2016.

A core part of HHI in Dublin is the design and delivery of an education programmes for those working in Irish healthcare that will build a sustainable culture of improvement and innovation. It is hoped that people who participate in these programmes then become catalysts for innovation within the health system.

HHI was awarded €5 million in funding by Enterprise Ireland for five years IN 2016. In addition the HSE is receiving €0.260m annually since 2017 to support the provision of 3.9 FTE to HHI. Importantly the HSE also provides significant in-kind support to the Hub.

eHealth Ireland, the body tasked with the promotion and implementation of the eHealth agenda in Ireland, supports innovation in eHealth through a series of events including the eHealth ecosystem, the annual 'Health Innovation Week' and hosting 'Innovation Challenges' across Ireland to encourage entrepreneurs, technologists and health care innovators both within the HSE and externally the opportunity and environment to develop their ideas and concepts further.

My Department, in co-operation with the HSE and eHealth Ireland, has made considerable progress to introduce technological improvements to our health services with the aim of improving patient safety and efficiencies. eHealth Ireland trial new ICT technology through their Quality Innovation Corridor (QIC) technology programme which has a maximum funding application amount of €25k each. The programme is primarily aimed at the assessment of the application of new technology, rather than for the innovation of new products. I have been advised that each QIC application is appraised on its merits and as such, expenditure is made on a case-by-case basis. Since it is not readily available, I have asked the HSE to collate the expenditure information and to forward it to the Deputy.

I also understand that my Department does not provide funding directly to the European Union for innovation.

Alcohol Treatment Services

352. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if the provision of resources to the HSE and-or local authorities to set up daytime activity centres for the significant cohort of street drinkers in Dublin's inner city will be considered. [41767/18]

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.

The Deputy is advised that local authorities come under the remit of my colleague the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Hospital Waiting Lists

353. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a date for cataract surgery; when a reply will issue to the representation made on 2 October 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41773/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any

individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Orthodontic Services

354. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called to receive braces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41777/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

355. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied) [41782/18]

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.

Occupational Therapy Provision

356. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment with an occupational therapist will be expedited in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41786/18]

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.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

357. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his plans for those diagnosed with Lyme disease to receive funding for treatment abroad in view of the fact that there is no treatment for the disease available here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41787/18]

367. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41876/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 357 and 367 together.

Testing and treatment for Lyme borreliosis is widely available in Ireland in all major hospitals. Lyme borreliosis is diagnosed by medical history and a physical examination. The infection is confirmed by blood tests which look for antibodies to *Borrelia burgdorferi* produced by an infected person's body in response to the infection. These normally take several weeks to develop and may not be present in the early stages of the disease.

Laboratories in Ireland generally follow the laboratory testing recommendations of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Infectious Disease Society of America, the European Federation of Neurological Societies, and the British Infection Association. Whereas Irish laboratories have their own quality assurance methods to make sure the tests are working correctly and are also accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Body to perform the relevant tests correctly, testing which is performed abroad may be performed in laboratories which have not met National or International Accreditation (Quality Standards) to a similar degree, giving rise to a greater degree of risk of diagnosis of a "false positive" result or interpreting equivocal results in a manner that is more likely to give rise to verification bias.

Best practice dictates that if a patient presents themselves in front of a GP or consultant in Ireland with a report/test from another EU member state and they are seeking ongoing treatment for a particular illness, the GP or consultant would examine the patient using both clinical and laboratory diagnostics confirmed before they would be in a position to prescribe a course of treatment for them. The same protocol would apply across most other EU member states as the GP or consultant would need to be totally satisfied that the patient is correctly diagnosed while getting the right course of treatment for their illness.

Patients can seek to access health care in another EU/EEA member state via two different schemes. Where a service is provided in Ireland but a patient wishes to access care in another EU/EEA Member State, this can be possible by seeking treatment under the Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare, otherwise known as the Cross Border Directive (CBD). The HSE operates the CBD in Ireland. Referral for care under the CBD may be made by a GP, a hospital consultant and certain other clinicians. In line with practice in other EU Member States, the HSE through the National Contact Point (NCP) provides information for patients on the CBD on its website which can be accessed at: hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/ and also by phone at (056) 7784551.

The HSE advises where a patient is in any doubt as to the need to seek prior authorisation before availing of a consultation or treatment abroad to contact the NCP.

The HSE also operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations (EC) No. 987/2009. The TAS provides for the

cost of approved treatments in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland through the issue of form E112 (IE) where the treatment is:

- Among the benefits provided for by Irish legislation;
- Not available in Ireland; and
- Not available within the time normally necessary for obtaining it in Ireland, taking account of the patient's current state of health and the probable course of the disease.

GPs refer patients to consultants for acute care and it is the treating consultant who, having exhausted all treatment options including tertiary care within the country, refers the patient abroad under the terms of the TAS. The consultant must specify the specific treatment and in making the referral accepts clinical responsibility in relation to the physician and facility abroad where the patient will attend. Applications to the TAS are processed and a determination given in accordance with the statutory framework prior to a patient travelling to avail of treatment. The statutory framework stipulates the patient must be a public patient and is required to have followed public patient pathways. Information on the TAS can be accessed on the HSE website at: hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/treatmentabroad/ and also by phone at (056) 7784551.

Medical Products

358. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans in the short to medium term to meet representatives of an organisation (details supplied) to discuss new medication which could be made available for sufferers of multiple sclerosis here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41789/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Owing to scheduling difficulties, it was not possible for me to meet with MS Ireland in June. However, a meeting has been scheduled to take place in the coming weeks.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

359. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the timescale for the new mental health unit at Naas General Hospital; and the estimated completion date of the project. [41790/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Diabetes Strategy

360. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health if funding for an additional community based diabetes podiatrist in County Limerick will be made available in budget 2019; the reason for the sudden increase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41792/18]

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.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

361. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when an additional orthodontist will commence work at St. Columcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown, in order to ease waiting times for patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41832/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a staffing matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospitals Data

362. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of hip and knee replacements carried out at Croom Hospital, County Limerick, in each of the years 2016 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of persons awaiting hip and knee replacement operations at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41836/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government. This year has seen ongoing improvements with the number of patients waiting for inpatient and daycase procedures (IPDC), now at 72,700 from the peak of 86,100 in July 2017. This represents a 16% reduction in the overall number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case procedure.

In Budget 2019 the Government has further increased investment in this area, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to increase from €55m in 2018 to €75m in 2019. My Department is working closely with the NTPF and the HSE to finalise the 2019 Waiting List Initiatives before the end of this year. This approach is to ensure a seamless continuation of the considerable progress made this year into next year.

Data from the National Treatment Purchase Fund (see following table) sets out details of the number of patients waiting for hip and knee replacements at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital at the end of September 2018.

In relation to the number of hip and knee replacements carried out at Croom in the past three years, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Croom Orthopaedic Hospital - Waiting List for Hip and Knee Replacements at 27/09/2018

| - | 0-3 months | 3-6 months | 6-9 months | 9-12 months | Grand Total |
|-------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Hip | 30 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 37 |
| Knee | 23 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 32 |
| Total | 53 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 69 |

Departmental Staff Data

363. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41845/18]

364. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41858/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 363 and 364 together.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to my Department is detailed in the following table. The HSE has been asked to forward the information in respect of the number of staff in the HSE appointed to Principal Officer arising from internal competitions directly to the Deputy. With regard to the Department's non-commercial state agencies, the information in respect appointments to Principal Officer has been sought and a response will be collated on receipt and sent to the Deputy.

| Department of Health | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 2 | 4 | 6 | N/A |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | N/A | N/A | 0 | 6 |

Services for People with Disabilities

365. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41874/18]

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

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

366. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [41875/18]

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 sched-

uled 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. 367 answered with Question No. 357.

Hospital Waiting Lists

368. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the date a person (details supplied) will receive surgery; if this surgery will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41877/18]

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.

Healthcare Policy

369. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 740 of 17 November 2017, the principles which guide this funding with specific reference to intellectual property rights and return on public investment; the mechanisms of oversight, transparency and accountability in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41878/18]

370. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a recently published document (details supplied); the extent to which public funding is contingent on these principles or ambitious to be contingent on these principles; his views on a move towards greater return for public investment in health research and investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41880/18]

371. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the international call for a new requirement to be introduced according to which all beneficiaries of public funding for biomedical research and innovation for treatment, prevention or diagnosis of seriously debilitating or life-threatening diseases shall commit to access, effectiveness, affordability and availability principles; if consideration has been given to the ways in

which such a requirement might be implemented here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41882/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 369 to 371, inclusive, together.

I understand the paper referred to by the Deputy, ‘Civil society’s proposal for Horizon Europe (2021)’ was submitted by a range of international organisations to the EU Commission for the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme (Horizon Europe) which will begin in 2021, and needs to be considered in that context.

In Ireland, Clinical trials involving medicines are regulated under EU legislation. The current legislation, the European Communities (Clinical Trials on Medicinal Products for Human Use) Regulations 2004, transposed EU Directive 2001/20/EC on clinical trials into Irish law. A new EU Clinical Trials Regulation, EU Regulation 536/2014, was adopted in May 2014 and is scheduled to be implemented in 2020. The new Regulation aims to create an environment that is favourable for conducting clinical trials, with the highest standards of patient safety, across the EU.

The benefits of the new Clinical Trials Regulation will include:

- Harmonised electronic submission and assessment process for clinical trials conducted in multiple Member States.
- Improved collaboration, information-sharing and decision-making between and within Member States.
- Increased transparency, with information on the authorisation, conduct and results of each clinical trial carried out in the EU to be made publicly available.

At national level the Health Research Board (HRB) is the lead agency in Ireland supporting and funding health research. It is important to note that the HRB funds a great deal of research which is not directly aimed at the development of products. This includes most of its health services and population health research portfolio. Within the clinical trials space the HRB funds testing of medicinal products, medical devices as well as processes and therapies such as physical or psychotherapy without an associated product. It needs to be understood that great public benefit can arise from understanding how things can be done better outside of the development of products.

The HRB, in funding health research projects is committed to the highest standards and principles such as integrity, transparency, fairness and accountability; collaboration and co-operation and a focus on outcomes and impact. Examples of how they work to achieve these aims include the following:

- The HRB has been at the forefront of developing public and patient involvement (PPI) in research in Ireland. This aims to drive the relevance and improve the conduct of research.
- HRB allocation of research funding is made following international peer review to ensure that only those proposals of the highest quality are funded.
- Considerable investment has been made by the HRB, with funding from my Department, in developing a clinical research landscape in Ireland that can provide the supports and infrastructure to facilitate clinical trials of medicinal products, diagnostics and medical devices, such that they can be robustly evaluated to ensure their safety and efficacy.

- As part of its funding criteria, the HRB requires the registration of all regulated clinical trials and the publication of trial outcomes. Through its Open Publishing Platform (HRB Open Research), the HRB facilitates the publication of protocols and results. HRB Clinical Research Co-Ordination Ireland (HRB-CRCI) co-ordinates multi-site clinical trials activity in Ireland as well as collaborative and multi-disciplinary projects.

- The HRB terms and conditions for its funded research set out a number of clauses that cover oversight, accountability, transparency and protection of intellectual property of grant funding.

- The terms and conditions accepted by host institutions for HRB funding cover publication and broader public dissemination of results, and appropriate protection of Intellectual Property (IP) in line with the National Intellectual Property Protocol, “Inspiring Partnership - the National IP Protocol 2016: Policies and Resources to help industry make good use of public research in Ireland”. This protocol encourages the use of non-exclusive licensing. Information on all HRB-funded awards is publicly available on its website.

The HRB monitor adherence to their terms and conditions of grants. They do this through annual and interim review and the collection of detailed evaluation data.

Home Care Packages Administration

372. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the allocation of home care package funding to CHO area 8; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41889/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Home Support Service is a core service for older people and is highly valued by service users, their families and by the HSE. It provides supports which assist older people to live independently in their own homes for longer and enables large numbers of people to return home following acute hospital admission who otherwise would remain in hospital or would be admitted to long stay residential care. Following the Budget announcement, the HSE and officials from the Department of Health will immediately commence the process of developing and agreeing the HSE National Service Plan 2019, which will set out, in detail, the type and quantum of services to be delivered in 2019 including in relation to services for older people.

Home Care Packages Provision

373. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ring-fence an allocation of home care package funding for dementia care in the home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41890/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014 to meet the challenges faced by the 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland and to provide services to meet growing demand in future years. The Strategy contains 35 priority and additional actions and its implementation is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE. The office has made substantial progress towards developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia and progress to date, as well as future plans, is recorded in the mid-term review of the Strategy’s implementation, which was published in May this year. The Strategy emphasises the need for a “whole community response” to dementia, as the majority of people with dementia live in their own communities

and wish to avail of services in their local area.

In 2014 the HSE introduced Dementia-Specific Intensive Homecare Packages (IHCPs) to test the feasibility of providing a high level of support to people with dementia with complex needs to facilitate them to remain living at home. These were initially co-funded by the HSE and the Atlantic Philanthropies and now fully funded by the HSE, which has committed to continue to provide approximately 120 packages at any one time beyond 2018. As of the end of July this year, 361 people with dementia had benefitted from an IHCP. In addition to the IHCPs, people with dementia are also able to avail of standard home care services on the basis of need and within the resources available.

The approach from the Government on Budget day is to announce the significant investment in health services for 2019 as a whole. On foot of this, the Department of Health and the HSE will commence a process of developing and agreeing the HSE National Service Plan 2019, which will set out, in detail, the type and quantum of services to be delivered in 2019.

Mental Health Services Funding

374. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if the allocation of mental health service funding to CHO area 8 will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41891/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Provision

375. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ring-fence an allocation of mental health service funding to extend delivery to a 24-7 service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41892/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Progressing the provision of a seven-day-a-week mental health service in all areas of Ireland is a HSE priority. Approximately 60% of the country was already providing weekend services prior to the implementation of the seven-day-a-week project. Since June 2017 considerable work has been done to assign resources to those remaining areas which were without weekend services. The further development of 24-hour Mental Health Service is being considered in light of the evidence coming from the implementation of the seven-day-a-week service in relation to demand for out-of-hours services and staffing needs for this. It is envisaged that all CHOs will have some level of a seven-day-a-week cover by Quarter 1, 2019.

Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. It must be noted however that the new developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2018, and the more detailed regional Operational

Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

376. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of public patients in each public and voluntary hospital who have been removed from outpatient lists to date in 2018 as a result of a validation exercise and not as a result of having an appointment with a consultant. [41903/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Good practice around the management of hospital waiting lists recommends periodic validation of waiting lists. Validation is the process whereby hospital administration contacts patients on waiting lists at pre-planned intervals during the year to ensure that patients are ready, willing, suitable and available to attend a hospital appointment or wish to be removed.

Importantly, the validation process allows for situations where, if requested by the GP/referring clinician, patients can be reinstated back to their original place on to the Waiting List.

In June, I approved the establishment of a Central Waiting List Validation function in the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). The NTPF advise that the National Centralised Validation Unit was established in September. The establishment of the new Centralised Validation Unit will put in place protocols and practices which will ensure a standardisation of approach to the validation of all waiting lists across all hospitals.

Information provided by the HSE, in the following table, sets out the data requested by the Deputy.

OPD Validation Completed to date

| Hospital Group | No. to be Targeted | Total Targeted | Total removed |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Children's Hospital Group | 23,600 | 47,606 | 5,401 |
| Dublin Midlands Group | 36,380 | 35,154 | 7,723 |
| Saolta Hospital Group | 38,132 | 82,472 | 14,401 |
| South/South West Group | 58,573 | 101,362 | 22,366 |
| University of Limerick Group | 22,183 | 26,511 | 7,694 |
| Ireland East Hospital Group | 40,761 | 20,012 | 3,060 |
| RCSI Hospital Group | 30,325 | 36,001 | 9,191 |
| National Total | 249,954 | 349,118 | 69,836 |

Home Care Packages Data

377. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for a home support hours package in each LHO area; and the number waiting zero to three, three to six, six to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively. [41906/18]

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

Home Care Packages Data

378. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours provided in each LHO area in each month from January to September 2018; and the way in which this compares against target for each month. [41907/18]

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.

Primary Care Centres Provision

379. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of primary care centre projects (details supplied) announced on 22 April 2015, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41910/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): We now have 124 primary care centres operational throughout the country. Sixteen have opened to date in 2018 and a further three are scheduled to become operational by the end of this year. The centres are being delivered by the HSE using three mechanisms - through direct build, through operational leases and through Public Private Partnership. The end of 2018 will successfully see the completion of the 14 PPP projects referred to in your question. This PPP bundle project was one of the first in Ireland to receive European Fund for Strategic Investments support and the first such project in Europe in the primary healthcare sector. 13 of the centres are already operational and the remaining one at Summerhill is due to open by the end of this year.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

380. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a 50-bed ward block at a hospital (details supplied); when funding will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41911/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

381. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the Ireland East hospital group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41914/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a staffing matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Data

382. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies

unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the RCSI hospital group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41915/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Data

383. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the Dublin Midlands hospital group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41916/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a staffing matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Data

384. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the Saolta University Health Care Group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41917/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Staff Data

385. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the South/South West hospital group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41918/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Data

386. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies unfilled or filled on a temporary basis in the UL hospital group; and the details of each (details supplied). [41919/18]

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

Cancer Screening Programmes

387. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if he will ask HIQA to investigate the misdiagnosed slides of the 221 women involved in the CervicalCheck scandal; and if this investigation will identify the laboratories involved and the cause of the errors committed in these laboratories. [41940/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government has already established two reviews to examine the issues raised in relation to CervicalCheck. One is the Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Gabriel Scally, and one is an Independent Clinical Expert Review led by the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology with expertise from the British Society for Colposcopy and Cytopathology. The scope of these reviews includes the labs contracted to provide services for CervicalCheck, and review of the slides of women diagnosed with cervical cancer who participated in the CervicalCheck programme. Together, these two strands of investigation provide the independent external expertise required to address the issues raised in relation to CervicalCheck.

The Scoping Inquiry into CervicalCheck was led by Dr Gabriel Scally. The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry were developed following cross-party engagement and included an examination of the tendering, contracting, operation, conflict of interest arrangements, performance information and performance management, accreditation and quality assurance of contracted cytology laboratory services by CervicalCheck from initiation of the programme. Dr Scally's expert team, which included cytopathology expertise, visited the labs as part of his report. He has confirmed he is satisfied with the quality management processes in the current laboratory sites.

Crucially, he has confirmed that he finds no reason why the existing contracts for laboratory services should not continue until the new HPV regime is introduced. This is very welcome reassurance for women in Ireland. Dr Scally will now be carrying out further work in relation to the laboratories.

Separately, the scope of the Independent Clinical Expert Review, to be led by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, includes all cases of cervical cancer in Ireland since CervicalCheck was established, to include the 1,482 cases notified to CervicalCheck since then and a further 1,630 cases registered by the National Cancer Registry of Ireland which had not been notified to CervicalCheck. It will examine the slides of those women within this cohort who were screened by the programme, approximately 1,856 women from within the total. All preceding slides taken within the CervicalCheck programme will be reviewed and will be read according to the protocol for the review, which is published on the website of my Department. This process will offer independent clinical assurance to women about their screening history.

Hospital Acquired Infections

388. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the recent reports of a drug resistant superbug being a factor in seven deaths in University Hospital Limerick; his views on the matter; the steps being taken to deal with the resistant infections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41953/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I welcome the publication on Tuesday 9 October last of this valuable Report.

My Department and I have been kept informed of the external review commissioned last year by University of Limerick Hospitals Group, regarding patients with CPE and concerns regarding whether CPE was a factor in the deaths of a number of these patients. An internal review was also conducted. The final Report combines the two review findings.

I am aware that this final Report was produced on foot of concerns raised under Protected Disclosures procedures and also concern by the University of Limerick Hospitals Group about the increase in detection of the 'superbug' CPE in University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in re-

cent years.

I note that the Report found that out of a final group of 73 patients in which CPE was detected from February 2009 to May 2017, 8 patient deaths were identified in whom CPE was considered to be a contributory factor. The conclusion of the external review, however, which ULHG has accepted, was that no deaths were a direct result of CPE acquisition. All 8 patients had serious underlying diseases and co-morbidity factors

In addition, of the remaining 65 deceased patients, the external reviewer concluded that CPE was found not to have been an associative factor in their deaths.

This is an important finding and will inform the work already ongoing in my Department and the HSE to tackle healthcare associated infections and antimicrobial resistance (HCAI/AMR).

My Department has provided funding to expand the HSE HCAI/AMR National Team and Implementation Leads to progress work on HCAs/AMR across the HSE, including Hospital Groups and Community Healthcare Organisations. My Department has also provided funding for additional capacity in Infection Prevention and Control and laboratory services. This includes posts for University Hospital Limerick.

I have been assured that ULHG have measures in place to appropriately support and manage patient care needs in line with national and international best practice.

Internationally, AMR is recognised as a world wide challenge. The World Health Organisation and European Union are supporting countries in taking a ‘One Health’ or cross sectoral approach to addressing AMR, including the spread of organisms such as CPE.

Last October, I launched Ireland’s National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2017-2020, known as iNAP, with Minister Michael Creed, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The HSE continues to address the management and prevention of healthcare associated infections, including these so-called superbugs, and Ireland is fully engaged in proactively addressing this world-wide challenge.

Substance Misuse

389. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make naloxone available as an over the counter medicine to those properly trained in its administration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41955/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Naloxone is a prescription-only medicine that ordinarily can only be supplied on foot of a prescription. However, the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003, as amended (S.I. No. 540 of 2003) allow certain prescription-only medicines, including naloxone for known or suspected narcotic overdose, to be administered by trained members of the public in emergency situations. Listed organisations are enabled to access an emergency medicine without the need for a prescription. Members of that organisation must first complete an approved course of training regarding the administration of such medicines and the management of any adverse reaction. The Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) has established a framework for the education and training of persons to safely and competently administer these medicines to those urgently requiring care.

In order for an organisation to avail of an emergency medicine without the need for a prescription, they must also register with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA). The HPRA's Emergency Medicines Portal is an online system that allows organisations to notify the HPRA of their intention to purchase a specified medicine from a pharmacy or other supplier for supply and administration in an emergency situation.

The Emergency Medicines Portal and the publicly available register of listed organisations is accessible on the HPRA website and can be found at: www.hpra.ie/homepage/medicines/emergency-medicines .

It is important to note that these regulations do not in any way change the existing 'good Samaritan' provisions, which allow any member of the public to assist a person in distress to administer a medicine which has been prescribed to that person.

Medicinal Products Availability

390. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Health if the drug osimertinib will be made available to persons with EGFR-positive non-small cell lung cancer; the cost-benefit analysis undertaken regarding the provision of the drug; and the reason it is not available here in view of the fact that it is widely available across the EU. [41956/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Vaccination Programme Data

391. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a catch-up programme of meningitis B vaccinations for children who had not received it prior to the roll-out of the current vaccination scheme; the estimated cost of such a catch-up programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41966/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Two changes were made to the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule on 1 December 2016 with the introduction of Meningococcal B (Men B) and Rotavirus for all babies born on or after 1 October 2016. This means that all children born on or after 1st October 2016 automatically receive the vaccine. All vaccines administered through the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule are provided free of charge.

There are no plans to introduce a catch-up programme for older children. No recommendation has been made concerning extension of the programme to other age groups.

The Men B immunisation programme makes Ireland the second country in Europe to make the vaccine available free of charge as part of its national immunisation programme.

Hospitals Funding

392. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding allocated to a hospital (details supplied) from 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41969/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Domestic Violence Policy

393. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if women are routinely queried regarding domestic violence during pregnancy; the stage inquiries are made; if the person is alone when inquiries are made; and if consideration has been given to introducing asking twice during pregnancy. [41970/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Maternity Strategy - Creating a Better Future Together 2016-2026 - recommends that women are asked about domestic violence at antenatal and postnatal visits, when appropriate. This will be supported by appropriate training for frontline staff to ensure that all such enquiries and disclosures are handled correctly.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Domestic Violence Policy

394. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if there are information materials regarding domestic abuse services in hospital toilets; and his plans to roll out such an information campaign. [41971/18]

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.

Domestic Violence Policy

395. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the protocol for recording patterns of attendance at emergency departments; and if those attending emergency departments are signposted to domestic abuse support services. [41972/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the issues raised by the Deputy relate to service matters, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

[ED Attenadances]

Hospital Staff Recruitment

396. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health when a surgeon will be appointed to cater for those in need of excessive skin removal surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin; the measures being put in place for those in need of surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41974/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a staffing matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospitals Building Programme

397. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans for a multi-million euro development proposed for the Sacred Heart Hospital, County Roscommon; the stage the proposed development is now at; when the finalisation of financing will be achieved; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41981/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Hospitals Building Programme

398. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the planned €16 million new build at St. Patrick's Community Hospital, Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim; the stage the proposed development is now at; when the finalisation of financing will be achieved; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41982/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Disabilities Assessments

399. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will undergo an assessment of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41987/18]

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.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

400. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health whether Athlone Institute of Technology is the only third level institution which does not have access to a sexually transmitted infections clinic. [41988/18]

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

Sexually Transmitted Infections

401. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health whether the costing of providing a sexually transmitted infections clinic at Clonbrusk primary care centre, Athlone, County Westmeath, has been considered. [41989/18]

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

Mental Health Services Staff

402. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the levels of child and adult mental health services staffing per community healthcare organisation area as a percentage of levels prescribed by A Vision for Change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41990/18]

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

Mental Health Services Data

403. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the number of community mental health teams, that is, general adult mental health, psychiatry of old age and child and adolescent mental health services, per community healthcare organisation area and per region, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41991/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

404. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents in County Roscommon receiving counselling and services from the child and adolescent mental health services; the number of staff providing these services in County Roscommon; the number of children and adolescents who are on a waiting list to receive such services in County Roscommon; the length of time each person has been waiting for a first appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41992/18]

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

405. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents receiving counselling and services from the child and adolescent mental health services in

a clinic (details supplied); the number of staff providing these services in the clinic; the number of children and adolescents on a waiting list to receive such services in the clinic; the length of time each person has been waiting for a first appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41994/18]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

406. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if an illness (details supplied) will be listed in the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41998/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme.

Home Help Service Provision

407. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of negotiations between a union (details supplied) and the HSE regarding the roll-out of a new home help service proposed by the HSE; if he is satisfied with the progress of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41999/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Hospital Appointments Status

408. **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. [42000/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed

national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Primary Care Services Provision

409. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the efforts being made to secure general practitioner-led primary care in Carrigallen, County Leitrim, where no permanent doctor is positioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42012/18]

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

410. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if a procedure will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [42015/18]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

411. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the details of the proposed works on a property (details supplied). [42017/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

Medical Card Drugs Availability

412. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make Naltrex-

one available under the medical card scheme, with particular reference to persons who have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42023/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services Funding

413. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health his priorities or preliminary plans for the allocation of additional funding for mental health services in 2019. [42025/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018.

Priorities for 2019 include the development of digital mental health interventions and the enhancement of primary care mental health services.

New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Funding

414. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the amount which will be allocated to new mental health services in 2019; and the breakdown of the figure for current and capital expenditure. [42026/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

The National Development Plan published earlier this year outlines capital funding for the Health sector for the five years to 2022. A capital plan will be developed by the HSE for each year of the NDP having regard to the total funding available and the capital priorities for the public health sector. Health capital projects and programmes currently underway will require the bulk of the notified capital allocation next year, including the development of the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital at Portrane. Work is also expected to commence shortly on the new Mental Health Unit at Sligo University Hospital.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

415. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on mental health

services in 2018; and the breakdown for current and capital spending, inclusive of funding spent on new services. [42027/18]

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 Funding

416. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the amount of the health budget for 2019 that will be used to cover overspend in the health service from the previous years; if mental health funding will be protected from same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42028/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Department is engaging closely with the HSE to ensure that every effort is made to maximise cost containment and cost avoidance measures and identify a series of mitigating actions that do not impact on the ability of the HSE to deliver on the planned activity levels set out in the NSP 2018. While it is anticipated that there may be some areas that will experience overruns in 2018, it is too early yet to be definitive in terms of the final out turn for the health services at year end.

A Supplementary Estimate will be provided in 2018 to the HSE, and this funding will carry forward into 2019.

Primary Care Centres Provision

417. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the stage a project (details supplied) has reached. [42030/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Addiction Treatment Services

418. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the pre-budget submission by an organisation (details supplied) calling for four specific actions in respect of the expansion of addiction services to women with children seeking recovery; if his officials have examined these proposals; his plans in respect of these four actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42034/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The Department of Health does not directly fund the Organisation referred to in the Details Supplied by the Deputy. The organisation does however receive funding from the HSE and drug and alcohol task forces.

The Department has noted the contents of the pre-budget submission from the Organisation. The proposals in the submission fall under the remit of a number of government departments and agencies.

The progression of the health related proposals outlined in the submission can be considered by the HSE in the context of its deliberations on priorities for the 2019 National Service Plan.

Implementing the health-led national drugs strategy continues to be a Government priority. Within the increased envelope of resources available in the health budget, my intention is to prioritise funding for community drug and alcohol projects in task force areas of greatest need, additional drug and alcohol midwives working with vulnerable mothers-to-be and enhanced treatment services to address existing and emerging needs.

Disability Services Data

419. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional staff needed to facilitate the policy of decongregation across County Louth; the number of additional staff recruited to date to facilitate this process; the number that will be recruited to complete the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42037/18]

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.

The Department of Health is also responsible for the development of policy on, and oversight of, the provisions of specialist health and personal social services for people with disability, including the reform programme for health funded specialist disability services.

Transforming Lives is the programme to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services. The Review is a multi-year project which is resulting in very significant changes to the way in which services and supports for people with disabilities are delivered in moving away from institutional models of care and service delivery to community based, person centred, models of service. The implementation of the recommendations in the VFM Review continues to be a priority in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2018.

The Report "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion" proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from Congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

At the end of December 2017, there were less than 2,400 people with a disability living in congregated settings. The HSE has prioritised the transition of 170 people from congregated settings in 2018 under its Service Plan. The HSE has established a subgroup, under the Value for Money Steering Group, which is developing an implementation plan for moving people from institutions that will be rolled out at a regional and local level, in full consultation with residents and their families.

To ensure that the needs of people transitioning from congregated settings are fully taken into account during the process, the model of care for individuals will be based on a person centred plan (PCP). The PCP may change over time in line with an individual's needs and circumstances and the model of service delivery applicable at a particular time.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion”, I have arranged for the specific issues raised in the Deputy’s question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

420. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the services offered at community hubs for persons with disabilities; and the regulatory framework for these hubs. [42038/18]

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

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

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

Domestic Violence

421. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if those receiving therapy for sexual abuse receive information regarding their vulnerability to domestic abuse in view of the links between sexual abuse and domestic abuse. [42039/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I understand that the funding of therapeutic services to victims of sexual violence is primarily a matter for Tusla. I am advised that in 2018, the Tusla national provision for frontline Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence services was €23.8 million.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, may be in a position to advise further. The Department of Health has no remit in the area.

Domestic Violence

422. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if there is a domestic abuse team operating at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [42040/18]

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.

Estimates Process

423. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the large increase

in funding under section H of the health Estimates for 2019 from €96 million in 2018 to €491 million in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42056/18]

441. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to the budget 2019 announcement that €20 million extra would be provided for the National Treatment Purchase Fund in 2019, the reason only €10 million extra is provided in the health Estimates published; and the way in which it is proposed to make up the shortfall. [42163/18]

443. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the 58% rise in funding in 2019 for developmental, consultative, supervisory, regulatory and advisory bodies. [42166/18]

459. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the current estimate of the outturn in health spending in 2018. [42264/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 423, 441, 443 and 459 together.

Up to 2018 the H subhead reflected funding for statutory pension lump payments only. All other pension funding was held in the Health Service Executive subheads I1 to I5. To improve transparency and the linkage between the Health Vote subheads and the Health Service Executives National Service Plan in 2019 subhead H was amended to reflect all HSE pension funding including lump sums. From 2019 this subhead will now reflect the full pension costs as set out in the National Service Plan for 2019.

A data entry error occurred which resulted in €10m of NTPF funding being included in error in the subhead E1, instead of E3. The NTPF allocation for 2019 is €75m. The full allocation to the NTPF is now reflected in the published Expenditure Report 2019 available on www.budget.gov.ie and will be reflected in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019 published before year end.

The provision for E.1 in 2019 is €99.131m an increase of €30.013m (43%) over 2018. This increase is primarily the additional funding for the SlainteCare Integration Fund as announced in the budget. The remainder will be used for essential health care projects as required during 2019.

The Department of Health is engaging closely with the HSE, but it is too early yet to be definitive in terms of the final outturn for the health services at year end 2018.

Home Help Service

424. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health when the gratuity payment due to certain home help workers will be made in lieu of pension payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42058/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Deputy is referring to Home Help workers who are employed by voluntary providers of home help services which are funded under section 39 of the Health Act 2004.

I advised the Deputy previously that as these home help workers are not employed by the HSE, the HSE and the Department have no role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff including any pension arrangements.

In addition, the Deputy is aware that a joint working group was established, as agreed as

part of the 2015 Lansdowne Road talks, to consider a number of issues in relation to section 39 organisations. Unfortunately it was not possible to reach an agreement between the parties on the issue of gratuity payments.

Diabetes Strategy

425. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the supports and services available to patients with type 1 and type 2 diabetes at University Hospital Waterford, for example, nurses, dieticians, training, workshops and counsellor support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42059/18]

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 Charges

426. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if he will abolish inpatient charges for cancer patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42060/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all persons ordinarily resident in the country are eligible, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services. The current public hospital statutory in-patient charge is €80 per night, subject to a maximum of €800 in any period of twelve consecutive months. All persons accessing public in-patient services in a public hospital are liable for the statutory public in-patient charge, subject to a number of exemptions, including where a person is a medical cardholder. There are currently no plans to exempt further categories of patients from the public in-patient charge.

Hospital charges represent a nominal yet important contribution towards the cost of providing hospital services. Any curtailment of this funding stream would put further pressure on the Exchequer and the taxpayer in order to maintain service levels.

Services for People with Disabilities

427. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) who is entering adult services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42067/18]

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 Procedures

428. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health the details of the synthetic mesh devices advisory group established by the HSE; if all women affected can input into this forum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42068/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As Minister for Health I am committed to putting in place the measures necessary to ensure that both the current use of Transvaginal mesh implants (TVMIs) in surgical procedures in Ireland, and the ongoing clinical management of women who have had these procedures in the past are in line with international best practice and emerging evidence. At my request, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) is preparing a report which will make recommendations in relation to the clinical and technical issues involved. I am informed that the CMO's Report is anticipated to be completed in the coming weeks.

Pending finalisation of the report, a number of significant system actions in relation to mesh implants have already been advanced.

The CMO wrote to the Acting Director General of the Health Service Executive on 20 July 2018 to request that the Executive put immediate measures in place to:

- Pause the use of all procedures involving uro-gynaecological/transvaginal mesh implants for the management of Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI) or Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP) in HSE funded hospitals, in cases where it is clinically appropriate and safe to do so.

- Ensure that in situations where expert clinical judgment is that there is an urgency to carry out the procedure and no suitable alternative exists, surgery should proceed only if a delay would risk harm to the patient and should be based on multidisciplinary team decision and fully informed consent.

This pause is to remain in place pending confirmation of implementation by the Health Service Executive, working in conjunction with the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), of three urgent recommendations relating to:

- (i) Surgical Training,
- (ii) Informed Consent and
- (iii) the Development of an agreed Dataset of Mesh Procedures.

The Department also wrote to the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and the Continence Foundation of Ireland on requesting that they assist the HSE in progressing these recommendations on an urgent basis.

It is anticipated that the Executive will be in a position to indicate to the Department that these recommendations have been implemented within a number of months. The HSE has published information concerning the pause on its website for patients affected.

The provision of appropriate aftercare for women suffering from mesh complications, including appropriate diagnostic facilities, has also been identified as a priority recommendation for immediate advancement by the Executive in the course of preparation of the CMO's report. The CMO wrote to the Acting Director General of the HSE, and to the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (IOG), the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), and the Continence Foundation of Ireland (CFI) on May 28 2018, requesting that the Executive commence work on (i) the development of appropriate patient information resources and consent materials

and (ii) clarification and development of treatment pathways and appropriate referral services for women suffering from mesh-related complications, in conjunction with the IOG, the RCSI and the CFI.

The HSE has confirmed that work has commenced by the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in the HSE to progress all the recommendations above. A Learning Notice concerning mesh devices in uro-gynaecological procedures was circulated by the NWIHP on 26 June 2018 to all maternity hospitals and acute hospitals with gynaecological services to highlight the importance of appropriate patient selection, adequate information and consent and also to inform the service providers that a Response Group has been convened to propose remedies for and address the provision of aftercare for complications. This learning notice has been posted on the NWIHP website.

The HSE has informed the Department of Health that a Synthetic Mesh Devices Advisory Group has been convened by the NWIHP which includes three patient representatives, as well as representatives of the HPRA, the IOG, the RCSI, the CFI and all Hospital Groups to advise on and action all of the recommendations above.

The HSE has advised that it is unable to facilitate membership on the Advisory Group to every patient or patient group who has a mesh experience. The NWIHP has sought to have a range of mesh experiences from the patient's perspective represented by a patient advocate on the Group – including patients who have had mesh with post-operative problems, patients who have had successful mesh surgery and patients who are on the waiting list for a mesh procedure. The HSE advises that women who wish to submit views or submissions to the overall work of the Group should contact the National Women & Infants Health Programme at smi.nwihp@hse.ie.

The HSE advice is that all patients who have experienced complications due to mesh devices are advised to contact their consultant's clinic in the first instance. Each hospital group has nominated an individual to coordinate a response to this group of patients. If patients are having trouble accessing information they can contact the National Women & Infants Health Programme at smi.nwihp@hse.ie for help.

Hospital Waiting Lists

429. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting nearly three years for an appointment at Beaumont Hospital. [42078/18]

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.

General Practitioner Contracts

430. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the significant multi-annual investment in general practice which he announced in budget 2019; the specific funding to be provided in 2018 to general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42079/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is committed to engaging with the representatives of general practitioners on the development of a package of measures and reforms to modernise the 1989 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.

The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 now allows the setting and varying of contractor payments on a non-emergency statutory basis. It is my intention to put in place a new multiannual approach to fees in return for service improvements and contractual reforms based upon health policy considerations and engagement with representative bodies.

Officials from the Department of Health and the HSE recently re-engaged with the IMO and set out the State's position in relation to reform of the GMS contract. Agreement on the delivery of service improvements and contractual reform has the potential to facilitate a substantial increase in the resourcing of general practice on a multiannual basis.

The Deputy will understand that it would not be appropriate at this stage of the process to discuss the proposed package of reform which has not yet been agreed.

Health Services Funding

431. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the additional funding for winter pressures in 2018-19 and new beds in 2019-20 which he announced in budget 2019; the specific funding to be provided for winter pressures; the additional services that will be provided with this funding; the number of new beds that will be provided in 2019-20; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42080/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is working closely with the HSE to ensure that local and regional winter plans at hospital and local level are consolidated and supported through policies and plans at national level to ensure the most effective response to the winter challenges to unscheduled care provision.

As part of Budget 2019, an additional €10m in funding is being provided in 2018 to prepare for and manage the expected peak in demand for health services in the winter ahead. This funding will focus on initiatives to enable the hospital system to de-escalate before Christmas, with a focus on supporting patients in the over 75 age group. I have asked my Department to engage with the HSE in relation to the programming of this funding and have emphasised the need for increased provision of social care measures, particularly in the first quarter of 2019, to respond to the likely surge in demand for services after the Christmas period.

Improving access to health services is a key priority in 2019. In the first quarter of 2019, in the region of 80 additional beds will be brought on stream, including an additional 30-bed ward

in Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda, a 40-bed modular ward block in South Tipperary General Hospital, and four high dependency beds in the Mater and Cork University Hospital respectively. In addition, the new ED planned for Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda is due to open early in 2019.

A further €10 million in capital funding is being made available in 2019 to enable additional acute beds to be opened for Winter 2019/2020. This is the first step in the process of implementing the Capacity Plan which identifies over 600 acute beds to be phased in by the end of 2020. My Department is currently engaging with the HSE to finalise the details of this investment.

Mental Health Policy

432. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 420 of 18 September 2018, the timeline for the production of the first draft of the model of care for dual diagnosis by a person (details supplied); if the inclusion of County Louth as a pilot site on completion of this draft will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42098/18]

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

National Treatment Purchase Fund

433. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the reason the National Treatment Purchase Fund does not operate in Beaumont Hospital; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) is on the waiting list for surgery for over 18 months; the position of the person on the list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42099/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government. In Budget 2019 the Government has further increased investment in this area, with funding to the NTPF to increase from €55m in 2018 to €75m in 2019.

The Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment. The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients. Under the Plan, the NTPF, working closely with the HSE, has invited all hospital groups to develop proposals to maximise the use of existing facilities and capacity.

The NTPF advises it has received a variety of proposals from across all hospital groups, including the RCSI group. The NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having being referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

In relation to the status of the appointment for specific patient outlined by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Mental Health Services Data

434. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the HSE spend on mental health agency staff to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42121/18]

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 Properties

435. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of vacant HSE properties in counties Sligo and Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42123/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the health care property estate, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Ambulance Service Response Times

436. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the way in which response times have improved in counties Cavan and Monaghan with regard to the programme for partnership Government commitment to increase ambulances, EMTs and paramedics every year to improve response times; the increase in each achieved. [42136/18]

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

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

437. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the prosthetic services provided to the health service by a contractor (details supplied); the value of the contract paid to this contractor for each year for the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42140/18]

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

438. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [42147/18]

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 Beds Data

439. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of new hospital beds that will be introduced in 2019 and 2020, respectively, as per the measures announced as part of the health budget for 2019 in which additional hospital bed capacity is pledged; the individual hospitals to which these beds will be allocated; the number of beds each facility will receive; the timeline for their proposed introduction at each facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42149/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving access to health services is a key priority in 2019. In the first quarter of 2019, in the region of 80 additional beds will be brought on stream, including an additional 30-bed ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda, a 40-bed modular ward block in South Tipperary General Hospital, and four high dependency beds in the Mater and Cork University Hospital respectively. In addition, the new ED planned for Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda is due to open early in 2019.

A further €10 million in capital funding is being made available in 2019 to enable additional acute beds to be opened for Winter 2019/2020. This is the first step in the process of implementing the Capacity Plan which identifies over 600 acute beds to be phased in by the end of 2020. My Department is currently engaging with the HSE to finalise the details of this investment.

Hospital Waiting Lists

440. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a date for a knee replacement operation despite replying to a letter from the HSE in July 2018 confirming the person still wanted an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42159/18]

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. 441 answered with Question No. 423.

Health Services Expenditure

442. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to spend the extra capital funding allocated to the health area in 2019. [42165/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The new Capital Envelope announced in the context of Budget 2019 is being used by the HSE to revise the Capital Plan and also in preparing the National Service Plan for 2019. On completion of the Capital Plan it will be submitted to my Department for consideration. It requires my approval together with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. When approved the HSE will publish the schedule of projects on its website.

The HSE is concentrating on applying the funding available for infrastructure development in the most effective way possible to meet current and future needs.

Question No. 443 answered with Question No. 423.

Budget 2019

444. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the year one measures set out in table 8 of the Sláintecare report that were funded as part of budget 2019; and the extent to which they were funded in each case. [42167/18]

445. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the measures set out in table 3 of the Sláintecare report that were funded as part of budget 2019; and the extent to which they were funded in each case. [42168/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 444 and 445 together.

The Sláintecare Report was published in May 2017 and recommended the production of a detailed implementation plan for the reform programme. I published a three year Sláintecare Implementation Strategy in August 2018, based on the eight principle in the Sláintecare Report.

I have been clear since the report was published that I am fully committed to the vision and policy direction which it sets out. I have also been clear however, that I believe that some of the timelines outlined in the report were ambitious given the inter-dependencies involved in a large scale reform programme of this nature. For this reason the Implementation Strategy has re-prioritised or proposed to phase some recommendations over a different time frame than that envisaged in the report.

It is noted that the original Sláintecare Report envisaged that €350 - €400 million would be needed annually in the initial years of the reform programme. I understand that the team of academics that supported the Committee's work recently presented revised timelines and annual costings to the Oireachtas Committee on Health and now estimate an annual funding requirement of €200m - €250 million. I am pleased that the revised costings support my own view that the initial timelines and costings in the report were ambitious.

It should also be noted that many of the items in Table 3 are funded under the National Development Plan announced earlier this year which commits €10.4bn to health infrastructure including a number of priority Sláintecare actions. This includes capital funding for:

- 2,600 acute hospital beds;
- 4,500 additional long and short-term beds;
- Elective only hospitals in Cork, Dublin and Galway;
- A modern ehealth and ICT infrastructure;
- Additional Primary Care facilities with greater access to diagnostics; and
- Additional facilities for mental health services and for people with disabilities.

I am delighted that the recent Budget provided an increase of €1.05 billion in Health funding. This brings the health budget for 2019 to €17 billion. This is the highest level of Health investment in the history of the State. This will allow the health service to meet additional demands due to the demographic pressure of a growing and aging population.

The Budget features over €200m additional funding which will directly support a range of additional services including initiatives proposed in the Sláintecare Report and committed to in the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy. The Deputy will appreciate that as some of these are subject to negotiation, I am not in a position to provide a detailed breakdown. However it includes:

- Ringfenced funding for the Sláintecare Programme Office;
- €20m for the establishment of a new ring-fenced Sláintecare Integration Fund to drive improvements in the way we deliver care across the system;
- Funding for a new GP contract;
- Expansion of free GP care, by increase in the weekly income threshold for GP Visit card by €25 which could benefit up to 100,000 people;
- Additional funding for 100 new therapy posts to address assessment of need waiting lists for children with disabilities and funding to ensure that the needs of all those leaving school in 2019 will be addressed;
- €55m in new development funding aimed at further enhancing community mental health teams for adults and children;
- Reducing user charges and out of pocket payments by further reductions in prescription charges - 50 cent reduction in prescription charges from €2.00 to €1.50 for all medical card holders over the age of 70 and by a €10 reduction in the monthly Drugs Payment Scheme threshold from €134 to €124;
- Increased investment of €20m in the National Treatment Purchase Fund. This funding will be used to treat 70,000 patients on waiting lists in 2019; and
- Additional funding for care redesign and the National Children's Hospital.

The Executive Director is currently preparing a detailed action plan, as mandated by Government, for 2019 which will be published before the end of the year.

I believe that this budget provided an excellent basis for progressing the Sláintecare implementation Strategy in 2019 and I look forward to being able to report positive progress throughout 2019.

HSE Staff Training

446. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the respective number of extra training places for general practitioners, consultants and primary care staff that will be funded in 2019. [42169/18]

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

Medical Card Delays

447. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in a medical card application by a person (details supplied) being finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42180/18]

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.

Home Care Packages Provision

448. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health when a home support package will be put in place for a person (details supplied). [42184/18]

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

Departmental Correspondence

449. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42232/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I would like to apologise that no response ever issued to this request. This was an oversight and I will arrange for a response to issue shortly.

Hospital Services

450. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the administration of pain relieving injections for persons with arthritis is no longer available at Louth County Hospital, Dundalk; the location of this service; and the reason for its cessation in Dundalk. [42233/18]

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

HSE to reply to you directly.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

451. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if equipment will be provided to a person (details supplied) without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42235/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

452. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if equipment will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42237/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

453. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card application by a person (details supplied) will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42238/18]

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.

Blood Donations

454. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the screening process in place to detect Lyme disease in blood donations; the consequences for a positive identification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42245/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Irish Blood Transfusion Service does not currently test for Lyme disease (B. burgdorferi infection) and has advised that there are no plans to do so in the short term. Lyme disease was risk-assessed as a transfusion risk by the United Kingdom Standing Advisory Committee on Transfusion Transmitted Diseases and the findings approved by the Joint United Kingdom Blood Transfusion Services Professional Advisory Committee in 2016. The Committee concluded that “no specific measures are needed for B. burgdorferi infection in potential blood donors in view of the lack of evidence of transfusion-transmitted infection”.

The Irish Blood Transfusion Service has advised that a donor who has had Lyme disease can donate two weeks after complete recovery (and a minimum of one week after completing antibiotics - which are prescribed for a three week course). A donor who has symptoms of chronic Lyme disease cannot donate blood.

I am informed that the Irish Blood Transfusion Service will keep developments in this area

under review.

Infectious Diseases

455. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the steps being taken to ensure that general practitioners and other health professionals have adequate training for the early testing and diagnosis of Lyme disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42246/18]

457. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to develop specialist services for Lyme disease patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42248/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 455 and 457 together.

Lyme disease (also known as Lyme borreliosis) is an infection caused by a spiral-shaped bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. It is the commonest cause of tick-borne infection in Europe. Lyme neuroborreliosis was made statutorily notifiable in Ireland by the Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I. no 452 of 2011).

Testing and treatment for Lyme borreliosis is widely available in Ireland in all major hospitals. Lyme borreliosis is diagnosed by medical history and a physical examination. Lyme disease may be treated by infectious diseases specialists (of which there are 12 nationally) or by general internal medicine available in all acute hospitals. Medical training programmes at undergraduate or postgraduate level in Ireland provide specialist training in infectious diseases, including Lyme disease.

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the HPSC established a Lyme Borreliosis Subcommittee, the aim of which is to develop strategies to undertake primary prevention with a view to minimising the harm caused by Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland.

The Subcommittee will shortly be meeting to consider its final report to the SAC. During the report's preparation, the HPSC learned that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the UK was undertaking a systematic review of Lyme disease which resulted in the NICE Lyme disease guidelines. These guidelines are based on the most exhaustive systematic review yet undertaken of the evidence around Lyme disease and focused on producing recommendations based on best available evidence relating to diagnosis, management and public awareness of Lyme disease.

The HPSC delayed the final production of the Subcommittee report to ensure that the findings of these guidelines could be considered for inclusion into the final report. The report is in the final stages of preparation and it is planned to circulate the report to members of the Lyme Subcommittee with a view to having a final sign-off meeting of the Subcommittee in November, at which point it will be sent for consideration to the SAC. At this juncture, it would be inappropriate to consider making changes to the testing, treatment and/or management of the condition until this deliberative process has been completed.

Infectious Disease Incidence

456. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with Lyme disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42247/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) of the HSE is responsible for the surveillance of notifiable infectious diseases such as Lyme disease.

The HPSC collects and collates surveillance data on a specific set of infectious diseases that are statutorily notifiable as a consequence of their clinical or public health importance. The number of cases of Lyme neuroborreliosis is included in the Annual Infectious Disease Statistics and the Weekly Infectious Disease Report published on the HPSC website (available at www.hpsc.ie/notifiablediseases/weeklyidreports/).

The table shows the annual totals of cases of neuroborreliosis notified to the HPSC:

| Year | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018* |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Total | 13 | 18 | 11 | 21 | 12 | 7 |

* Figures for 2018 are incomplete and provisional, and will only become official statistics following validation in early 2019.

Question No. 457 answered with Question No. 455.

Nursing Home Services

458. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) who is resident in a nursing home cannot avail of services such as ulcer dressing at primary care centres when required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42259/18]

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

Question No. 459 answered with Question No. 423.

Protected Disclosures Data

460. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE staff who have made a protected disclosure to him in 2018. [42267/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): All protected disclosures submitted to my Department are given due attention in keeping with my Department's protected disclosures policy and procedures and in accordance with the requirements under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. Given that all protected disclosures must be treated as confidential, it would not be appropriate for me to provide this information.

The Annual Report for 2018, detailing the number of protected disclosures received by me will be published on the Department's website not later than 30th June 2019, in accordance with Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

Home Care Packages Data

461. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the additional home support hours required by 2031 (details supplied). [42269/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The HSE has begun streamlining home care services by introducing a single funded home support service in 2018. This brings together the funding for home help and standard home care packages which now operates as a single home support service from 2018 onwards. The HSE's 2018 National Service Plan provides for a target of some:

- 17.094m home support hours to be provided to 50,500 people, which compares with last year's 16.34m hours delivered to 50,000 people (home help and home hours combined). This is an increase on the 2017 provision of 754,000 hours to 500 more people;

- 235 intensive home support packages will provide 360,000 home support hours for people with complex needs.

A further initiative saw 324 people being provided with Home Support services in the context of the adverse weather earlier this year.

I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to the projected converted hours required by 2031.

Hospital Appointments Delays

462. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in a person (details supplied) receiving reconstructive surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42280/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question refers to service delivery matters and accordingly, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Hospital Appointments Delays

463. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be called for assessment; and if his attention has been drawn to the hardship this person is enduring as a consequence of not being called for urgent assessment. [42284/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

464. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if hip replacement operations have come to a halt or slowed in number in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan; the number of hip replacement operations carried out at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, in each month in the past two years; and if persons who are on the Navan hip replacement list are having their operations carried out in other hospitals here or outside the State under the National Treatment Purchase Fund. [42286/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government. This year has seen ongoing improvements with the number of patients waiting for inpatient and daycase procedures (IPDC), now at 72,700 from the peak of 86,100 in July 2017. This represents a 16% reduction in the overall number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case procedure.

In addition, the waiting list figures show that since July 2017, the number of patients waiting for a hip/knee replacement has reduced from 3,500 to 2,800 at the end of September 2018 equating to a reduction of 21% while the number of patients waiting over 9 months has more than halved from 1,019 to 444 in the same period.

In Budget 2019 the Government has further increased investment in this area, with funding to the NTPF to increase from €55m in 2018 to €75m in 2019. My Department is working closely with the National Treatment Purchase Fund and the HSE to finalise the 2019 Waiting List Initiatives before the end of this year. This approach is to ensure a seamless continuation of the considerable progress made this year into next year.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Charges

465. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his views on a campaign by a society (details supplied); his further views on the society's call to abolish inpatient charges for all patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42290/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all persons ordinarily resident in the country are eligible, subject to certain charges, to public in-patient hospital services. The current public hospital statutory in-patient charge is €80 per night, subject to a maximum of €800 in any period of twelve consecutive months. All persons accessing public in-patient services in a public hospital are liable for the statutory public in-patient charge, subject to a number of exemptions, including where a person is a medical cardholder. There are currently no plans to exempt further categories of patients from the public in-patient charge.

Hospital charges represent a nominal yet important contribution towards the cost of providing hospital services. Any curtailment of this funding stream would put further pressure on the Exchequer and the taxpayer in order to maintain service levels.

Respite Care Services Funding

466. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a request by an organisation (details supplied); if a request for a further €600,000 annual investment will be granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42291/18]

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

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

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

Maternity Services

467. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on baby formula by each maternity hospital or hospital with a maternity function; the amount spent in each of the years 2012 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42292/18]

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

Maternity Services

468. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on breastfeeding supports in each of the years 2012 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42293/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Staff Recruitment

469. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when a new director general and-or chief executive officer of the HSE will be appointed. [42316/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The recruitment process for the appointment of a new Director General for the HSE is at an advanced stage. The recruitment is being carried out by the Public Appointments Service, who have advised that preliminary interviews are scheduled for the end of this month. No date has yet been set for the final interviews but I understand that they are likely to be held in early December.

Assisted Human Reproduction

470. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health when plans will be put in place to assist families with the cost of IVF; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42317/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Currently, patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the HSE. Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE 'High Tech Liaison Officers'. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme. There is also a limited specialist AHR service available through the HSE, which provides funding for fertility preservation for cancer patients whose treatment is likely to impact on their future fertility.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. The introduction of legislation in relation to AHR and associated research is a priority for me, and officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill. The General Scheme is published on my Department's website and the Joint Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of this year.

In order to support the commencement of the legislation, officials in my Department are working with the HSE over the course of this year in developing a model of care for infertility to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Part of this work includes identifying policy options for a public funding model for AHR treatment. Once I have had the opportunity to consider these policy options I will bring a Memorandum to Government in relation to a model of care for infertility, including public funding for AHR treatment, for the Government's consideration.

It should be noted that any funding model that may ultimately be introduced would need to operate within the broader regulatory framework set out in the AHR Bill and a model of care for infertility.

Proposed Legislation

471. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health when the Bill for assisted health reproduction will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42318/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As you will be aware, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. The General Scheme is published on my Department's website. This comprehensive piece of legislation encompasses the regulation of a range of practices, including: gamete (sperm or egg) and embryo donation for AHR and research; surrogacy; pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) of embryos; posthumous assisted reproduction; and embryo and stem cell research. The General Scheme also provides for an independent regulatory authority for AHR.

The Joint Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of this year. The introduction of legislation in relation to AHR and associated research is a priority for me and officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill. However, it is not

possible at this time to give a definitive timeline for the completion of the draft Bill and its subsequent passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

General Medical Services Scheme

472. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost in 2019 of expanding access to free general practitioner care through a 10% increase in the weekly income thresholds for general practitioner visit cards; and the full year cost of same. [42319/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Budget 2019 provided for a 10% increase in the assessment threshold in respect of means-tested GP visit cards. This change comes into effect from 31st March 2019. The cost of this measure will be dependent on a number of factors, including the number of additional applications made to the HSE, the timescale within which these are made and the number of applicants who are found to qualify for this benefit. Funding of €20 million in respect of the measure is being included in the HSE's allocation for 2019.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

473. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the status of a recruitment process (details supplied); the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42321/18]

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 Agency Staff Expenditure

474. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the expenditure incurred employing agency nurses to date in 2017; and the fee paid to recruitment agencies to hire staff in the HSE. [42325/18]

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

Home Help Service Provision

475. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the home help hours for a person (details supplied) will be sanctioned immediately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42327/18]

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.

Disability Services Provision

476. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the action plan for an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42328/18]

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.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

477. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health when funding allocations for drug and alcohol task forces will be announced; if there will be an increase in core funding to these task forces in view of the financial challenges many are facing having received no increase in funding in several years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42334/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem and in initiating appropriate responses, so that there is a coordinated approach involving all sectors to the problem of substance misuse in local communities.

Over €27.85m has been allocated to Task Forces by the HSE and the Department of Health for community-based drugs initiatives this year. This level of funding is consistent with the amounts provided for the last four years. This included an additional €540,000 in one off funding to the Task Forces to support implementation of the national drugs strategy. In addition, Task Forces are being consulted on the provision of €710,000 in one off funding for priority projects and services in CHO areas.

Implementing the health-led national drugs strategy continues to be a Government priority. Within the increased envelope of resources available in Budget 2019 for health services, my intention is to prioritise funding for community drug and alcohol projects in task force areas of greatest need, additional drug and alcohol midwives working with vulnerable mothers-to-be and enhanced treatment services to address existing and emerging needs. The full details of the allocation to task forces will be set out in the HSE 2019 national service plan.

It is intended that all Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces will be notified of their 2019 funding allocations by the Department and the HSE as soon as the HSE National Service Plan for 2019 has been approved by the Minister for Health.

Disabilities Assessments

478. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting for assessment by early intervention teams in CHO 9; and the number waiting zero to three, three to six, six to nine, nine to 12, 12 to 18, 18 to 24 and more than 24 months, respectively. [42335/18]

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

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

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Funding

479. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health if the €55 million increase in the mental health budget will include an allocation of expansion of Jigsaw youth mental health services; if expanding the jigsaw service to County Wicklow is included in budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42356/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million for mental health services, bringing the HSE Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% since 2012. Of this, €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

In order to ensure that public funding is being spent wisely, the HSE is currently reviewing Jigsaw services across a number of headings including Financial, Clinical and Governance. The HSE expects to have this process completed by end of 2018.

This review, in conjunction with the HSE Service Plan and Operational Plan 2019, will help inform potential expansion of the Jigsaw service nationally, including any proposals relating to Wicklow.

HSE National Service Plan

480. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE is expected to submit its service plan for 2019 following budget 2019 measures announced to support persons with disabilities. [42377/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The timeframes for submission of the HSE National Service Plan for my colleague, the Minister for Health's approval are set down in legislation. As provided for under the Health Act 2004, as amended, the Department must write to the Health Service Executive to notify it of its allocation for 2019 not later than 21 days after the publication by the Government of the Estimates for Public Services. The legislation further provides that, on receipt of the letter of determination, the Executive has 21 days to prepare and submit its National Service Plan for 2019 for my approval. The Health Act allows the Minister to extend the period provided to the HSE to prepare, adopt and submit its Service Plan, if required.

Following the submission of the draft National Service Plan by the HSE, the legislation

provides 21 days for the Minister to examine the proposed Plan and where necessary to seek amendment to, or approve, the Plan. The National Service Plan must be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas within 21 days of its approval. Once the Service Plan is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas the HSE must ensure it is published at the earliest possible time.

Disability Support Services Funding

481. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the €12 million announced in budget 2019 to develop day services for school leavers with disabilities will be allocated to each CHO area; and the services, programmes or projects that will receive funding from this allocation. [42378/18]

482. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of the further €150 million for disability services in 2019 announced by the Minister in budget 2019 in tabular form; and the moneys from this which will be allocated specifically to County Louth. [42379/18]

483. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the €150 million announced in budget 2019 for the provision of disability services will be allocated; the amount of funding that will be allocated to each CHO area; and the services, programmes or projects that will receive funding from this allocation. [42380/18]

485. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of additional funding that will be allocated to personal assistance hours as a result of budget 2019 for each CHO area; and the moneys which will be specific to County Louth. [42382/18]

487. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of additional funding that will be spent on respite care as a result of budget 2019 for each CHO area; and the moneys which will be specific to County Louth. [42384/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 481 to 483, inclusive, 485 and 487 together.

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

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.

Following last week's Budget announcement, the HSE and officials from the Department of Health immediately commenced the process of developing and agreeing the HSE National Service Plan 2019, which will set out, in detail, the type and quantum of services to be delivered in 2019 including in relation to services for people with disabilities.

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

Disability Support Services Funding

484. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of additional funding that will be allocated to residential care as a result of budget 2019 in each CHO area; and the moneys will be specific to County Louth. [42381/18]

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. 485 answered with Question No. 481.

Home Help Service Funding

486. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of additional funding that will be allocated to home support service hours as a result of budget 2019 for each CHO area; and the moneys that will be specific to County Louth. [42383/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Home Support Service is a core service for older people and is highly valued by service users, their families and by the HSE. It provides supports which assist older people to live independently in their own homes for longer and enables large numbers of people to return home following acute hospital admission who otherwise would remain in hospital or would be admitted to long stay residential care.

Following the recent Budget announcement, the HSE and officials from the Department of Health have commenced the process of developing and agreeing the HSE National Service Plan 2019, which will set out, in detail, the type and quantum of services to be delivered in 2019 including in relation to services for older people. The Service Plan will be developed over, approximately, the next month.

Question No. 487 answered with Question No. 481.

Respite Care Services Data

488. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional in-home respite hours for respite care that will be available as a result of budget 2019 for each CHO area; and the moneys which will be specific to County Louth. [42385/18]

490. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the annual breakdown for the provision of respite care, in-house respite care and overnight respite sessions for each CHO area; and the breakdown for County Louth over the past four years, in tabular form. [42387/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 488 and 490 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabili-

ties 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 questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services Data

489. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional overnight respite sessions that will be provided as a result of budget 2019 in each community health-care organisation, CHO, area; and the additional sessions which will be made available specific to County Louth. [42386/18]

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

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

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

Question No. 490 answered with Question No. 488.

Mental Health Services Funding

491. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the additional €84 million announced in budget 2019 for the provision of mental health services will be allocated; the amount of funding that will be allocated to each community healthcare organisation, CHO, area; and the services, programmes or projects that will receive funding from this allocation. [42388/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Funding

492. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the way the additional €55 million in new development funding will be allocated in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, area; the moneys which will specifically be allocated to enhancing community mental health teams for adults and children in each CHO area; and the moneys which will be specifically allocated to County Louth. [42389/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Funding

493. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of the additional €84 million for mental health services as announced in budget 2019 which will be used to provide a new facility for mental health services in north County Louth. [42390/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Funding

494. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of the additional €84 million for mental health services as announced in budget 2019 which will be used to provide new community mental health services in County Louth. [42391/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2019, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Mental Health Services Funding

495. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the amount of the additional €84 million for mental health services as announced in budget 2019 which will be used to provide child and adolescent mental health services, CAMHS, in north County Louth. [42392/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Budget 2019 allocated an additional €84 million to mental health services, bringing the Mental Health budget to almost €1 billion, an increase of 40% on 2012. €35 million is apportioned for new developments, while €20 million is for the further growth of projects commenced in 2018. New developments will be progressed in the context of both the overall HSE Service Plan 2018, and the more detailed regional Operational Plan for Mental Health. These will be published by the HSE in the near future.

Health Services Provision

496. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the reason the necessary rehabilitation and physiotherapy is being denied to a person (details supplied). [42398/18]

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 to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

497. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list to see a consultant urologist at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; the average waiting time to see a consultant; the steps being taken to reduce the waiting time to see the consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42463/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The waiting list figures for the end of September 2018, published by the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), show there are 1,697 waiters on the Urology Outpatient waiting list in Beaumont Hospital, of which 676 have appointments. Over 68% of patients are waiting 6 months or less, while there are 9 waiting 12-15 months.

The latest IPDC figures show that there are 837 patients on the Urology waiting list at Beaumont Hospital, of which 74% are waiting 6 months or less and 87% are waiting 9 months or less.

Improving access to hospital treatment is a key priority for Government. In Budget 2019 the Government has further increased investment in this area, with funding to the NTPF to increase from €55m in 2018 to €75m in 2019. My Department is working closely with the NTPF and the HSE to finalise the 2019 Waiting List Initiatives before the end of this year. This approach is to ensure a seamless continuation of the considerable progress made this year into next year.

The following tables set out the requested data on Urology Waiting lists at Beaumont Hospital.

Outpatient Urology Waiting List at Beaumont Hospital

| 0-3 Months | 3-6 Months | 6-9 Months | 9-12 Months | 12-15 Months | Total |
|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 736 | 423 | 327 | 202 | 9 | 1697 |

IPDC Urology Waiting List at Beaumont Hospital

| 0-3 Months | 3-6 Months | 6-9 Months | 9-12 Months | 12-15 Months | 15-18 Months | 18-24 Months | Total |
|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|
| 415 | 204 | 107 | 78 | 25 | 7 | 1 | 837 |

General Practitioner Contracts

498. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of reversing the financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, reductions to general practitioner fees announced in July 2013. [42471/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, GPs are reimbursed for a range of services they provide to medical card and GP visit card holders. GPs are remunerated for these services primarily on a capitation basis, with a range of additional support payments and fees for specific items of service. GPs are also remunerated for services they provide on behalf of the HSE under other public health schemes, such as the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme, etc.

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 imposed a range of adjustments to health contractor payments. This specific adjustments made in July 2013 resulted in savings in the region of €36 million.

Despite reductions to the payment rates of health contractors made under FEMPI legislation, the total fees paid to GPs under the GMS scheme have increased from just over €472 million in 2009 to approximately €525 million in 2017. This increase in fees is largely due to significant developments and investment in GP services introduced in recent years, with more services being made available to our citizens and additional financial support provided by the HSE.

The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 now allows the setting and varying of contractor payments on a non-emergency statutory basis. It is my intention to put in place a new multiannual approach to fees in return for service improvements and contractual reforms based upon health policy considerations and engagement with representative bodies.

Officials from my Department and the HSE recently re-engaged with the Irish Medical Organisation to set out the State's position in relation to reform of the GMS contract. Agreement on the delivery of service improvements and contractual reform has the potential to facilitate a substantial increase in the resourcing of general practice on a multiannual basis.

Hospital Consultant Remuneration

499. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of paying all new entrant consultants recruited since 2012 at the pre-2012 rate of salary. [42472/18]

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

Primary Care Services Provision

500. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in

each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for a podiatry appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42473/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Primary Care Services Provision

501. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for an ophthalmology appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42474/18]

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.

Audiology Services Data

502. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for an audiology appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42475/18]

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.

Dietician Service Provision

503. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for a dietetics appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42476/18]

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

Dental Services Data

504. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for an oral health appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42477/18]

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.

Psychological Services

505. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each community healthcare organisation, CHO, waiting for a psychology appointment in primary care; and the number waiting zero to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks, respectively. [42478/18]

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.

Physiotherapy Provision

506. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the physiotherapy waiting list; and the number waiting less than four, four to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively, in tabular form. [42480/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

507. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children's disability network teams in each local health office area in tabular form. [42481/18]

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.

Budget 2019

508. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the 58% increase to subhead E.1 of the health Vote as per page 216 of the budget 2019 expenditure report. [42521/18]

509. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the €65 million estimate, inclusive of a €10 million increase indicated for subhead E.3 - National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, of the health Vote, as per page 216 of the budget 2019 expenditure report, is the only voted expenditure for the NTPF; if not, the other subheads that include moneys for the NTPF; and the amount of same. [42522/18]

510. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the details of subhead H of the

health Vote on page 217 of the budget 2019 expenditure report and its contents; the reason no percentage changes are recorded for the subhead; the reason there are no pension lump sum payments recorded under the 2019 Estimates; the reason there were no net pension costs recorded under the 2018 Estimates; and the reason for the 24% reduction to Exchequer pensions included in the net total noted at the bottom of page 217. [42523/18]

511. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of subhead I of the health Vote on page 217 of the budget 2019 expenditure report; the way in which this subhead differs to subhead I presented in the budget 2018 expenditure report on page 205; if the €143,539,000 recorded under subhead J5 2018 Estimates in budget 2019 was transferred in whole or part into subhead I; and if so, if those moneys make up part of the 10% increase recorded for subhead I. [42524/18]

512. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of, and the rationale for, the €86 million increase to the Estimates for the State Claims Agency under subhead J.4 of the health Vote as per page 217 of the budget 2019 expenditure report. [42525/18]

513. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of, and the rationale for, the €98.4 million increase to the Estimates for subhead K.1 of the health Vote as per page 217 of the budget 2019 expenditure report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42526/18]

514. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of, and the rationale for, the 12% increase estimated for appropriations-in-aid in the health Vote as per page 217 of the budget 2019 expenditure report. [42527/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 508 to 514, inclusive, together.

The provision for E.1 in 2019 is €99.131m an increase of €30.013m (43%) over 2018. This increase is primarily the additional funding for the SlainteCare Integration Fund as announced in the budget. The remainder will be used for essential health care projects as required during 2019.

A data entry error occurred which resulted in €10m of NTPF funding being included in error in the subhead E1, instead of E3. The NTPF allocation for 2019 is €75m. The full allocation to the NTPF is now reflected in the published Expenditure Report 2019 available on www.budget.gov.ie and will be reflected in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019 published before year end.

Up to 2018 the H subhead reflected funding for statutory pension lump payments only. All other pension funding was held in the Health Service Executive subheads I1 to I5. To improve transparency and the linkage between the Health Vote subheads and the Health Service Executives National Service Plan in 2019 subhead H was amended to reflect all HSE pension funding including lump sums. From 2019 this subhead will now reflect the full pension costs as set out in the National Service Plan for 2019.

The 2018 Health Vote for net exchequer pension costs was €649.476m. Pension related deductions (PRD) were netted against pay. In 2019, as part of the Public Service Stability Agreement, PRD will convert to Additional Superannuation Contributions (ASC), and therefore, are also netted off pensions costs for the 2019 Health Vote. It is the presentation of these additional superannuation contributions that is driving the perceived 24% reduction in exchequer pension costs.

It was determined that the format of subheads for I1 to I5 causes confusion as they do not

align with how HSE performance is reported. The HSE reports performance against their annual service plan which is set out by service division. The HSE does not plan or report on services delivery by HSE region or on a statutory/voluntary basis as indicated by the previous subheads I1 to I5. To improve the linkage between the estimates presentation and the NSP the following adjustments were made.

Subhead I now represents the funding allocated to HSE service areas set out in the National Service Plan with the exception of PCRS/Local Demand Led Schemes and Long Term Residential Care which are funded from Subheads K1 and K2 respectively. It includes funding for new operational services developments for 2019 and excludes all pension related costs. Pension costs are now reported in total in subhead H.

The 10% increase in subhead I arises due to the increase in health funding for 2019 of €1.5 billion as set out in the budget book, less the funds applicable to subheads E, H, K.1 and K.2 as above.

An actuarial assessment for potential claims under the CIS is prepared annually by the State Claims Agency and a determination is taken with regard to the level of funding that will be required by year end, under subhead J4.

Regarding subhead K1; Medicines play a vital role in improving the health of Irish patients. Securing access to existing and new and innovative medicines is a key objective of the health service. However, the challenge is to do this in an affordable and sustainable manner. The allocation provided under K1 for 2019 is arrived at following considerable consideration and analysis of a range of factors. The detailed allocation of the funding will be finalised as part of the preparation by the HSE of their 2019 National Service Plan.

Under EU regulations, where a person is employed in or a pensioner of one member state but residing or staying in another, the member state of employment or paying the pension must in general bear the responsibility for the cost of health services. As the number of Irish people living here who worked previously in the United Kingdom holding British pensions is considerable, a reimbursement agreement has been agreed between the two countries. The Appropriations-in-Aid receipt represents the U.K.'s net liability to this country. Following detailed engagement with UK officials it has been indicated that the net position due from the UK for 2018 will be €55m below planned on an ongoing basis giving rise to the 12% reduction in receipts reflected for 2019.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

515. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an over claim appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41748/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the 2018 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) was lodged on behalf of the person named on 14 February 2018. Following the standard validation process, overclaims were identified on two land parcels.

Query letters and maps were issued by my Department outlining the position. The authorised agent of the person named replied, appealing the Departments initial findings. That appeal was successful leading to a reduction in the original overclaim to 0.13 hectares.

Payment under the 2018 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme has now issued on this basis.

A further letter has issued to the person named detailing the overclaim of 0.13 hectares. It remains open to the person named to appeal this revised finding should he wish to do so.

Laboratory Facilities

516. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the proposed redeployment and redevelopment of laboratories under the aegis of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41749/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has commissioned a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of options that have been proposed for the future development of the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs). The team conducting the CBA includes internationally-recognised, independent experts in economic analysis and animal disease surveillance. It is currently finalising its work, after which a report and recommendations will be presented to me.

My Department completed an initial consultative process with all relevant stakeholders on the options for the RVLs during the course of last year and the consultants undertaking the CBA have also consulted with stakeholders. Any decision that is made on the RVLs will be informed by both those consultative processes and the outcome of the CBA.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme

517. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the AEOS 3 scheme which comes to an end in 2018 will be extended for another year in view of the fact that there is no alternative scheme available to persons leaving the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41754/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are no plans to reopen or extend the Agri-Environment Options and Natura Schemes (AEOS) or the subsequent agri-environment scheme GLAS (the Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme), which is now fully subscribed with the RDP target of 50,000 participants met well ahead of schedule. It was open to AEOS participants to apply to join GLAS, and to terminate their AEOS contract. A large number of AEOS3 participants did take up this option. Our focus now is on continuing the full implementation of the GLAS scheme and ensuring that the 2018 advance payments commence as scheduled before the end of November.

Agri-environment policy is included in the CAP reform negotiations currently under way and any future scheme will be dependent on the outcome of these negotiations.

Departmental Communications

518. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will release all documentation, including internal departmental emails, relating to the sale of a stadium (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41762/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the deputy will be provided by my Department officials directly to him as soon as possible.

Departmental Communications

519. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of all meetings, telephone calls or other forms of communications between his Department and the Irish Greyhound Board in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [41763/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon (BNG), a commercial state body, was established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. It is responsible for the control, promotion and operation, including the regulation, of greyhound racing.

Bord na gCon operates under the aegis of my Department. Department officials are in almost daily contact with Bord na gCon as they are with the other 11 state bodies under the aegis of my Department. The deputy's request is extremely broad in scope. My officials would be happy to forward the Deputy details of communications with Bord na gCon, but given the scope of the information sought it would be helpful if the deputy could indicate any specific areas of interest.

Hen Harriers Threat Response Plan

520. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for the hen harrier scheme by a person (details supplied); when a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41765/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I wish to clarify that the new Hen Harrier Programme is a locally-led, locally-designed and locally-administered scheme - it is not operated or managed directly by my Department.

Payment will issue in the near future to more than 620 applicants who have already accepted Letters of Offer from the Hen Harrier Project Team. All other applications received are currently being assessed by the Project Team and Letters of Offer will commence again shortly for each of the six SPA designated areas.

The person in question should contact the Hen Harrier Project Team directly with regards to the status of their application.

Departmental Staff Data

521. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41837/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can confirm that a total of seven staff in my Department were appointed to Principal Officer posts arising from internal competitions since the 7th July 2015.

Four staff were appointed to Principal Officer in 2015 and three staff were appointed in 2018. I can confirm that no appointments arising from internal competitions took place in the years 2016 and 2017.

The question of appointments within the State Agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. The question has been referred to the Agencies and

they have been requested to respond directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

522. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41850/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The details of Principal Officer appointments in my Department for the years in question are shown in the following table.

It should be noted by the Deputy, that from time to time the Public Appointments Service run competitions for specific posts. In addition to the posts shown in the table, my Department has appointed three Principal Officers to specific posts in the years in question, one appointment in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. A number of appointments have also been made under the Protocol on Principal Officer Mobility, in line with agreed sequences.

| Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Control of Dogs

523. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 959 of 7 September 2018, if he will expand on the term “available evidence” which he stated in his reply indicates a very high level of compliance with the micro-chip legislation; if his attention has been drawn to the feedback from rescue groups that there is an extremely low level of compliance with microchipping legislation; and if he will clarify the source and the extent of the available evidence. [41897/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The evidence on compliance I have cited has been based on total numbers of dogs registered with databases as provided by Europetnet as compared to estimates of the total dog population for the country.

The dogs which the various animal welfare charities are encountering are in many ways atypical in that they are unwanted or have been abandoned by irresponsible owners. For both these reasons they are less likely than the canine population as a whole to have been micro-chipped. In any case as part of the ex gratia funding arrangements in place for animal welfare organisations in recent years, additional funds have been made available to assist in the microchipping of dogs. Furthermore, special provision was made so that appropriate members of staff of the animal welfare charities who have obtained the necessary training may chip and register dogs in order to cut down on cost.

Control of Dogs

524. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 959 of 7 September 2018, if there is a legal aspect of the micro-chip legislation under review; if so, the detail of same; and the cause, possible implications and proposed timeframe involved until the issue is resolved. [41898/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The legal requirement to have a dog microchipped is enshrined in the existing legislation. Under the Programme for a Partnership Government there is a commitment to strengthen the powers of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. In this regard, I have published the Greyhound Racing Bill 2018. While this Bill deals primarily with matters relating to greyhound racing and the greyhound industry, it also contains a number of amendments to the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, including provisions relating to the recording of information about dogs.

Organic Farming Scheme Payments

525. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42020/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The terms and conditions of the Organic Farming Scheme do not permit a payment in respect of certain parcels of land that are in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme and the Organic Farming Scheme simultaneously.

The persons named received payment under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS) in respect of 2015 which therefore affected their entitlement to full payment under the Organic Farming Scheme for 2015. All payments under the Organic Farming Scheme have issued to the persons named up to and including their payments for 2017.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

526. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an ANC payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42061/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The processing of the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application from the person named has been completed and payment has issued to his nominated bank account.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

527. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an areas of natural constraint payment will issue to a person (details provided) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42122/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 2 May 2018. The processing of this application has been completed and payment will issue to the nominated bank account shortly.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

528. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing an areas of natural constraint scheme payment to a person (details supplied); the reason the same delay occurs each year; and if the payment will be expedited. [42257/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application for the 2018 Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme was received from the person named on 17 April 2018. Processing of this application is now complete with payment due to issue to the nominated bank account of the person named in the coming days.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

529. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) can expect a decision on their application for an areas of natural constraint scheme payment. [42263/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2018 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes application on the 25th April 2018. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

530. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take to ensure a farmer (details supplied) who has been subject to numerous on-farm inspections such as cross compliance, Bord Bia inspections, remote slurry inspections and so on will have payments due for 2018 issued without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42363/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2018 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Schemes application on the 13th May 2018. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

531. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42468/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the 2018 Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) was received from the person named on 11 April 2018.

Under 2018 Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme, all eligible applicants are required to meet a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units per hectare for a retention period of seven consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units per hectare calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. Stocking density can be satisfied by cattle, sheep, goats, deer and equines.

Payment under the 2018 ANC Scheme has not issued to the person named as the holding concerned has not satisfied the scheme's minimum stocking density requirements.

Future Growth Loan Scheme

532. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the €25 million allocation for farmers, fishermen and food businesses in budget 2018 for a loan scheme has been put into the future growth loan scheme for long-term investment loans announced in budget 2019; the amount of funding that will be put into the future growth loan scheme to leverage additional moneys via the SBCI; if farmers will be able to apply to this future growth loan scheme when it opens; the percentage of the €300 million scheme that will be ring-fenced for farmers, fishermen, food businesses and other business sectors in tabular form; when the scheme will open for applications; and the expected lending interest rate. [42536/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In his Budget speech my colleague the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD, formally announced progress in relation to the development of the "Future Growth Loan Scheme" for SMEs, including the primary agriculture and seafood sectors. As I announced on Budget day, this is the Scheme for which I had provided €25 million in funding in 2018. This is a key Government Brexit response that has been under consideration and development throughout 2018.

The Scheme, which will be administered by the SBCI and backed by a European Investment Fund counter-guarantee, will bring previously unavailable 8 to 10 year unsecured investment finance to the Irish market at competitive interest rates. I am working with colleagues the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister Donohoe, to bring up to €300 million of loans to the market.

My Department is providing 40% of the funding so an overall agri-food package of up to €120 million will be available. However, unlike previous similar Schemes, this can be reviewed and adjusted according to demand.

Loans will be available to farmers, the seafood sector and to agri-food businesses. This will be a long-awaited source of finance for young and new entrant farmers, especially the cohort who do not have high levels of security. It will also serve smaller-scale farmers, who often do not have the leverage to negotiate for more favourable terms with their banking institution. Along with the likes of Milk Flex, this Scheme will form part of a comprehensive investment package for farmers.

Food companies have identified long term investment finance of up to ten years as a critical need which is currently unavailable in Ireland. I am pleased that the Government have been able to deliver this product and its effects will be felt all along the food production chain.

Further details will be provided in the coming months. The Scheme is expected to be in place in early 2019 and will run for three years from its launch date.

Beef Environmental Efficiency Scheme

533. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the overview of the €20 million beef environmental efficiency pilot scheme introduced in budget 2019; the maximum payment per cow and weanling; and the estimated full year cost of increasing payments (details supplied) based on expected participation rates and forecast modelling on the payment per cow under BEEP. [42538/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has provided €20 million in budget 2019 for a new pilot scheme for suckler farmers, specifically aimed at further improving the carbon efficiency of beef production. The Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot (BEEP) will target the weaning efficiency of suckler cows and calves - measuring the liveweight of the calf at weaning as a percentage of the cow's liveweight.

Building on the success of the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, the data collected will also be a valuable addition to Ireland's already impressive database on cattle genomics.

There is €20 million funding available for the scheme which is restricted to 500,000 head, which will allow for payment equivalent to €40 per cow. If the scheme is oversubscribed, selection criteria will be applied.

It is a pilot scheme for 2019 only, Exchequer funded and operated under State Aid de minimis provisions. There will be no additional measures/actions added to this pilot.

Details of the scheme will be announced in due course following further consultation. It is aimed to have the scheme in place for early summer 2019.

Agriculture Schemes

534. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the 2019 allocations to each scheme in the 2014-2020 RDP. [42539/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The individual allocations for 2019 will be set out in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) which will be published later this year.

Electric Vehicles

535. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will roll out further charging points for electric cars nationwide. [42362/18]

546. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of charging stations for electric cars (details supplied) in County Kerry; his plans to ensure more points will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [42001/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 and 546 together.

The majority of the existing network of publicly accessible charge points was rolled out by the ESB through its eCars programme. This network includes circa 80 fast chargers, mainly on national routes. A map showing the charge points, including the status and availability of the charge points, is available on the ESB's website at www.esb.ie/ecars.

The maintenance and repair of these charge points is an operational matter for the ESB. In relation to the out-of-service charge point in Killarney, the ESB has informed my Department that the manufacturer is due to come to Ireland in the coming weeks to visit the charge point. At this point it is expected that the issue will be resolved. I am also informed that the fast charge point in Tralee is located at a car dealership and not operated by the ESB.

The provision of charging infrastructure is a necessity for the uptake of electric vehicles. In this regard, last month's publication by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities of their approval of ESB Networks' proposal on the future operation and maintenance of the charging network is a welcome development. This ensures the continued operation and maintenance of the public charging network by the ESB and provides the certainty electric vehicle users need when purchasing an electric vehicle.

I understand that the ESB has commenced work to resolve the maintenance issues with the public charging network. This includes upgrades and, in the case of those with the highest reliability issues, replacement of public chargers. I am informed that it has replaced 15 standard chargers, constituting 30 charge points as well upgrading seven older fast chargers with newer chargers that can accommodate all three charging types that are in active use in Ireland. The ESB advises me that the uptime of the fleet of fast chargers is in excess of 98% which is very high by international standards.

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 will focus on an expanded range of supports for the provision of effective and efficient electric vehicle charging.

In this regard, my Department, in conjunction with the SEAI, is working on how best to support the provision of greater levels of on-street public charging.

It is also important to note the role of the Climate Action Fund. The first Call for Applications, which was launched in July, includes provision for supporting electric vehicle charging networks along with a range of other project types. The deadline for applications has now passed and I can confirm that 97 applications have been received. An assessment process of these applications is currently underway.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

536. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the transatlantic subsea fibre optic cable extending from the United States of America to Killala, County Mayo; the persons and bodies that have benefited from the cable; if a study has been carried out on the cost associated with alternative landfall routes; and his plans to use this infrastructure for the benefit of communities across the west of Ireland.

[41770/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The transatlantic subsea fibre optic cable extending from the United States of America to Killala, County Mayo is privately owned infrastructure. The installation and operation of commercial telecommunications infrastructure in Ireland is undertaken by commercial companies operating in a liberalised market.

Any consents and permissions required for the landing of this cable are a matter for the Company, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the relevant Local Authority and I have no function in relation to this matter.

Departmental Staff Data

537. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41840/18]

538. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41853/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 537 and 538 together.

The information sought by the Deputy, in relation to my Department, is contained in the following table.

| Department or Office Name | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | 2 (From competition held in 2014) | 2 (From competition held in 2016) | 1 (From competition held in 2016) | 1 (From competition held in 2016) |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

| Department or Office Name | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The information requested in relation to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. The Department will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisations.

Climate Change Policy

539. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the terms of reference for his Department's report on just transition due early in 2019 as mentioned by an official from his Department at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Action on 17 September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41913/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Investment in the low carbon economy has the potential to create decent work and quality jobs to support local communities and workers in regions most strongly impacted by the on-going transformation to a decarbonised society. The Government's National Mitigation Plan recognises that fully realising the economic opportunities in the low carbon economy is key to ensuring a just transition.

To inform this process, the National Mitigation Plan contains a commitment to prepare a report on the economic and employment implications of the transition to a low carbon economy. The exact terms of reference for this work are still to be finalised but will be cognisant of the need to take on board a range of factors. This may include but not be limited to the following areas:

- Employment impacts
- Social and regional dimension
- Need for stakeholder dialogue
- Skills and training aspects

Climate Action Fund

540. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the advisory board for the climate action fund has been established; and if so, the members of same. [41957/18]

541. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment the number of applications received to the climate action fund by the deadline of 1 October 2018. [41958/18]

542. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if State-owned companies such as Bord na Móna and Coillte which hold large landbanks of degraded peatland from which emissions could be cost effectively abated are eligible to apply to the climate action fund; and if so, if they were notified of the fund. [41959/18]

543. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the organisations which were notified of the climate action fund by letter or email. [41960/18]

544. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if public health benefits are one of the criteria to be used in assessing applications under the climate action fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41961/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos 540 to 544, inclusive, together.

The Climate Action Fund is one of four funds established under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 as part of Project Ireland 2040.

The first call for applications, which was launched on 9 July, was open to applications from the public and private sector. This included non-commercial state bodies, commercial state bodies (including Coillte and Bord na Mona) and Local Authorities.

The launch of the call for applications was by way of a general press release with a reference to documentation on my Department's website. All terms and conditions, including eligibility criteria, were included in that documentation. In addition, to the press release, the call for applications for the Climate Action Fund was displayed on the front page of my Department's website. The publication of the call for applications was also communicated via email, including notifying the Departmental Energy Performance Officer in each Government department suggesting they relay it to the Energy Performance Officer in organisations in their group under the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy. The deadline for applications under the First Call for Applications was 1 October 2018 and I can confirm that 97 applications were received by this date.

The Advisory Board that will oversee the assessment process is in the process of being established. A common template is being followed for the four funds and the Advisory Board will be chaired by my Department and will include representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and independent experts.

Further information on the Climate Action Fund, including detail of the assessment process, is available on my Department's website. The assessment includes consideration of the contribution to Ireland's climate and energy targets, and wider Government policy priorities (which would encompass health benefits).

Support provided under the first call for applications is subject to European Union state aid rules - specifically the terms and conditions of the General Block Exemption Regulation. There are likely to be projects (such as using peatlands to abate greenhouse gas emissions) that do not conform to the types of support provided for under the relevant state aid rules.

My Department is therefore engaging with Bord na Mona to identify potential peatland

projects that could be supported by the Climate Action Fund outside of the current call for applications process.

Electricity Grid

545. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the cost of an NC5 non-batch application will be removed; if the requirement for a planning application in order to make the application will be removed; and the guidelines and guidance on the costs of making the connection. [41963/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The management of connections to the electricity grid, including processes and connection charging rules, is a matter for EirGrid and ESB Networks under rules determined by the Commission for Regulation Utilities (CRU), which is an independent statutory body.

I understand that the CRU has been reviewing the existing grid connection policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Following on from a public consultation in November 2017, the CRU published its decision in March 2018 on a revised set of grid connection rules, the Enduring Connection Policy Stage 1 (ECP-1). ECP-1 constitutes the first step in revising the existing connection policy, allowing the first of a set of more regular batches of connection offers. As the system cannot, at present, accommodate all the projects seeking to connect, this decision first allows those ‘shovel ready’ projects (i.e. with planning permission) to get a connection offer, ahead of less mature projects. ECP 1 also prioritises connection of new, more flexible technologies able to provide specific system services currently required by the system operator and makes a number of other changes including a revised schedule of application fees.

On 31 August 2018 EirGrid and ESB Networks published the final list of applicants that meet the criteria to be processed as part of the first ‘batch’ of offers under ECP 1. It is expected that any future changes to connection rules will be consulted on by the CRU before any decisions are made.

Question No. 546 answered with Question No. 535.

Warmer Homes Scheme Eligibility

547. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason a person (details supplied) is not eligible for the SEAI better energy warmer homes scheme. [42130/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Warmer Homes Scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households vulnerable to energy poverty, who meet the defined eligibility criteria.

In reference to the case raised by Deputy Collins, officials in my Department have been in contact with the SEAI and I have been informed that the applicant applied for works under the Scheme in 2017 but as the walls would not have been insulated the applicant did not proceed with the works at the time. In June this year the Scheme was expanded to include insulation of solid walls. As the applicant did not have any previous work carried out under the Warmer Homes Scheme I would advise the applicant to contact SEAI on 1850 250 204 to make a new application, and note that proof of eligibility will be required also.

Broadband Service Provision

548. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when broadband will be rolled out in an area (details supplied). [42142/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In April 2017 my Department published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan.

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

There are 31 premises in Deenes, 16 of which fall within the AMBER area and will be served under the State led Intervention, while 15 are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be served by eir's planned rural deployment.

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. The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. Evaluation of the final tender submission is ongoing and will be allowed the time required. On conclusion of the evaluation, my Department will make a recommendation on whether to appoint the bidder as preferred bidder and I will bring the matter to Government for decision.

Under a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017, eir is in the process of passing 300,000 predominantly rural homes with high speed broadband. Approximately 175,000 of the committed premises have been passed as of Q2 2018.

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>.

Waste Management

549. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if support for the once-off collection and recycling of farm tyre waste in the remaining counties where a collection service has not taken place will be provided; if the sustainable and environmentally friendly management of this waste stream will be supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42143/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2017, my Department made available funding of €1 million to local authorities to deal with the clean-up of existing stockpiles of tyres illegally dumped across the countryside. This was done to support the introduction of a new compliance scheme for tyres and waste tyres from 1 October 2017. The new full compliance scheme to deal with Ireland's chronic waste tyres problem, which is operated by Repak ELT with a registration and reporting role for the Producer Register Limited (PRL), is funded by a visible Environmental Management Cost (vEMC) on the sale of new tyres. The new compliance scheme provides the assurance to drivers and consumers that their old tyres will be disposed of responsibly by the retailer when they buy new tyres.

At that time, the Minister also indicated that he would look at the issue of old tyres on farms and €700,000 was recently allocated to remove tyres from farms. Irish Farm Film Producers Group (IFFPG), the national farm plastics recycling compliance scheme, agreed to undertake the removal of tyres from farms through 4 bring centres around the country. The collections, which were chosen because they represent a good geographical spread, began on Saturday 29th September at Cootehill Mart, Co. Cavan. Collections also took place in New Ross Mart, Co. Wexford on Tuesday 9th October and Athenry Mart, Co. Galway on Saturday 13th October. The 4th bring centre collection will take place in Gort Drum Mines, Monard, Co. Tipperary on Saturday 20th October next.

Waste Management Regulations

550. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the development of a waste regulator; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42144/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The findings of the recent CCPC report must be studied with care and diligence to ensure that consumer well-being is protected and that our environmental goals are met.

The CCPC Report recommends that existing national waste management policy, as set out in "A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland" would be reviewed. This review should take account of:

- the CCPC report, including its recommendation on the role of an economic regulator for household waste collection;
- the on-going work of the Price Monitoring Group; and
- the finalisation of the European circular economy waste and plastics legislation framework.

The review will inform the development of a future national waste management policy, including our environmental goals, regulatory and market structures, and policy instruments and tools.

Ministerial Meetings

551. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of meetings and the dates of meetings in which he met with representatives of a company (details supplied); if minutes of these meetings were taken; if he will release these minutes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42145/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have had no such meetings with the consortium named by the Deputy.

Metropolitan Area Networks Programme

552. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date for the publication of the review of State-owned fibre networks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42146/18]

559. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a review conducted of the metropolitan area networks will be published; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42323/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 552 and 559 together.

The Review of pricing and access arrangements of the Metropolitan Area Networks has been finalised by Analysys Mason Consultants. My Department is engaging with the Management Services Entity (enet) in relation to implementation of the recommendations of the Review and the Review will be published shortly.

Renewable Energy Generation

553. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the breakdown of supports on offer to renewable energy start-ups here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42223/18]

554. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the percentage of the energy matrix which is renewable energy, that is, wind, water and solar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42224/18]

555. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to increase the renewable energy infrastructure here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42225/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 553 to 555, inclusive, together.

The main support for start-up companies seeking to grow their business comes through the Department of Enterprise, Business and Innovation and their agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.

In terms of supports for energy there are several programmes funded from the Exchequer and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Better Energy Communities (BEC) Scheme funds community based partnerships to improve the energy ef-

efficiency of the building stock in their area. Upgrades can take place across building types to reduce energy use and costs, Partnerships can be between the public and private sectors, domestic and non-domestic sectors, commercial and not-for-profit organisations and energy suppliers, and leverage considerable additional private investment. The BEC supports renewable energy projects as well as energy efficiency projects. In 2018, 37 projects have been approved funding totalling €22m.

The Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) Programme provides the first step for communities in learning how to develop local partnerships to manage and conserve their energy before they apply to the Better Energy Communities Scheme. A SEC aims to be energy efficient, to use renewable energy where feasible and to develop decentralised energy supplies. The community can include all the different energy users in the area including; homes, sports clubs, community centres, churches and businesses. Over 200 community groups have signed up to the SEC network since it was launched in 2015 and are availing of technical support and mentoring from SEAI. In 2018, 17 Sustainable Energy Community projects have been offered grants totalling €2.44million, to enable them to carry out smaller energy projects as identified in their Energy Master Plans.

Turning to offshore renewable energy there are a range of supports available to developers in bringing their devices from prototype to full scale commercial viability. Exchequer support for ocean research, development and demonstration has been provided to the sector in recent years and was increased under the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPP). The Department's multi-annual ocean energy development budget was increased by €21.3 million, covering the period 2013 to 2017, which brought the total cumulative funding to €31.05 million. This funding supports the development of the test facilities in counties Mayo, Galway and Cork, and the Prototype Development Fund (PDF). The PDF supports innovation by providing funding to offshore renewable energy development projects.

Since 2009, the Fund has supported 110 projects. 18 projects are currently being funded, with a further 6 being evaluated by SEAI and 10 that have already been completed in 2018. A further €4.75 million has been allocated to Ocean Energy development in 2018.

Finally, the SEAI Research, Development & Demonstration Fund invests in innovative energy projects which contribute to Ireland's transition to a clean and secure energy future. The SEAI RD&D Funding Programme aims to:

- Accelerate the development and deployment in the Irish marketplace of competitive energy-related products, processes and systems
- Support solutions that enable technical and other barriers to market uptake to be overcome
- Grow Ireland's national capacity to access, develop and apply international class RD&D
- Provide guidance and support to policy makers and public bodies through results, outcomes and learning from supported energy projects.

The 2019 Call is expected to open for applications from late Q4 2018. Further details of the RD&D Programme can be found at:

<https://www.seai.ie/grants/research-funding/research-development-and-demonstration-fund/>

In relation to renewable energy, the 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive sets Ireland a target of meeting 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020, and we have committed to achieve this through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10%

of transport from renewable sources of energy, with the latter target also being legally binding.

The most recent annual data from the SEAI indicates that 30.1% of electricity, 6.9% of heat and 7.2% of transport energy requirements were met from renewable sources at end 2017. Overall, SEAI analysis shows that 10.6% of Ireland's energy requirements in 2017 were met from renewable sources.

Electricity production from wind energy has increased to the point that it accounted for 84% of the renewable electricity generated in 2017. The following table sets out the contributions from the different renewable energy sources in 2017.

| Renewables Electricity % | 2017 |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Hydro (normalised) | 2.4 |
| Wind (normalised) | 25.2 |
| Biomass | 1.8 |
| Landfill Gas | 0.5 |
| Biogas | 0.1 |
| Solar | 0.04 |
| Renewables Electricity (overall) | 30.1 |

Electricity generated from biomass accounted for 6% of renewable electricity in 2017. Provisional figures for 2018 up to the end of August show that wind generation has increased by 6.6% while overall electricity demand increased by 2.4%.

The Government has adopted a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of renewable energy including the Renewable Energy Feed-In-Tariff (REFIT) schemes. In addition, the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS), approved by Government in July, is designed to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy contributions out to 2030. It is expected that the first renewable electricity auctions will take place under the RESS in 2019.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) also launched this year, is open to all non-domestic heat users not operating in the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). The purpose of the scheme is to reduce the use of fossil fuels within the heating sector.

Turning finally to energy infrastructure, Ireland's statutory National Transmission System Operator (TSO), EirGrid, has a key role in planning for the development of renewable energy infrastructure and the electricity transmission system to meet the future needs of society. This involves detailed analysis of electricity demand, electricity supply, electricity storage and interconnection, and locations of electricity demand and supply. A process is currently underway to consider a range of possible ways that energy usage may change in the future, and a series of scenarios are central to an extensive consultation that is being undertaken, covering four scenarios; Steady Evolution, Low Carbon Living, Slow Change, and Consumer Action. Details of this process are contained within Eirgrid's Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios available at <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/customer-and-industry/energy-future/>

Broadband Service Provision

556. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason a person (details supplied) cannot have broadband supplied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42279/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard

Bruton): The National Broadband Plan High Speed Broadband Map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie, shows that the premises referenced by the Deputy is in a BLUE area, where commercial operators are currently delivering or have indicated plans to deliver high speed broadband services. My Department defines high speed broadband as a service of at least 30Mbps download and 6Mbps upload.

Where a citizen living in a Blue area is unable to obtain a high speed broadband service, I would encourage them to email my Department at broadband@dcae.gov.ie with their eircode and details of the service providers they have contacted.

Broadband Service Provision

557. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the roll-out of fibre broadband to Ballymore, County Westmeath. [42282/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In April 2017 my Department published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan.

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.
- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.
- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

There are 136 premises in the townland of Ballymore. 2 fall within the AMBER area and will be served under the State led Intervention, while the remaining 134 premises are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be served by eir's planned rural deployment.

The procurement process to appoint a bidder for the State intervention network is now at the final stage. Evaluation of the final tender submission is ongoing and will be allowed the time required. On conclusion of the evaluation, my Department will make a recommendation to me on whether to appoint the bidder as preferred bidder and I will bring the matter to Government for decision.

Under a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017, eir is in the process of passing 300,000 predominantly rural homes with high speed broadband. Approximately 175,000 of the committed premises have been passed as of Q2 2018.

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 author-

ities 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>.

Wind Energy Generation

558. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the proportion of the €164 million allocated in budget 2019 that is dedicated to indigenous wind energy for farms, businesses and homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42322/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Within the overall funding envelope of €164 million for energy in Budget 2019, the individual programme allocations are still be finalised and will be published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services in December.

In terms of renewable energy there will be provision for a pilot micro generation scheme which was announced in July 2018 and which will run until the end of 2020. The scheme, administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, will initially target homeowners for domestic self-consumption. Grants are available for the installation of solar PV panels and battery energy storage systems. The data gathered during the pilot scheme will inform potential future phases of support for micro-generation in Ireland that may be appropriate, as we align with the ambition and requirements of the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED) that recognises the rights, entitlements and obligations of renewable self-consumers. The scheme is open to farm households to participate in. Further details are available at: www.seai.ie

Question No. 559 answered with Question No. 552.

Waste Disposal Charges

560. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress he has made in securing an annual support of €75 for medical incontinence; the way in which it can be applied for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42331/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is continuing the work of developing a mechanism to provide a €75 support for persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence to help meet the average annual cost of disposing of medical incontinence products. This process has unfortunately taken longer than envisaged, due to a number of issues, not least data protection issues that have arisen since the introduction of GDPR. However, I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to introducing an annual support as soon as practically possible in conjunction with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

561. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans in setting a 70% target for renewable electricity by 2030; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42332/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has the lead role in developing Ireland's first National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), covering the period 2021-2030. The creation of a NECP is one of the key provisions of the proposed Governance of the Energy Union Regulation, part of the European Clean Energy Package published in November 2016. This is an overarching, consolidating regulation that will consolidate the existing patchwork of national energy and climate planning and reporting obligations. The NECP will include trajectories for renewable energy (including renewable electricity), energy efficiency, and national emissions, as well as the measures required to achieve these trajectories.

The Plan, which will cover all five dimensions of the Energy Union, will contain the policies and measures proposed to reach our 2030 energy and climate goals, and will be based on a common EU template to allow for comparability. The first draft is due for submission to the European Commission by 31 December 2018, with the final version due by 31 December 2019. Energy and Climate Change modelling work to look at energy and climate policy options out to 2030 has already started under the auspices of the Technical Research and Modelling (TRAM) Group. The outcomes of this modelling work will underpin the development of the draft NECP, in particular on identifying cost effective, yet realistic solutions that will contribute to compliance with our binding 2021-2030 national greenhouse gas emissions target and underpin the development of our renewable energy and energy efficiency ambitions.

The high level design of the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) was approved by Government in July 2018 and it is expected that the first renewable electricity auctions will take place under RESS in 2019. The RESS has been designed to deliver Ireland's contribution towards an EU-wide renewable energy target of 32% out to 2030, within a competitive auction-based, cost effective framework. The scheme will provide for a renewable electricity (RES-E) ambition of up to a maximum of 55% by 2030 subject to determining the cost effective level which will be set out in Ireland's first draft National Energy and Climate Plan.

Renewable Energy Incentives

562. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures he is taking to put additional resources in place to ensure that the renewable electricity support scheme, RESS, receives state aid approval in the EU and that the first auctions take place as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42333/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The high level design of the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) was approved by Government in July 2018 and it is expected that the first renewable electricity auctions will take place under RESS in 2019. The RESS will be subject to the new rules on public support for projects in the field of energy, adopted by the European Commission in April 2014, which seek to promote a gradual move to market-based support for renewable energy. In this regard, the scheme has been designed in line with the 2014-2020 EU State Aid Guidelines.

The RESS has been designed to deliver Ireland's contribution towards an EU-wide renewable energy target of 32% out to 2030, within a competitive auction-based, cost effective framework. The RESS will deliver a broad range of policy objectives including: the provision of

pathways and supports for communities to participate in renewable energy projects; broadening the renewable electricity technology mix and increasing energy security, energy sustainability and ensuring the cost effectiveness of energy policy.

The scheme will provide for a renewable electricity (RES-E) ambition of up to a maximum of 55% by 2030 subject to determining the cost effective level which will be set out in Ireland's first draft National Energy and Climate Plan.

My Department is now progressing the RESS design across three main work streams: the EU State Aid approval process; the development of an Enabling Framework for Community Participation; and the detailed design of the first RESS auctions. Engagement with relevant stakeholders including the European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) for Competition, will continue in the coming months and Departmental resources will be assigned accordingly.

Departmental Staff Data

563. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41849/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The following table sets out the number of staff in my Department appointed to Principal Officer from internal competitions since 7th July 2015.

| Year | Number |
|-------|--------|
| 2015 | 1 |
| 2016 | 0 |
| 2017 | 2 |
| 2018 | 1 |
| Total | 4 |

I have asked the State agencies under the aegis of my Department to provide the Deputy with the information requested. If he does not receive a reply from the agencies within ten working days, he should advise my private office.

Departmental Staff Data

564. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41862/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Please see the table setting out the number of persons appointed to Principal Officer (PO) from internal competitions since 7th July 2015 and Open Public Service Appointments competitions for PO conducted in 2015 and 2017.

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|---|---|
| Number of PO appointments arising from internal competitions since 07/07/2015 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Number of PO appointments arising from the 2015 Open competition conducted by the PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) | n/a | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Number of PO appointments arising from the 2017 Open competition conducted by the PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) | n/a | n/a | 0 | 0 |

My Department is an equal opportunities employer and organises internal competitions in accordance with the Code of Practice for Appointments to positions in the Civil and Public Service published by the Commissioners for Public Service Appointments (CPSA).

Departmental Funding

565. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding is provided for schemes which provide resources to establish benches at key walking and cycling points; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41873/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport and active travel.

In relation to active travel specifically, my Department provides funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for both cycling and walking infrastructure projects and sustainable urban transport projects. Details of individual projects are managed by the NTA in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

The Deputy is also likely aware that funding is also available under the recently published Greenways Strategy in relation to the development of greenways in more rural areas. A call for funding applications is currently open and the Strategy and its requirements in relation to the development of such greenways is available to view on my Department's website - www.dttas.gov.ie.

Public Transport Data

566. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the data available in regard to regular overcrowding of commuter buses, trams and trains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41901/18]

569. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the frequency of the DART service; the length and number of carriages of the DART at peak times; if severe overcrowding has been brought to his attention (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42069/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 566 and 569 together.

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

Urban Development

567. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to recent changes in the United Kingdom regarding shared space guidance in the public realm; his plans to make changes in Irish guidance to reflect this, such as modifying the design manual for urban streets and roads and other design guidance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41902/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand that UK Authorities are looking at issues around shared spaces and navigability with a view to ensuring that they are accessible, inclusive and well-designed.

With regard to Ireland, the shared space approach to urban design is already addressed in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) which is available on my Department's website. The Manual sets out design guidance and standards for constructing new and reconfiguring existing urban roads and streets in Ireland. It aims to end the practice of designing streets as traffic corridors and instead focuses on the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. DMURS emphasises the role of streets as social spaces, where people come first and uses practical examples from Irish cities and towns to show how these issues can be designed for and managed successfully. Among other things, the Manual acknowledges issues that can arise for impaired users, in particular visually impaired users, where shared spaces are involved and suggests some remedial measures in that regard.

Supplementary material is currently being prepared for inclusion in the Manual towards providing additional clarity. The National Disability Authority has been consulted in the matter and has advocated a universal design approach for incorporation therein including for shared spaces. It is intended to publish the supplementary material early next year. Further updates to the Manual will occur from time to time.

Rural Transport Services Provision

568. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the criteria required in order to secure a Local Link bus service in a rural area in the evening time. [42033/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 569 answered with Question No. 566.

Fáilte Ireland Properties

570. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for a former Fáilte Ireland centre (details supplied); if a business plan for the centre has been developed; the date on which retrofitting it for its future use will begin; if the centre remains part of Fáilte Ireland's property portfolio; the duration of the lease that may have been granted to a body or company in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42092/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I have no direct role in relation to the management or future use of the property detailed by the Deputy. This is a matter for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly I have referred the question to the agency for direct reply.

Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Fáilte Ireland Properties

571. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a schedule of all Fáilte Ireland owned properties and lands here and outside the State; the uses of those properties and lands; the properties and lands that have been leased out; the purpose and duration of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42093/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The matter raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for the board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the question to the agency for further information and direct reply.

Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Greenways Development

572. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the development of greenways in consultation with communities and without dividing farm holdings. [42095/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As laid out in the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, the first option for future Greenways is to examine use of lands that are already in State ownership. In addition to this, the Strategy also sets out a number of options for project promoters to access land for Greenways such as permissive access and land purchase. The aim is to have Greenways that have community support, minimise the impact on landowners, particularly those whose businesses would be affected, and that provide access to scenery and things to see and do for Greenway users. Where the use of private land is necessary it is incumbent on project promoters to engage with stakeholders as early as possible in the process, engage agronomists to ascertain the impact on farming of the proposed route corridor, avoid severance as far as possible and to make all attempts to achieve agreement on routes.

Driver Test

573. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the scheduling of a driver test for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42125/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As this is a matter for the Road Safety Authority I have referred this 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.

Ministerial Correspondence

574. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a reply to a letter sent to him on 11 May 2018 (details supplied) will issue; the reason for the delay in replying to this letter despite reminders seeking a reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42134/18]

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 national roads including motorways is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

I understand from TII that the signage on the M17/M18 for Ireland West Airport and Shannon Airport adheres to the principles of the current edition of the Traffic Signs Manual (TSM).

The TSM stipulates the traffic signs to be used on Irish roads, their layout and symbols, the circumstances in which each sign should be used and the rules for positioning them. The Manual constitutes a Ministerial Direction to road authorities under section 95(16) of the Road Traffic Act 1961, and is available from my Department's website.

Regarding the correspondence received in my Department referred to by the Deputy, regarding signage issues relating to Ireland West Airport, these issues raised are now being considered in the context of a general review of the TSM which is now under way. The Deputy will appreciate that such a review must consider the impact of any amendments on the safety and efficiency of the road network as a whole and not just individual cases. I intend to revert to the Deputy with the outcome of the review, including in relation to these matters, when it is complete.

Rural Transport Programme

575. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the rural transport programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42138/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Córas Iompair Éireann

576. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for an increase in the CIÉ wage grade pension scheme; if not, the reason; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42189/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Issues in relation to Córas Iompair Éireann (CIÉ) pension schemes are primarily a matter for the trustees of the pension schemes, the CIÉ Group and their employees. Therefore, I have referred the Deputy's question to CIÉ for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Sports Events

577. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of his discussions with the organisers of a tournament (details supplied) regarding Ireland potentially hosting the 2026 tournament; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42210/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2018 Ryder Cup is a three day golf tournament organised by one of the governing bodies for golf in Europe, the European Tour.

The European Tour recently conveyed their wish to discuss the possible hosting of a future Ryder Cup in Ireland and sought a meeting with me to discuss same. Along with officials from my Department, I attended meetings with representatives of the European Tour on 30th September at the Ryder Cup in Paris and viewed the event infrastructure and facilities. My officials have since been engaging with the European Tour to ascertain what support is generally required from the Government of a hosting country. Further meetings are planned.

The hosting of a Ryder Cup gives rise to considerable economic value in the host country. Deloitte have reported on the value to the Irish economy of the 2006 Ryder Cup. The direct economic value was estimated to be more than €140m and the full impact was reported to be around €240m. Similarly, the value to the Scottish and Welsh economies, from the 2014 and 2010 events respectively, have been reported as substantial.

Sports Events

578. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he or officials from his Department have met with an organisation (details supplied) regarding plans to join the bid to host a tournament; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42211/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Representatives of the FAI recently met with officials from my Department to brief them on the invitation that the FAI received to join the feasibility study to look into the possibility of a joint British-Irish bid to host the 2030 FIFA World Cup. The process is at a very early stage and my Department indicated to the FAI that it would be happy to engage with them on the study.

Sport Ireland Funding

579. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the breakdown of funding for grassroots sport to each county in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42212/18]

580. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the breakdown of funding for grassroots sport to each sporting organisation for the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42213/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 579 and 580 together.

Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development and promotion of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards, including the allocation of funding across its various programmes. Sport Ireland channels funding through its network of Local Sports Partnerships, recognised National Governing Bodies of Sport and other relevant sporting organisations.

I have referred the Deputy's Questions to Sport Ireland for direct reply regarding the funding it provides for grassroots sport. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

In relation to the Sports Capital Programme, which is administered by my Department, details of all allocations, on a county by county basis, are available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

Traffic Management

581. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will liaise with the NTA to ensure measures are taken to reduce the average speed of traffic including HGVs along a route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42277/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): For the purpose of my reply to the question, I have assumed and as subsequently clarified by you, that the question should have referred to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly known as the National Roads Authority (NRA).

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and regional roads, or for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

With regard to speed limits on national roads, the application of Special Speed Limits i.e. speed limits other than the default speed limits, are provided for in Section 9 of the Road Traf-

fic Act 2004 which gives local authorities the power to make bye-laws (“special speed limit bye-laws”) in respect of any specified public road or specified part of a public road or specified carriageway or lane of a public road within a local authority’s administrative area.

The 2004 Act also states that a County Council or City Council shall not make bye-laws relating to a national road or a motorway without the prior written consent of TII. I would also make the point that An Garda Síochána has responsibility for the enforcement of the speed limits.

However, noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Bus Services

582. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a bus stop will be provided in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42285/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for ensuring the development and delivery of public transport infrastructure, including the provision of bus stops.

In light of the NTA’s responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Authority for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Network Expansion

583. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline his views on the plans of Iarnród Éireann to extend the DART to Rush, Skerries and Balbriggan; and the steps he has taken relating to same. [42287/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority’s (NTA) ‘Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035’ proposes implementation of the overall DART Expansion Programme which, as the Deputy is aware and as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP), is a series of projects that will create a full metropolitan area DART network for Dublin with all of the lines linked and connected.

The NDP investment in the DART Expansion Programme will provide fast, high-frequency electrified services - to Drogheda on the Northern Line (incorporating the stations the Deputy has mentioned); to Maynooth and M3 Parkway on the Maynooth/Sligo Line; and to Celbridge/Hazelhatch on the Kildare Line; while continuing to provide DART services on the South-Eastern Line as far south as Greystones. The investment will provide for significant improvements in services for commuters along these lines and also provide for the delivery of other priority elements such as the introduction of additional train fleet including the expansion of the fleet with new diesel electric trains. This fleet type will allow the introduction of DART services north of Malahide in advance of completion of the full electrification of the line.

Noting the NTA’s responsibility for implementation of public transport in the Greater Dublin Area, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Provision

584. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the steps he has taken to intervene with Iarnród Éireann to address the fact that DART trains are full in the evenings coming from the city centre to Portmarnock and the need to require at least two further additional trains between 4:53 p.m. and 5:53 p.m. in view of the fact that the present 20 minute frequency is perceived to be not enough; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42326/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Family Resource Centres

585. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to provide details on the number of new family resource centres that will be funded in the upcoming programme; and her views on whether an area (details supplied) is in need of a family resource centre. [41778/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.

In Budget 2018, I secured an additional funding of €3.0 m for Tusla to support the Family Resource Centre Programme. The additional funding was to support existing Family Resource Centres and for expansion of the Programme with the inclusion of 11 new centres, which means that 120 centres will be operational by the end of 2018.

I understand that the Walkinstown and Greenhills Resource Centre made an application for inclusion in the Family Resource Centre Programme last year but was unsuccessful.

Tusla has advised me that it met with representatives from Walkinstown and Greenhills Resource Centre in July, 2017 to discuss local community needs and Tusla's commissioning priorities. Tusla is acutely aware of the level of need in certain areas, and is actively working to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Tusla will continue to work with Family Resource Centres and other family support organisations throughout the country and will discuss service needs and funding resources with centres where appropriate. Tusla is committed to using all available resources for children and families in the most efficient, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.

In Budget 2019, I was pleased to announce a €33 m increase in funding for Tusla, which will include targeted funds for further investment and development of the Family Resource Centre Programme.

Child Detention Centres

586. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a report (details supplied) into safety at Oberstown Detention Centre will be made public. [41798/18]

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

for Children and Youth Affairs has been advised by Oberstown Children Detention Campus that in light of the challenges experienced in 2016, several external, expert reviews were undertaken to support the development of Oberstown Children Detention Campus into the future. An external expert was appointed to undertake a review of Health and Safety on campus. The Health and Safety Report undertaken by Tom Beegan Associates was shared with the relevant parties, including the Oberstown Board of Management, staff representatives and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

In July 2017 the Board of Management published a summary report of all external reviews outlining their recommendations and explaining the process underway to ensure their implementation. This report can be viewed at www.oberstown.com.

To ensure the implementation of each of the reviews' recommendations the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs established a Review Implementation Group in March 2017. The Group was chaired by Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Chairperson of the Oberstown Board of Management. It included representatives from Oberstown staff and management, the Board of Management, DCYA, a child development expert and also representatives of the IMPACT Trade Union.

The First Report of the Review Implementation Group Action Plan was completed in May 2018. This report can also be viewed at www.oberstown.com.

Departmental Staff Data

587. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set out by year the number of staff in her Department and bodies under her aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015. [41839/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The following principal officer appointments were made in my Department arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015:

2016 - 1 appointment

2017 - 2 appointments

2018 - 2 appointments.

The bodies under the aegis of my Department have not appointed principal officers from internal competitions in that period.

Departmental Staff Data

588. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to set out by year the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41852/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The number of principal officers appointed in my Department following open competitions runs by the Public Appointments Service between 2015 and 2017 are as follows:

Following 2015 competition (Campaign ID 1512210) - 1 appointment in 2016

Following 2017 competition (Campaign ID 17101202) - 2 appointments in 2018.

Protected Disclosures

589. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department provided a protected disclosure from a person (details supplied) to HIQA in the course of the HIQA investigation into the management of allegations of child sexual abuse against adults of concern by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. [41900/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I would like to inform the Deputy that it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual disclosures under the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014.

Foster Care Policy

590. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the reason foster carers are no longer covered by public liability insurance through Tusla; when foster carers were notified that they were no longer covered; the efforts being made to address these matters; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41912/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy is aware, foster carers are no longer covered by a commercial public liability insurance policy. Attempts by Tusla to secure continuing commercial cover have proved unsuccessful.

However, I am pleased to confirm that pending a permanent solution all foster carers have an indemnity on an individual basis where required. This is on an ex-gratia basis as a temporary measure to address immediate individual cases while the overall indemnification issues are being resolved.

As I have stated previously, I fully support extending the State Indemnity Scheme under the State Claims Agency to foster parents. Unfortunately, this has taken longer than expected due to technical issues associated with the approvals and statutory process involved, but I can assure the Deputy that work is continuing to address these matters. My Department has been in discussion with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the matter, and my intention is to include foster carers under the General Indemnity Scheme operated by the State Claims Agency as soon as possible. In this regard, work is ongoing with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to draft the necessary Order for Government.

My Department has written to the Irish Foster Carers Association (IFCA) outlining the position and, through the Association, foster carers have been informed as to the current position. IFCA have been kept up to date on a continuous basis. In addition, I understand that Tusla has also made publicly available the information provided to IFCA so as to communicate the position to those foster carers who are not members of that association.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

591. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to provide details on the funding allocated to an organisation (details supplied) on a yearly basis.

[41985/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) is a registered charity and one of the largest organisations operating in the Early Years sector. ECI represents 3,800 childcare members, who support over 100,000 children and their families through preschool, after-school, and full day-care provision nationwide. They provide a broad range of training, mentoring, information and advocacy supports to better shape the systems, policies and practices that impact on the lives of young children.

ECI is one of seven National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs) formerly funded under the Quality Sub Measure of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 (EOCP) and the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 and continue to receive annual exchequer funding.

In 2018, ECI received funding of €1,190,000 from my Department. This funding remains unchanged from both 2017 and 2016. This funding is provided to ECI:

1. To support the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the delivery of the national childcare programmes;
2. To provide support to all childcare service providers (community, private, childminders, parent and toddler groups, after-schools) in accordance with all statutory regulations, national policy and quality standards;
3. To contribute to national policy development and participate in national collaborations to develop and improve quality standards in childcare, and
4. To enable ECI to provide a support service to their members in the context of the early childhood care and education programmes.

My Department also provides additional funding to ECI on the agreement that they act as an “authorised signatory” and process applications for the Garda Vetting of its members. In 2018, my Department allocated funding of €222,080 to ECI for Garda Vetting. The total number of Garda vetting transactions with members in 2017 was 97,051, with a total of 30,137 applications received.

After-School Support Service Provision

592. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the after-school care provisions available where the local community crèche does not cater for the age of the child. [42077/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It must be noted that my Department is not the owner/employer of Early Years services as these are private businesses that operate independently of the State.

My Department offers a range of programmes to support the delivery of childcare. However, individual services are free to choose what levels of service they offer.

I would advise any parent having difficulty sourcing an after school programme for their child to contact their local County/City Childcare Committee (CCC's) who are in a position to offer advice regarding services available in the area that best suit their circumstances. A list of CCC's can be found on www.pobal.ie/programmes/county-city-childcare-committees-ccc/.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

593. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the changes in 2019 in the amount of benefit parents can enjoy under the universal element of the affordable childcare scheme. [42278/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In September 2017 I introduced a range of measures to lower the cost of childcare while the new Affordable Childcare Scheme was under development. These included raising the level of childcare subsidy available for families that need it most by up to 50% (from a maximum of €95 to €145 per week for children up to the age of fifteen). I also introduced a brand new universal subsidy of up to €1,040 per annum for children under three in registered childcare. Over the past year these measures have reached the families of more than 84,000 children.

In Budget 2019, rather than adjusting the existing schemes, which will continue to be available until the Affordable Childcare Scheme is in place, I announced changes to the income thresholds that will operate as part of the Affordable Childcare Scheme when it is introduced later next year.

Under the scheme's original policy proposals, income-based subsidies would have been available to all families with a net annual income of up to €47,500. This threshold will now increase by 26% to cover all families with a net annual income of up to €60,000. The scheme's lower income thresholds have also been adjusted, meaning that maximum subsidy rates will now be paid to all families with a net annual income of up to €26,000 (the previous proposed threshold stood at €22,700). These increased thresholds will mean that thousands more families will benefit from the new Affordable Childcare Scheme once launched at the end of 2019 and will see their childcare costs tangibly reduce.

It is my view that making these changes is a more progressive use of available resources than merely adjusting the universal element of the scheme. Because of these changes, an estimated additional 8,000 children will be eligible for the scheme for the first time. Another 8,000 will move from a universal subsidy to a higher targeted subsidy. 44,000 other children will continue to access a subsidy, 34,000 of whom will see increases to their subsidies.

The new measures ensure that families with, in some cases, a gross income of €100,000 will benefit from subsidies.

The increase in the lower net income threshold to €26,000 from €22,700 is important in terms of benefitting people at the lower end of the income spectrum. The measure 'poverty proofs' the scheme by ensuring that families at, or below, the relative income poverty line will benefit from the very highest subsidy rates under the scheme.

For those above the net income threshold of €60,000, but with a child under 3 in regulated childcare, the scheme will continue to make up to €1,040 per annum available.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

594. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she, through Tusla, will provide for a domestic violence refuge in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area in view of the fact that no such support exists at present for women in the area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42294/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child

and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence whether in the context of the family or otherwise. At all times, Tusla's key priority is to ensure that the needs of victims of domestic violence are being met in the best way possible.

The provision of capital funding for refuges is dealt with by the Housing Authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

In 2018, Tusla allocated funding of €23.8 million to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services, which represents an increase of €1.7 million over 2017 funding. Tusla's priority is to achieve the best outcomes for victims of domestic violence from the use of its available resources.

Tusla recognises that the provision of emergency refuge accommodation for victims of domestic violence is a core element of the response to domestic violence. While there is no domestic violence refuge located in the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown area, there are currently four units of emergency Safe Home accommodation provided in the area, which are supported by Tusla. Safe Homes provide services to those affected by domestic violence that may require lower levels of support. Safe Home accommodation comprises independent housing units with additional safety measures, where victims and families receive intensive support to achieve long term safety and well-being.

Victims of domestic violence and their children can also access emergency refuge accommodation in refuges across Dublin or in adjacent areas.

Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes

595. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the position regarding the treatment of booking deposits for childcare providers; the circumstances in which they must return same to parents; if the requirement to return such deposits applies to children availing of ECCE services only or also applies to children in full-time care; if there has been a change of policy in recent months whereby providers are now also required to return deposits to parents of children in full-time care; the basis for such a change; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42397/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme is fully funded by my Department and the rule in relation to the return of booking deposits relating to ECCE services remains unchanged.

“Booking deposits may be taken from parents provided such booking deposits are no more than four times the weekly capitation fee applicable to the pre-school service. The deposit must be repaid in full to the parents once the child's registration has been approved on PIP.”

This rule means that the maximum ECCE deposit that can be held is €258.

If a service is holding a deposit that exceeds this amount for a child that has already been attending the service prior to commencement of ECCE, depending on the level of ECCE service they must return up to €258 to the parent/guardian once the child has been registered for ECCE on the Programme Implementation Platform (PIP) system.

The purpose of this clause is to prevent an over payment of exchequer funding, because if a child leaves a service provider unexpectedly, my Department will continue to pay their ECCE funding for 4 weeks.

It must be noted that my Department is not the owner/employer of Early Years services; they are private businesses and their policy on deposits relating to levels of service not funded by my Department, including full time care, are a matter between the service provider and the individual parent.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

596. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline in tabular form the number and detail of the recipients of the outdoor rural recreation fund for 2017 and to date 2018; and the amount approved. [41779/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (previously known as the Rural Recreation Scheme) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for the maintenance and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland.

A total of €13.6 million was allocated to 251 projects under the 2017 scheme.

I launched the 2018 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme on 1st June last, with an indicative budget of €12 million under three measures. The final closing date for applications under the 2018 scheme was 27 July 2018.

On 18th September, I approved over €1.8 million for 128 small projects under Measure 1, which supports small-scale projects. Further approvals in respect of medium and large-scale projects will be announced shortly under Measures 2 and 3 of the scheme respectively.

Details of all projects approved under the scheme since its inception are available on the Rural Development pages of my Department's website at: www.drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/rural-development/rural-recreation.

Departmental Staff Data

597. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41848/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July 2017.

I can confirm that the Department held one internal Principal Officer competition in early 2018. Two staff members have been appointed to Principal Officer positions arising from this competition.

Departmental Staff Data

598. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition and 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41861/18]

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, one Principal Officer has been appointed from the 2015 open competition; that appointment was made in 2017.

Two Principal Officers were appointed from the 2017 open competition, one was appointed in 2017 and one was appointed in 2018.

See the following completed Table A.

Table A:

| Department or Office Name: | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | n/a | n/a | 1 | n/a |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS(Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | n/a | n/a | 1 | 1 |

Departmental Schemes

599. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the schemes his Department run which may allocate funding for benches at key vantage points in rural Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41872/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has no dedicated scheme which specifically funds benches at key vantage points in rural areas. This would generally be a matter for the Local Authorities.

However, my Department runs a number of schemes which may include the provision of public seating as part of a larger project. For example, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary maintenance or enhancement of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland. Over €23 million has been allocated to almost 500 projects under this scheme since 2016 to improve walking trails, greenways and other recreational amenities.

My Department also funds the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by the Local Authorities. Towns and villages can apply through their Local Authorities for funding under the scheme to support the rejuvenation of the town or village, including for improvements to the public realm. More than 670 projects have been approved for funding of €53 million under this scheme since 2016.

The Department also provide funding for the Community Enhancement Programme which is administered by Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) in each Local Authority area. Under this programme, community groups can apply to their LCDC for funding to enhance facilities in their area. This programme was launched in 2018 and it is planned to run the programme again in 2019.

Details regarding all funding schemes operated by my Department can be found on my Department's website, www.drcd.gov.ie.

600. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding CLÁR funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42024/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR provides funding for small scale capital projects in specified rural areas that have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

As part of the 2018 CLÁR programme, I allocated €1.5 million to a Mobility and Cancer Care Transport Measure to support the purchase of vehicles by voluntary organisations in CLÁR areas that provide transport services to people for cancer treatment and for persons with significant mobility issues in order to enable them to access support. It provided up to 85% of the total cost of a vehicle/fit out up to a maximum of €50,000 for a wheelchair accessible vehicle or €100,000 for a bus.

The closing date for applications from qualifying voluntary organisations was 31st August. In the normal course, CLÁR eligibility is based on facilities being physically located within a designated CLÁR DED. Given the need to travel considerable distances, in some cases, to hospitals and other specialist facilities located in non CLÁR areas, eligibility in this instance was based on the ‘catchment area’ being served by the vehicles i.e., that at least 80% of the vehicle’s need is attributable to CLÁR areas.

I intend carrying out a full review of qualifying CLÁR areas later this year on the basis of the 2016 Census data. The level of depopulation will continue to be a primary factor in the designation of any area as a CLÁR area. The review will involve a detailed examination of all areas of the country, as well as stakeholder consultation.

The findings of the review will inform future launches of the CLÁR programme into 2019 and beyond.

Industrial Disputes

601. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on the ongoing industrial dispute between an organisation (details supplied) and its workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42032/18]

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

While the CSP provides a contribution to the cost of FTE positions in the organisation in question, the organisation is a private company. Accordingly, all internal operations including general employment and industrial relations issues are matters for the Board of the company, as the employer, to manage.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

602. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

the reason a project (details supplied) was not approved for funding under the town and village renewal scheme 2018; the reason the application was not approved; if there is an appeal system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42361/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April of this year and Local Authorities were invited to submit up to 12 applications each for consideration by my Department. There was a strong level of interest in the scheme and 290 applications in total were received for funding of almost €28 million.

The selection of projects under the Scheme was by means of a competitive process and details of the marking scheme were made available to the Local Authorities with the application forms.

On 5th October, I approved funding of €21.3 million for 224 projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. This was the maximum number of projects which could be approved within the budget available to me.

11 projects in Co. Laois were approved for funding to the value of €872,000. Unfortunately, the project referred to by the Deputy did not achieve a high enough score to be funded under this year's scheme.

There is no appeal system in place for this scheme. However, my Department's officials are available to provide feedback on the application, which may assist the Local Authority with future applications under the scheme.

Charities Regulation

603. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the remaining sections of the Charities Act 2009 will come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42464/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney) (Deputy Seán Canney): The Charities Regulatory Authority ("the Charities Regulator") was established on 16 October, 2014 pursuant to the Charities Act 2009. Responsibility for the oversight of the Regulator transferred to my Department on its establishment in July 2017.

The general function of the Regulator is to regulate charitable organisations operating in Ireland, in order to increase public trust and confidence in their management and administration. Under the Charities Act, 2009, the Charities Regulator is fully independent in the performance of its statutory functions.

My officials continue to liaise with the Charities Regulator to review the operation of the legislation to ensure that it is operating effectively. In 2017, on foot of public consultation, the Regulator proposed amendments to the Charities Act 2009 in order to ensure consistency and fairness in the accounting and reporting obligations of charities.

My Department is working with the Regulator to consider these amendments and consideration of the remaining sections of the 2009 Act will also be undertaken as part of this process.

Illness Benefit Waiting Times

604. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a delay of 11 weeks in payment of illness benefit for a person (details supplied). [41739/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Illness Benefit (IB) is a short-term scheme intended for persons who are unable to work due to illness or injury. It is paid while the incapacitated person remains unable to work and continues to meet the conditions of the scheme. There is, however, a maximum payment period of two years after which payment will cease.

The person concerned made an application for IB which was received on 20 August 2018.

The Department experienced some delays in processing claims following the introduction of a new IB system in August last. However, the claim for the person concerned has now been approved and she is in receipt of her full entitlements and arrears owing to her were processed on October 10th.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

605. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an illness benefit payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41757/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): My Department experienced some delays following the introduction of a new system for Illness benefit (IB) which was introduced in August last.

The IB claim from the person concerned has now been processed and she is in receipt of her full IB entitlements and any/all arrears owing to her have been paid.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

606. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person who received illness benefit payments as a result of a personal injury is still liable for tax on the said payments received in circumstances in which compensation is subsequently awarded and the compensator has paid an amount equal to the illness benefit payments made to the person concerned directly to them, which is taken off the compensation award; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41772/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Payments made by a compensator under the Recovery of Benefit and Assistance (RBA) Scheme, and on foot of an RBA statement, represents an amount equivalent to the value of the illness-related payments received by the injured person.

The Department recovers the amount from the compensator as they are the liable entity.

The person's actual illness-related payments are not being repaid to the Department. Their scheme record regarding tax paid, claim paid days, benefit expiration (benex) etc. are not al-

tered. Additionally, there is no implication for any refund of tax.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

607. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an appeal by a person (details supplied) for partial capacity benefit; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41776/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The customer concerned does not meet the criteria for payment under the Illness Benefit scheme guidelines. In particular, the customer does not satisfy the required PRSI contributions for the relevant tax years. The customer has been awarded ‘credits’ for the period.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

608. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for illness benefit by a person (details supplied). [41788/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department experienced some delays following the introduction of a new system for Illness Benefit (IB) in August last.

However, the claim from the person concerned has now been processed and she is in receipt of her full IB entitlements and any/all arrears owing to her have been paid. She should continue to send medical certs for the duration of her illness to ensure prompt payment of IB.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Status

609. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41796/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): On receipt of additional medical evidence, submitted in support of their appeal, a review of this person’s claim was carried out and they have been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 08 March 2018. As a result the appeal is no longer necessary.

Payment will issue to their nominated bank post office on the 25 October 2018. Any arrears due from 08 March 2018 to 24 October 2018 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue in due course. The person concerned was notified of this decision on the 11 October 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

610. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application for carer's benefit by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41829/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Applications for carer's benefit in respect of two care recipients were received from the person concerned on 18 July 2018.

The applications were awarded to the person concerned with effect from 16 August 2018 when her carer's leave commenced. The first payment will issue to her via her nominated payment method on 11 October 2018.

Arrears of benefit due from 16 August 2018 to 10 October 2018 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 28 September 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

611. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41830/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for carer's allowance was received from the person concerned on 9 July 2018

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that although a certain level of care was being provided the level involved did not amount to full-time care.

In addition, it was decided that her means exceed the statutory limit and therefore she is not entitled to CA.

The person concerned was notified on 2 October 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

612. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of staff in her Department and bodies under her aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41844/18]

613. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition and 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41857/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 612 and 613 together.

The details being sought be the Deputy in respect of appointments made by competition to the grade of Principal Officer in my Department and the Agencies that operate under its aegis are shown in the following table.

Positions at Principal Officer in the Pensions Authority are advertised directly by the Authority and via PAS with subsequent competitions conducted by the Authority itself.

| Organisation/Competition type | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection | | | | |
| Internal | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| PAS 2015 Competition | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| PAS 2017 Competition | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1* |
| | | | | |
| Pensions Authority | | | | |
| Open Competition | | | 2** | |
| | | | | |
| Citizens Information Board | | | | |
| Internal | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

* Open competition conducted by the Department

** Open competition conducted by the Pensions Authority.

Invalidity Pension Applications

614. **Deputy Tom Neville** 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. [41871/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department received a claim for invalidity pension (IP) from the lady concerned on the 28 April 2017. Her claim for IP was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on the 26 June 2017 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her rights of review and appeal.

A review was requested and further medical evidence was submitted on 17 July 2017. Following a review of all the information available it was decided that there was no change to the original decision. She was notified on 28 August 2017 of the outcome of the review. A further review was requested on 31 May 2018 and additional medical evidence was submitted on 22 June 2018. Following a review of all the information available a deciding officer has confirmed the original decision to disallow the claim on medical grounds. She was notified on 08 October 2018 of the outcome of the review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

615. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which a self-employed person can pay PRSI reckonable contributions for their State pension, contributory, up to the date the person turns 66 years of age in that year, as is available to a PAYE worker (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41973/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As Revenue does not have the facility to collect a part of a year's PRSI liability in respect of the individual's 66th year, payment can be facilitated by the Department's Client Eligibility Services, Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Government Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford.

In general PRSI is charged on income, including income from self-employment, where the individual is over 16 years and under pensionable age, currently 66 years. Self-employed persons, who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. The payment of Class S contributions entitles self-employed workers to a range of benefits including State pension (contributory).

The regulations governing the award of Class S social insurance prescribe that where a self-employed person is assessed as being liable for a compulsory insurance charge, the person is granted a full annual complement of 52 'Class-S' contributions for that tax year once the liability is discharged (irrespective of whether their self-employment was pursued throughout the year, or if it was just for a portion of the year). Therefore, in a self-employed person's initial year of assessment of having an insurance liability, on payment of the due amount, the person will be recorded as having paid 52 weekly contributions for that year.

Where the self-employed discharge their combined Income Tax, USC and PRSI liability through Revenue's self-assessed system of collection, a single payment is made in respect of their combined liability for all complete tax years up to and including the year in which the self-employed worker reaches their 65th year.

Such additional (66th year) S Class contributions may be used, where necessary, to satisfy the 'minimum 520 paid contributions' condition for State pension (contributory) eligibility, but cannot be used in the yearly-averaging assessment of pension rate entitlement, for which the cut-off point in totalling contributions is the end date of the immediately preceding (full) tax year. This is exactly the same '66th year' approach that is facilitated in the case of standard employees (rather than self-employed) who may require some additional contributions to satisfy the "520 contribution" condition.

I hope this information is helpful to the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

616. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41995/18]

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 14 December 2017. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on the 11 October 2018. Any arrears due from 14 December 2017 to 10 October 2018 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue in due course. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 08 October 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

617. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [42005/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case in the coming weeks. The person concerned will be notified of the arrangements for the hearing in due course.

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.

Carer's Allowance Applications

618. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the decision to refuse an application for a carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42006/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 31 August 2018.

My department takes the view that full-time care and attention does not necessarily mean 24 hours in each day. Full-time care and attention can be considered to apply where there is an on-going and daily commitment by the carer and which also generally results in the carer not being able to support him/herself through normal full-time employment.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that although the person concerned is providing a certain level of care the time involved is not considered to be full time.

The person concerned was notified on 2 Oct 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

A review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Payments

619. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a payment in respect of an illness benefit claim will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42010/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): While the customer concerned has submitted medical certs from her GP, she has not yet submitted an IB1 claim form. As a result, an IB1 claim form has been posted to the customer's home address with a return freepost envelope.

Once received, the claim will be processed and any/all arrears owing will be paid to her as soon as possible.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment

620. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if persons on working family payments will receive a full Christmas bonus payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42011/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I was pleased to announce on Budget Day that the Christmas Bonus payment to long-term social welfare recipients will be fully restored to a 100% payment in December this year, and will be paid to all schemes that were eligible for the Bonus in previous years. Working Family Payment recipients were never eligible for the Bonus in the past and similar arrangements apply this year.

As a result of Budget 2019, Working Family Payment recipients may benefit from the introduction, in March 2019, of a new maintenance payments disregard of €95.23 per week (€4,952 per year) in respect of housing costs, with the balance of any maintenance assessed at 50%. For existing Working Family Payment recipients where this impacts, this can mean an increase in their weekly payments of up to €58 per week.

Working Family Payment recipients will also benefit from the improvements to taxation and USC rates introduced by my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

Carer's Allowance Applications

621. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for a carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42016/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 9 August 2018.

The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

622. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42036/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 24 August 2018.

The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Applications

623. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a partial capacity benefit by a person (details supplied). [42053/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department received an application for Partial Capacity Benefit from the customer concerned on Tuesday 9th October.

The claim will be processed in line with usual procedures and we have been in contact with the customer to advise him of this.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

624. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [42141/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Reviews

625. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on the review of further medical evidence submitted in support of an invalidity pension application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42183/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The department received a claim for invalidity pension (IP) from the gentleman concerned on the 28 March 2018. His claim for IP was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 27 June 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his rights of review and appeal.

A review was requested and further medical evidence was submitted. Following a review of all the information available it was decided that there was no change to the original decision. He was notified on 12 October 2018 of the outcome of the review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Applications

626. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for illness benefit by a person (details supplied); when payment will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42188/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): When the customer concerned initially applied for Illness Benefit, he did not satisfy the eligibility criteria to award a claim.

The customer subsequently returned additional information which has been applied to the application and his eligibility has been established. The customer will receive a payment next week.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Eligibility

627. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will consider including persons on community employment schemes with young families for the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42190/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) is the largest employment programme administered by the Department and is a valuable resource for both jobseekers and communities. This scheme aims to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by provid-

ing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. In addition, it helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to a regular work routine.

Working Family Payment (WFP) provides an income support for employees on low earnings with families. This is a weekly tax-free payment for families, including one-parent families, at work on low pay.

In general a person must be engaged in full-time remunerative employment as an employee, have at least one qualified child, who normally resides with them or is part of a family wholly or mainly supported by them and the weekly family Income is less than a set limit for their family size.

A person on a Work Scheme such as CE is not considered to be in full-time employment and is therefore excluded from claiming WFP while participating on the programme.

Illness Benefit Applications

628. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures she is taking to clear the backlog in processing times for illness benefit applications; the actions she is undertaking to have general practitioners move over to the new application forms to prevent the backlog; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42214/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In August last, my Department introduced a new claim form and medical certificate to replace the previous forms used for certification of the Department's Illness and Injury Benefit schemes. This change is part of a programme of modernisation in the Department which is aimed at improving the certification process and at making claim and payment procedures more efficient for everyone involved – GPs, patients and the Department.

The Department has a contract with GPs on the DEASP panel in respect of medical certification for Illness and Injury Benefit and we wrote to just under 3,500 contracting GPs in July setting out the changes. We will continue to communicate with all panel holders as the new process beds in.

In addition, the Department consulted with the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) - a long-standing representative body with a broad range of GPs in its membership. The Department will continue to consult with the IMO under the Framework Agreement on a range of issues, including e-certification, closed certification and changes to forms.

The IMO is the representative GP body which is affiliated with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and has been for many years. The Department will continue to hold substantive discussions with the IMO and I would hope they will conclude over the coming weeks.

The Department wants to reassure all customers that they will be paid the correct amount of Illness Benefit up to the end of their certified illness, as certified by their GP. No customer will lose out on their payments. Any customer with an urgent financial need can apply to the Department's Community Welfare Service to receive an interim payment. Customers in these circumstances should get in touch with their local Intreo Centre.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Carer's Allowance Applications

629. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42243/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

The person concerned has been in receipt of a half-rate CA since 25 September 2014 as her husband has been claiming an increase for a qualified adult on his jobseeker's allowance in respect of her. On 11 September 2018 she requested a review of her CA entitlement as her husband has returned to work and ceased to claim jobseeker's allowance.

As his means from employment may affect that entitlement, a full means review is being carried out. As part of the review, financial documents were requested from the person concerned on 17 September 2018.

Once the review is complete the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Statistics

630. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to undertake research on the costs associated with disability as announced during her briefing on budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42252/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As part of the Pre-Budget consultation process that I and my Department held with stakeholders, the issue of cost of disability was raised. The Deputy will be aware that consideration of the issue was also recommended in a recent report by the combined Joint Oireachtas Committees on Education, Health and Social Protection.

During the Pre-Budget Forum I acknowledged that while there may be extra cost to having a disability, the Government would need to consider further research before arriving at the most appropriate response.

As part of Budget 2019 I announced my intention to commission this research – a first step to comprehensively understanding this complex issue. I expect that this research, when complete, will provide a roadmap to inform policy direction in the future – from a whole-of-Government perspective – in relation to the adequate provision of support to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The Government recognises that those with a disability face additional financial costs. This research will help us to quantify those costs and start to provide for them in future Budgets.

There are considerable issues to be addressed in both defining and measuring the cost of disability. These include defining the scope of the research, deciding on the best approach and engaging in any procurement work. It is my intention to engage with other relevant Departments to address this before procuring independent external research. I have asked my officials to consider and assess the scope, governance and potential timelines for this research.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

631. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42281/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

CA can be payable for a maximum of 13 weeks after admission where either the carer or care recipient is undergoing medical or other treatment of a temporary nature in an institution such as a hospital, convalescent, nursing or care home.

Since January 2017, when a care recipient enters permanent residential care, CA can continue in payment to the carer for 12 weeks.

As care recipient of the person concerned was admitted to hospital on 11 July 2018, her entitlement to CA will cease on 10 October 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Payments

632. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a fuel allowance payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42283/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Fuel allowance is a means tested payment, payable to people who either live alone or only with certain other qualified people. Only one fuel allowance can be paid to any one household at any one time.

Two fuel payments issued to this gentleman since the commencement of the 2018/2019 fuel season on 03 October 2018. Based on the information provided to the department, he no longer qualifies for the allowance with effect from 17 October 2018 as it is already in payment to a member of his household.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

633. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the schools that will benefit from the new hot school meals pilot programme for DEIS schools announced in budget 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42288/18]

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.

Budget 2019 announced a further extension to the scheme and additional funding of €1m for 2019. The additional funding is to provide a hot school meals pilot programme to commence in the 2019/2020 academic year.

Research shows us the value of the provision of adequate and nutritious meals for a child's health, learning, attention and educational achievement. That is why I am providing funds to establish a pilot programme for a hot meals scheme in DEIS schools. Hot dinners will be provided on a pilot basis in up to some 7,200 children. If successful, I would hope to work with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in extending the scheme on a much wider basis in future years and establish the scheme on a permanent basis.

Officials from my Department will now engage with officials in DES to identify suitable DEIS schools for the pilot and thereafter a consultation with the schools involved will begin.

Live Register Data

634. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of recipients of jobseeker's allowance and jobseeker's benefit in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42310/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement. I note that this information is published monthly by the Central Statistics Office, available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/labourmarket/liveregister/>.

Number of recipients of jobseeker's allowance and jobseeker's benefit at the 30th September 2018

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Jobseeker's Allowance | 157,018 |
| Jobseeker's Benefit | 30,186 |

Labour Activation Programmes Data

635. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of referrals made to the local employment services to date in 2018, by office; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42311/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Local Employment Services (LES) forms part of the State's public employment service. The public employment service is managed by my Department and delivered through the Intreo service as well as by contractors, such as JobPath, the Local Employment Service and Job Club providers.

The LES engages primarily with long-term unemployed jobseekers, but may also engage with short-term unemployed jobseekers where a local need arises. Jobseekers are referred directly to the LES by Intreo offices. LES maximum caseloads per mediators (120:1) are agreed for each contract and jobseekers are referred to LES offices on a replacement basis only.

The following table reflects the numbers of customers who attended/engaged with the LES,

by provider, to end of September 2018. The engagement period can last for up to 12 months. The Department records when a customer attends/engages with the LES service, some of the numbers below may include those persons who were referred towards the end of 2017, but who attended/engaged with the service this year. The number of referrals to the LES this year to the end of September was 12,525.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

| Local Employment Service | Activation clients engaged with service 2018 YTD |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Northside | 1579 |
| Ballymun | 1299 |
| Dublin City NW | 1624 |
| Blanchardstown | 1453 |
| Dublin City SW | 484 |
| Dublin City Docklands/Eastside | 998 |
| Dublin South City | 419 |
| Dublin 12 | 712 |
| Ballyfermot | 638 |
| Clondalkin | 1479 |
| Tallaght | 2069 |
| Southside | 970 |
| Kildare | 1801 |
| Bray | 761 |
| Monaghan | 718 |
| Dundalk | 526 |
| Drogheda | 1012 |
| Mayo | 822 |
| Galway | 759 |
| Limerick | 2092 |
| Cork | 1581 |
| South Kerry | 660 |
| Tralee | 1147 |
| Waterford City | 941 |
| Waterford County | 489 |
| Wexford | 1418 |
| Total | 28451 |

JobPath Data

636. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons referred to JobPath to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42312/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Job-Path is an employment service, which helps long-term unemployed people to secure and sustain paid employment.

To date in 2018, just over 43,000 jobseekers have commenced their engagement period with the JobPath service.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Youth Employment Initiative

637. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications received from employers and from young persons under the new youth employment support scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42315/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) was introduced on 1 October 2018. YESS is targeted at young jobseekers aged between 18 and 24 who are long-term unemployed or who face barriers to employment. The scheme aims to provide jobseekers with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. The scheme will provide a supportive structure for participants, including case worker support for both Placement Hosts and jobseekers.

To date, a total of 35 YESS placements have been advertised on JobsIreland.ie. Jobseekers are advised to contact a case officer at their local Intreo centre in order to express their interest, at which point their eligibility for the scheme is determined. While the numbers expressing an interest is not recorded on my Department's systems, figures on actual placements will become available in due course.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Data

638. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the rent supplement budget for 2019. [42353/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Budget for Rent Supplement in 2019 is €132.4m, as published in the 2019 Budget Estimates on Budget Day.

Expenditure on Rent Supplement is declining as a result of the transfer of recipients to the Housing Assistance Payment administered by local authorities and funded from the Vote of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

639. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42355/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 9th October 2018 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals

against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

640. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42395/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that an application from this lady for disability allowance (DA) was received by the Department on 7 August 2018.

The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

The application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. Once the SWI has submitted their report, a decision will be made on the application and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals

641. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42528/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 27th September 2018 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications Data

642. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications received each week in the carer's benefit section; the reason it takes a considerable amount of time to process an application even though it has all the correct paperwork (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42530/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed and that decisions on entitlement are made as quickly as

possible.

Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a child or an adult in need of full-time care and attention. An increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

At the end of August 2018, the average waiting time for new CARB applications was 11 weeks with 1,039 CARB applications awaiting decision. On average 85 applications are received into the section weekly.

Before a decision can be made on entitlement to CARB, a person has to show that they have the required level of PRSI contributions, that they have left full-time employment, that they are providing full-time care and attention and that the person being cared for has such a disability that they require full-time care and attention.

In general, social welfare schemes with a number of complex qualifying conditions can take longer to process. This is compounded if the documentary evidence provided at initial application stage is incomplete or insufficient; this is sometimes the case with CARB applications.

The Department is currently in the process of re-designing the CARB application form. This will allow carers to provide more information on the type and level of care they provide, with an aim to providing Deciding Officers with the information they need to expedite decisions on entitlement.

Staff have recently been re-assigned within the CARB area to work on claims processing and this should lead to a reduction in processing times.

An application for carer's benefit (CARB) was received from the person concerned on 26 September 2018.

The application is currently being examined by a deciding officer and once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Housing Issues

643. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the progress of the programme for a partnership Government on the housing crisis. [41755/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Following on from the Programme for a Partnership Government and recognising the urgency of the housing crisis, the Government introduced the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness in July 2016. This Action Plan provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the range of complex issues which need to be addressed across the housing sector. The Plan is underpinned by over €6 billion in funding to support the delivery of 50,000 new social housing homes and 87,000 other housing supports over the 6 years 2016 to 2021.

Significant progress has been made in 2016 and 2017, in partnership with local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and a range of other delivery partners, with over 45,000 individuals and families having their housing needs met during those 2 years, and a further 25,500 households expected to be supported this year. The level of progress being made is reflected in social housing waiting lists, which have reduced by 22%, from 91,600 households to 71,858, between

2016 and 2018.

The Government has made tackling homelessness a key priority under Rebuilding Ireland and while the numbers experiencing homelessness continue to increase and additional measures are required to address emergency accommodation needs, records levels of individuals and families are being supported out of homelessness. 4,729 adults exited homelessness into independent tenancies in 2017 and a further 2,332 in the first half of 2018. A Homeless HAP Place finder service has been made available nationally to support households experiencing homelessness to identify and secure independent tenancies and family hubs have also been introduced to provide more appropriate emergency accommodation to better cater for the needs of families and now provide accommodation for over 500 families.

The number of rough sleepers recorded in April 2018 had reduced by 40%, following the delivery of over 300 additional emergency beds, and a further 150 emergency beds are to be delivered by end-2018. The recent launch of the first national Housing First Strategy provides a strong framework for homeless individuals with the most complex needs to move into independent supported living.

The recent establishment of the new Land Development Agency under Project Ireland 2040 demonstrates the whole-of-Government response needed to maximise the value and use of lands in public control and to drive a more active land management role by the State. This new Agency will be crucial in supporting the delivery of affordable homes on public lands, through the new affordability requirement whereby a minimum of 30% of all publicly owned lands will be reserved for affordable housing purposes, building on the work that local authorities are initiating to deliver affordable housing on their lands, supported by the €310m Serviced Sites Fund.

New planning guidelines have also been introduced to support increased and more varied delivery of apartments in our main urban centres, where rental pressures are strongest, and a range of measures have been introduced to provide better protections for both tenants and landlords in the rental sector, including longer notice periods and the introduction of an annual limit of 4% on rent increases in areas designated as Rent Pressure Zones. Further measures will be brought forward shortly in new legislation to strengthen the role of the Residential Tenancies Board in enforcing the RPZ provisions, as part of a wider multi-annual change management programme to more proactively enforce tenancy law and have the RTB assume more the role of a regulator within the rental sector.

Recent Central Bank statistics on mortgage arrears show that the level of arrears is declining. There remains, however, a significant number of borrowers in long-term mortgage distress. The Government is committed to building on recent reforms and creating a framework that removes fear and brings predictability to a difficult process. Through a range of actions, Government Departments and Agencies are working together to find ways to encourage those who have not been able to engage, to reach a suitable long-term debt resolution, and avoid repossession if possible.

Progress is also being made under the following services in relation to Mortgage Arrears:

- Take up of the Abhaile service has been high, with 13,342 vouchers for consultations issued between the start of the scheme in July 2016 to 3 September 2018;
- The Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) has returned over 6,000 debtors to solvency with over 2,000 of those cases being Personal Insolvency Arrangements (PIAs), which deal with mortgage debt; and

- At the end of August, 380 families had been supported to remain in their home through the Mortgage to Rent scheme and 845 further cases were being actively progressed.

In relation to the wider housing sector, the measures undertaken under Rebuilding Ireland are underpinning a strong increase in activity, with planning permissions for 26,752 homes granted in the year to end-June 2018, up 39%; commencement notices submitted for almost 19,500 new homes in the year to end-July, up 17%; and 19,650 new homes becoming available for use in the year to end June 2018, up 24%.

The most recent Rebuilding Ireland detailed Action Status report is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/install/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Rebuilding-Ireland-Action-Status-Report-Q2-2018-Sept-2018.pdf>.

Land Development Agency

644. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when Columb Barracks will be transferred to the Land Development Agency; if it will be transferred with vacant possession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41759/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I refer to the reply to Question No. 510 of 9 October 2018, which sets out the position on this matter.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Data

645. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons nationally and in County Kerry, respectively, who have had to pay the maximum penalty due to not paying the non-principal private residence charge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41743/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The NPPR charge, which has since been discontinued, applied in the years 2009 to 2013 to any residential property in which the owner did not reside as their normal place of residence. The self-assessed charge is set at €200 per annum. It is a matter for an owner to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the charge and any late payment fees applicable. Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect Non-Principal Private Residence charges and late payment fees due to it and all charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned.

My Department has no role in relation to the collection or the enforcement of the charge. The data requested in relation to the number of persons who have paid the maximum amount of late payment fees imposed under the charge is therefore not available in my Department. Data in relation to NPPR late payment fees in Kerry is a matter for Kerry County Council. The Local Government Management Agency coordinates certain matters relating to the NPPR, acting on an agency basis on behalf of the local government sector, and may be contacted at corporate@lgma.ie.

Land Development Agency

646. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to use lands from old institutions for housing, both social and private, in view of the fact the moneys made from the sale of these lands were promised to be used to develop mental health services and that this is a commitment under A Vision For Change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41753/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Land Development Agency (LDA) will act as a key new Government instrument and in line with its mandate will work:

- To ensure the optimal usage of State lands, coordinating their regeneration and development and opening up key sites not being optimally used, especially for delivery of new homes; and

- To drive strategic land assembly through mechanisms that will bring together both public and private sector interests in ensuring the timely preparation and release of strategic land for development in a counter-cyclical manner. Such counter-cyclical action will be aimed at stabilising any tendency towards volatility in development land values, securing more of the increase in such values as a result of the planning and infrastructure investment processes for the common good and thereby driving increased affordability through better and more cost-competitive land availability.

The work of the LDA is to secure the strategic redevelopment of relevant state lands respecting any pre-existing commitments in relation to the destination or use of the proceeds from the sale/development of such lands. The use of proceeds from the disposal of specific sites to the LDA from another State body, which is under the aegis of a different Minister, is a question for the relevant Minister with responsibility for the body in question to address. In relation to the HSE publication “A Vision for Change”, it is matter for the Minister for Health.

Commercial Rates

647. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if casual markets pay commercial rates on private and-or public lands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41783/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): Under Irish law there is a distinct separation of function between the valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates. The amount of rates payable in any calendar year is a product of the valuation set by the Commissioner of Valuation, multiplied by the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) decided annually by the elected members of each local authority.

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The Valuation Acts provide that all buildings used or developed for any purpose, including constructions affixed thereto, are rateable unless expressly exempted under Schedule 4 of the Act. The matter of rateability of casual markets on private and/or public properties falls, in the first instance, to be determined by the rateability or otherwise of the properties on which the particular activity is conducted. If the property in question is liable to rates in its own right, the matter of holding ca-

sual markets thereon would not change that rateability. However, if the property is exempt from rates under Schedule 4 of the Act (which would include many public properties), it would be a matter of whether or not the holding of one or more casual markets thereon would constitute “rateable occupation”. This would be a matter of law and fact, depending on the nature, extent and frequency of the arrangements between the parties.

The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the performance of his functions under the Acts and the making of valuations for rating is his sole responsibility. I have no function in decisions made in this regard. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Departmental Staff Data

648. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff in his Department and bodies under his aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41846/18]

649. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 and 2017 open competitions for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41859/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 648 and 649 together.

There were a number of appointments as a result of internal Principal Officer competitions in my Department since 7 July 2015. In addition to these appointments there were further appointments from the 2015 open Principal Officer competitions run by the Public Appointments Service, as well as some filling of PO posts through external mobility. Principal Officer posts are assigned over time in accordance with the sequencing arrangements agreed centrally through the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A breakdown of the appointments made through the competitions referred to is included in the following table.

| Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | | | 4 | 3 |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210)(Effective 7/7/15) | | 5 | 1 | |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open Competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202)(Effective 23/11/17) | | | | |

The details requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department are a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out as follows:

| Agency | Email address |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| An Bord Pleanála | Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie |
| Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland | oireachtas@ervia.ie |

| Agency | Email address |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Housing Sustainable Communities Agency | publicreps@housingagency.ie |
| Housing Finance Agency | oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie |
| Irish Water | oireachtasmembers@water.ie |
| Local Government Management Agency | corporate@lgma.ie |
| Ordnance Survey Ireland | Oireachtas@osi.ie |
| Property Registration Authority | reps@prai.ie |
| Pyrite Resolution Board | oireachtasinfo@pyriteboard.ie |
| Residential Tenancies Board | OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie |
| Valuation Office | oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie |

Planning Issues

650. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to remove the requirement for planning permission for residential solar photovoltaic installations (details supplied). [41962/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, all development, unless specifically exempted under the Act or associated Regulations, requires planning permission.

Section 4 of the Act and Schedule 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, set out various exemptions from the requirement to obtain planning permission. Any such exemptions are subject to compliance with any general restrictions on exemptions set out in the Act or the Regulations and to the specific conditions set out in each class of exempted development in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

With regard to exemptions for solar panels, Class 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection of a solar panel on, or within the curtilage of a house or any buildings within the curtilage of a house”, subject to certain siting and size conditions.

Class 56 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on or within the curtilage of an industrial building, or any ancillary buildings within the curtilage of an industrial building, of solar panels (thermal collector or photovoltaic)”, subject to specific conditions.

Furthermore, Class 18 of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on an agricultural structure, or within the curtilage of an agricultural holding, of solar panels (thermal collector or photovoltaic)”, again subject to a number of conditions.

Exemptions from the requirement to obtain planning permission in respect of specific forms of development are provided for, when they are considered to be consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

Consideration is being given to initiating a review of the current exemptions relating to solar panels as provided for in the Planning and Development Regulations, in consultation with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

651. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 2670 of 24 July 2018, the estimated cost of building affordable homes for each of the Dublin local authorities in tabular form. [42014/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In order to deliver affordable housing, in the areas of the country most affected by a lack of affordable housing supply, the Government has committed €310 million to support this programme of work, under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF), as part of Budget 2019. The Exchequer contribution is €275 million with €35 million to be contributed by local authorities. In 2019 funding of €100 million will be available under the Fund with a further €142 million in 2020 and €68 million in 2021. The funding is available for key facilitating infrastructure, on local authority sites, to support the provision of affordable homes to purchase or rent.

A first call for proposals, under the SSF, issued to local authorities in Dublin; the Greater Dublin Area; Cork City and County; and Galway City. 15 proposals were received from 9 local authorities. These are currently being assessed and I expect this process to be finalised and an announcement of the first successful bids to be made in the coming weeks.

I envisage a maximum amount of SSF funding of €50,000 per affordable home. On the basis of this infrastructure investment, I expect that some 6,200 affordable homes could be facilitated in this way.

In preparing their bids for funding, local authorities were advised to be guided by the Unit Cost Ceilings (UCCs) for social housing in determining the cost of the affordable homes to be delivered under this programme. These UCCs are based on the analysis of returned data from tendered social housing schemes over an extended period, and market tender index information. Construction cost is reflective of building costs (including VAT) and also includes normal site works and site development. All-in cost includes cost of construction, land cost, professional fees, utility connections, site investigations/surveys, archaeology where appropriate, VAT and contribution to public art. Abnormal costs are excluded from these figures. The relevant UCC data were set out in the reply to Question No 2670 of 24 July 2018.

Moreover, an important factor in the assessment of bids will be the capacity to translate the secured infrastructure funding into a discount on the affordable homes. In addition, local authorities must consider the market price of similar homes on sale in the equivalent private market and the level of discount on market price envisaged, which will be required under the Affordable Purchase Scheme terms.

The objective is to maximise the benefits from public money by funding the best value for money proposals possible.

Homeless Accommodation Funding

652. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to deficits in resources for a section 10 homeless charity (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42018/18]

653. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to deficits in the budget for an emergency accommodation service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42019/18]

656. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding the long-term future of a service (details supplied) with reference to the

Murtagh report. [42094/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 652, 653 and 656 together.

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 services rests with individual housing authorities. My Department does not fund any service directly, but provides funding to housing authorities towards the operational costs of homeless services.

Under the arrangements in place between my Department and housing authorities, Exchequer funding is provided on a regional basis, whereby it is delegated to a lead-authority in each region. Decisions on the organisation and range of accommodation services to be provided are a matter for the individual housing authorities in consultation with the Statutory Management Group of the relevant regional Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum, and my Department has no function in relation to such matters.

The funding provided for specific homeless services is governed by contracts or Service Level Agreements between the relevant local authority and service provider and any service-related funding issues arising would fall to be addressed in that context.

Pyrite Remediation Programme

654. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a full review of the pyrite remediation scheme with a view to including all homes with a category 1 rating in the scheme will be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42070/18]

655. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on the exceptional circumstances clause when assessing appeals of refusals of applications to the pyrite remediation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42071/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 654 and 655 together.

The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for the establishment of the Pyrite Resolution Board and for the making of a pyrite remediation scheme to be implemented by the Board with support from the Housing Agency. The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of "last resort" for affected homeowners who have no other practical option to obtain redress and is limited in its application and scope. The full conditions for eligibility under the scheme are set out in the scheme which is available on the Board's website, www.pyriteboard.ie.

The scheme is applicable to dwellings which are subject to significant damage attributable to pyritic heave established in accordance with I.S. 398-1:2017 - Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and categorisation protocol. In this regard, it is a condition of eligibility under the scheme that an application to the Board must be accompanied by a Building Condition Assessment with a Damage Condition Rating of 2. Dwellings which do not have a Damage Condition Rating of 2 are not eligible to apply under the scheme. This ensures that, having regard to the available resources, the focus of the scheme is on dwellings which are

most severely damaged by pyritic heave. I have no proposals to amend this eligibility criterion.

Where a dwelling, otherwise not eligible for inclusion in the scheme, adjoins a dwelling already included in the scheme, such a dwelling may be considered in accordance with the exceptional circumstance provisions set out in section 17 of the Act. Section 17 provides that exceptional circumstances may apply where -

- failure to include a dwelling in the scheme may result in damage to that dwelling or damage to the dwelling being remediated under the scheme, or
- pyrite remediation work is causing or may cause damage to a dwelling.

The Housing Agency will consider if exceptional circumstances apply when the Remedial Works Plan is being drawn up and the Board will be informed of any recommendation for a decision in the matter. To date, one dwelling has been included in the pyrite remediation scheme under the exceptional circumstances provisions of the Act. My Department is in regular contact with the Board and the Housing Agency in relation to the implementation of the scheme and is satisfied with the arrangements that are currently in place, including in relation to appeals.

The Report of the Pyrite Panel (June 2012) recommended a categorisation system as a means of prioritising pyrite remediation works in recognition of the expensive and intrusive nature of pyrite remediation and the unpredictability of pyritic heave. The independent Pyrite Panel was clear in its view that only dwellings with significant damage due to pyritic heave should be remediated and that it would be unreasonable to expect dwellings not exhibiting such damage to be remediated.

Dwellings which have no significant damage but have reactive pyrite in the hardcore material should be monitored and only remediated if they display significant damage due to pyritic heave. This remains the position with regard to dwellings which do not display significant pyritic damage.

The latest figures available indicate that a total of 2,179 applications have been received under the pyrite remediation scheme. Of the 2,179 applications received so far, 1,727 dwellings have been included in the pyrite remediation scheme and the applicants notified accordingly.

A further 105 applications have been validated and referred to the Housing Agency for the Assessment and Verification Process, while another 214 applications are at the initial Application and Validation Process. 133 applications under the scheme were not successful.

Of the 1,727 dwellings that have been included in the pyrite remediation scheme:

- 136 are at remedial works planning stage,
- 106 are at tender / tender analysis,
- 248 are under remediation, and
- 1,237 are complete.

A sum of €30 million was announced under Budget 2018 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme this year. This allocation will facilitate the remediation of some 430 additional dwellings in 2018.

A sum of €32 million was announced under Budget 2019 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme next year. This allocation will facilitate the remediation of some 460 additional dwellings and is a clear signal of the continuing importance attached by Government to

addressing the issue of significant pyritic damage in private dwellings.

Question No. 656 answered with Question No. 652.

Ministerial Correspondence

657. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a reply to a letter sent to him on 13 July 2018 and subsequently on 20 August 2018 (details supplied) will issue; the reason for the delay in replying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42135/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I replied to the Deputy's correspondence on 11 October 2018. Unfortunately, my office had no record of receiving the original correspondence, which caused some delay in responding.

Housing Assistance Payment Eligibility

658. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to a technicality regarding the HAP scheme, that is, if a person is an approved housing applicant and cannot source accommodation even though there is available accommodation in the family home, the person will not qualify for the scheme; if he will review this technicality in view of the housing crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42185/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is deemed to be a social housing support under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. As a long term housing support, an assessment of housing need must be completed in order for a household to qualify for HAP. Any household with an identified housing need is eligible for HAP.

In order for a housing authority to be satisfied that a tenancy is or would be in good faith; the onus is on the applicant and landlord to prove that what is being proposed is a bona fide tenancy. Ultimately, it is up to the local authority to make a decision in each individual case. I do not consider it appropriate to introduce HAP payments for family members to be housed in the family home.

HAP support is available to tenants in rent a room scheme arrangements; however, the rental of a room to a civil partner, son or daughter are excluded from this scheme.

Budget 2018 increased the Exchequer funding for the HAP scheme to €301 million. This will allow for the continued support of existing HAP households and also enable the additional 17,000 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2018. A further €121m for HAP has been announced under Budget 2019. This will provide for the continued support of existing HAP households and also enable the additional 16,760 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2019, as well as supporting the roll-out of the Homeless HAP Place Finder Support Service across the country.

At the end of Quarter 2, 2018 over 37,750 tenancies were being supported by the HAP scheme. I continue to keep the operation of HAP under review but I am currently satisfied with how the scheme is operating. I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting current housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme set out in Rebuilding Ireland.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

659. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a review of the tenant purchase scheme is nearing completion; if the qualifying conditions of same will be changed for persons, particularly older persons who may be in receipt of a pension but who have a proven capacity to purchase their house such as from savings or help from family members or proven income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42244/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations covering various aspects of the scheme including the issue of the minimum reckonable income criterion, which the Deputy has referred to.

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 in the near future to publish the outcome of the review.

Vacant Properties

660. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount allocated to Limerick City and County Council to repair void houses in the city and county; the number of voids to be made available for allocation; when the allocation was paid; and when the voids are expected to be available. [42249/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The purpose of the Voids Programme is to ensure that vacant units are actively targeted, with a view to minimising the turnaround and re-let time of these units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition. Without substantial refurbishment, these social homes would have been left vacant and in turn would not be part of the active social housing stock.

Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock, including the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs, is a matter for each individual local authority.

Earlier this year, local authorities, including Limerick City and County Council, submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this programme in 2018. These proposals were evaluated and Limerick City and County Council were given approval to proceed with refurbishment works to 70 properties under the voids programme, subject to the relevant funding thresholds, which are listed in the following tables. Given the availability of funding, the completion of the works concerned is now a matter for the Council.

Table 1

| Energy Efficient Measures – 50% ERDF Co Funded | Max Grant |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 300mm Attic Insulation | €500 |
| Cavity Wall Insulation or Dry ling Wall | €1,000 |
| External Wall Insulation in lieu of cavity wall insula- tion or dry lining Terrace/End Terrace | Terrace €4,500 End Tec €7,500 |
| Window & External Door Replacement | €4,750 |
| Replacement Boiler or Installation of Renewable Heat- ing System with fully Integrated Heating Controls with exception for solid fuelled central heating appliances. | €1,750 |
| Replacement Radiators and Pipework | €750 |
| Installation of Room Space Heating Stove | €1,000 |
| Total | Terrace €14,250 End Tec €17,250 |

Table 2

| Ancillary Measures if required | Max Grant |
|---|-----------|
| Installation of Kitchen | €1,200 |
| Installation of Bathroom | €1,000 |
| Rewiring of Smoke Alarm | €2,300 |
| Plumbing | €800 |
| Internal Joinery | €800 |
| Internal Painting | €1,500 |
| External Painting | €1,100 |
| Gutter Downpipes/Foul Water Systems | €500 |
| Wheel Chair Access | €500 |
| External Works Upgrade | €800 |
| Waste Disposal | €250 |
| Other Necessary Works not specified Above. | €2,000 |
| Total | €12,750 |

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

661. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-
ment his target for the number of housing units that will be built by the State in 2019. [42253/18]

665. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-
ment the social housing output targets for 2019 by delivery stream including build, Part V,
refurbishment, void, acquisition, long-term leasing, RAS and HAP as revised following budget
2019. [42297/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I
propose to take Questions Nos. 661 and 665 together.

Following Budget 2019, the number of social housing homes to be delivered in 2019 under
Rebuilding Ireland are as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Rebuilding Ireland Targets | 2019 |
| New build | 4,982 |
| Part V | 1,260 |
| Voids | 303 |
| Total Build | 6,545 |
| Acquisition | 1,325 |
| Lease | 2,130 |
| Total Build, Acquisition and Lease | 10,000 |
| RAS | 600 |
| HAP | 16,760 |
| Total | 27,360 |

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

662. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide information (details supplied) on the 10,000 affordable houses planned for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42258/18]

668. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which the serviced sites fund scheme will work; the way in which the equity stake and the clawback will operate; the kinds of schemes he expects this funding trio to be drawn down against; the amounts being made available to local authorities in 2019 to 2022, inclusive; when the first round of applications will be decided upon; and when a second call for funding applications will be opened. [42300/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 662 and 668 together.

In order to deliver affordable housing, in the areas of the country most affected by a lack of affordable housing supply, a three-pronged, targeted approach is being pursued. The Government has committed €310 million to support this programme of work, under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF), as part of Budget 2019. The Exchequer contribution is €275 million with €35 million to be contributed by local authorities. In 2019 funding of €100 million will be available under the Fund with a further €142 million in 2020 and €68 million in 2021. The funding is available for key facilitating infrastructure, on local authority sites, to support the provision of affordable homes to purchase or rent.

A first call for proposals, under the SSF, issued to local authorities in Dublin; the Greater Dublin Area; Cork and Galway on 29 June 2018. The closing date for applications was 31 August and 15 proposals were received from 9 local authorities. These are currently being assessed and I expect this process to be finalised and an announcement of the first successful bids to be made in the coming weeks. Further calls for proposals will be made thereafter.

Once the funding is awarded and the infrastructure is provided I expect delivery of affordable homes from 2019 onwards. Separately, all local authorities will now carry out an economic assessment of the requirement for affordable housing in their area, and the authorities capacity to deliver housing at affordable prices from their sites. Based on this analysis further local authorities may be considered for funding under the SSF.

I envisage a maximum amount of SSF funding of €50,000 per affordable home and on this basis some 6,200 affordable homes could be facilitated.

In terms of the type of affordable housing that will be delivered on local authority sites it may be affordable housing for purchase, under the recently commenced provisions of Part V of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, or cost rental, which is being advanced on a number of pilot sites before being rolled out more generally. Under the 2009 Act, the maximum discount is 40% of the market value of the home and the local authority takes a charge, equivalent to the discount, against the property. The scheme applies to new homes, and is targeted at single applicants earning up to €50,000 per annum or €75,000 for dual applicants.

This new scheme replaces the time-limited claw-back which applied under the various previous affordable housing schemes. The local authority will retain a charge equivalent to the discount and the household must recoup the charge at re-sale or during the charge period. The funding repaid by the purchaser is paid into a new Affordable Dwellings Fund which can then be used to fund more affordable housing.

An Bord Pleanála Appeals

663. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views regarding the backlog of appeals with An Bord Pleanála; if assistance or support is being provided to An Bord Pleanála to assist it in clearing the backlog; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42260/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under section 126 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, An Bord Pleanála has a statutory objective to determine planning appeals within 18 weeks. Where the Board does not consider it possible or appropriate to reach a decision within 18 weeks (e.g. because of the particular complexities of a case or the requirement to hold an oral hearing), it will inform the parties of the reasons for this, and will indicate when it intends to make its decision.

The compliance rate with the statutory objective period has been reduced over the past year due to a number of factors. Firstly, there was a reduction in Board capacity in mid-2017, arising from a time interval between the departure of five outgoing Board members, whose terms of office had expired in April and May, and the five new replacement Board members taking up their posts. While, by September 2017, the Board complement had been fully replenished, this time interval significantly impacted on the Board's case work output over the whole year.

In addition, An Bord Pleanála is also implementing a major ICT strategy which will facilitate the introduction of on-line planning services as part of a complete upgrade and replacement of core systems. In this regard, a new case management system was installed and became operational in Q4 2017. As is to be expected with such a fundamental and integrated project, the transition to the new system has caused some initial disruption to the processing of cases, resulting in a further increase in the backlog of cases on hand. However, measures have been put in place to ensure that the new system is bedded down and becomes operational at an optimal level as soon as possible.

Furthermore there has been a general increase in cases received by the Board. For example, there was an increase of almost 12% on normal planning appeals received in 2017 compared to 2016; this upward trend has continued into 2018. The intake of normal planning appeals in the eight months to end-August 2018 was 11% greater than the intake over the corresponding period to end-August 2017.

Now that the Board's full complement has been restored, combined with the measures that are being put in place in relation to the new ICT systems, it is expected that the backlog of cases

will begin to reduce over the coming months, with an associated improvement in the compliance rate with the statutory objective period for the determination of cases.

My Department liaises closely with the Board to ensure that it has appropriate resources in relation to the performance of its functions. In mid 2017, the Board acquired additional functions in determining planning applications for strategic housing developments. A new Strategic Housing Division of the Board was established to decide on these applications, involving the recruitment of an additional dedicated 10 professional and administrative staff members in 2017. Two additional Board members have also been sanctioned to serve this Division, with the appointments being made in February and June this year.

The Board now has a complement of 10 members and has over 150 staff employed. I am satisfied that the Board has sufficient and necessary resources to deliver effectively and efficiently on its important statutory mandate and functions.

Home Loan Scheme

664. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Rebuilding Ireland home loans applied for in County Tipperary since its introduction; the number of approved and refused applicants, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42295/18]

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 continues to publish information on the overall number and value of (i) local authority loan approvals and (ii) local authority loan drawdowns. Information up to Q4 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 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 on the numbers of applications it has recommended to approve by local authority. The most recent figures for County Tipperary, as at the end of September, are set out as follows.

| Local Authority | Applications Underwritten by HA | Applications Recommended for Refusal by HA | Applications Recommended to Approve by HA |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Tipperary County Council | 58 | 35 | 23 |

Each local authority must have in place a credit committee and it is a matter for the committee to make the final decision on all loan applications, in accordance with the regulations, having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

Question No. 665 answered with Question No. 661.

Departmental Expenditure

666. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the 2019 capital and current expenditure votes by scheme within each Vote heading, that is, housing, water services, local government, planning, Met Éireann and administrations; and if he will provide a comparison with the comparable figure for 2018. [42298/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The following tables give information on the estimated capital and current expenditure by my Department this year, on the basis of the financial provision made for my Department in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018 published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and the planned comparable expenditure next year following decisions made in the context of Budget 2019. The tables do not include additional funding for housing purposes provided by certain local authorities from LPT receipts in the amount of €92m in both 2018 and 2019.

| 2018 | Current | Capital | Total |
|---|---------|-----------|-----------|
| ADMINISTRATION - PAY | 46,771 | 0 | 46,771 |
| ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY | 10,486 | 7,500 | 17,986 |
| HOUSING | 745,745 | 1,064,306 | 1,810,051 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING | 0 | 561,670 | 561,670 |
| SOCIAL HOUSING CURRENT EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME | 114,586 | 0 | 550,260 |
| RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME | 134,338 | 0 | 134,338 |
| HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SCHEME | 301,336 | 0 | 301,336 |
| CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME | 0 | 88,800 | 88,800 |
| CAPITAL LOANS & SUBSIDY SCHEME | 54,750 | 0 | 54,750 |
| COMMUNAL FACILITIES | 0 | 500 | 500 |
| MORTGAGE TO RENT | 0 | 22,000 | 22,000 |
| CAPITAL ADVANCE LEASING FACILITY | 0 | 91,706 | 91,706 |
| TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT | 4,310 | 12,000 | 16,310 |
| HOMELESS SERVICES AND EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION | 116,000 | 0 | 116,000 |
| HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY | 345 | 0 | 345 |
| ESTATE REGENERATION/REMEDIAL WORKS | 0 | 61,000 | 61,000 |
| ENERGY EFFICIENCY-RETROFITTING | 0 | 35,080 | 35,080 |
| VACANT REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME | 0 | 32,000 | 32,000 |
| PRIVATE HOUSING GRANTS | 0 | 53,000 | 53,000 |
| MORTGAGE ALLOWANCES | 0 | 600 | 600 |
| AFFORDABLE HOUSING/SHARED OWNERSHIP SUBSIDY | 4,000 | 0 | 4,000 |
| INFRASTRUCTURE FUND | 0 | 75,000 | 75,000 |
| PYRITE RESOLUTION BOARD | 0 | 30,000 | 30,000 |

| 2018 | Current | Capital | Total |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| HOUSING & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AGENCY | 7,174 | 0 | 7,174 |
| RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD/INSPECTIONS | 6,891 | 950 | 7,841 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 2,015 | 0 | 2,015 |
| WATER SERVICES | 661,261 | 531,460 | 1,192,721 |
| WATER QUALITY PROGRAMME | 15,457 | 7,000 | 22,457 |
| RURAL WATER PROGRAMME | 24,000 | 20,000 | 44,000 |
| FORESHORE | 4,850 | 460 | 5,310 |
| IRISH WATER | 600,000 | 500,000 | 1,100,000 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITIES | 16,500 | 0 | 16,500 |
| LEAD REMEDIATION/DEVELOPER PROVIDED INFRASTRUCTURE | 0 | 4,000 | 4,000 |
| WATER ADVISORY BODY | 420 | 0 | 420 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 34 | 0 | 34 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT | 128,067 | 9,501 | 137,568 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND | 124,800 | 0 | 124,800 |
| FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES | 1,050 | 9,250 | 10,300 |
| FRANCHISE | 1,973 | 250 | 2,223 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 244 | 1 | 245 |
| PLANNING | 37,444 | 17,468 | 54,912 |
| AN BORD PLEANÁLA | 16,761 | 483 | 17,244 |
| PLANNING TRIBUNAL | 3,745 | 0 | 3,745 |
| OFFICE OF THE PLANNING REGULATOR | 1,400 | 0 | 1,400 |
| PLANNING POLICY | 360 | 0 | 360 |
| FORWARD PLANNING | 250 | 0 | 250 |
| MY PLAN | 210 | 0 | 210 |
| URBAN RENEWAL/REGENERATION | 0 | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION REBATE SCHEME | 0 | 6,000 | 6,000 |
| ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND | 14,608 | 985 | 15,593 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 110 | 0 | 110 |
| MET EIREANN | 3,125 | 750 | 3,875 |
| SUBS TO INTERNATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL ORGANISATIONS | 3,000 | 0 | 3,000 |
| FLOOD FORECASTING AND WARNING SERVICE | 125 | 750 | 875 |
| GROSS TOTAL | 1,632,899 | 1,630,985 | 3,263,884 |
| APPROPRIATIONS IN AID | 63,266 | 0 | 63,266 |
| NET TOTAL | 1,569,633 | 1,630,985 | 3,200,618 |

| 2019 | Current | Capital | Total |
|--|---------|-----------|-----------|
| ADMINISTRATION - PAY | 49,449 | 0 | 49,449 |
| ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY | 14,729 | 10,500 | 25,229 |
| HOUSING | 945,727 | 1,334,000 | 2,279,727 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING | 0 | 747,471 | 747,471 |
| SOCIAL HOUSING CURRENT EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME | 154,886 | 0 | 154,886 |
| RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME | 134,300 | 0 | 134,330 |
| HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENT SCHEME | 422,729 | 0 | 422,729 |
| CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME | 0 | 94,875 | 94,875 |
| CAPITAL LOANS & SUBSIDY SCHEME | 54,750 | 0 | 54,750 |
| COMMUNAL FACILITIES | 0 | 500 | 500 |
| MORTGAGE TO RENT | 0 | 23,000 | 23,000 |
| CAPITAL ADVANCE LEASING FACILITY | 0 | 94,400 | 94,400 |
| TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT | 4,710 | 13,000 | 17,710 |
| ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS | 146,000 | 0 | 146,000 |
| HOUSING FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY | 345 | 0 | 345 |
| ESTATE REGENERATION/RE-MEDIAL WORKS | 0 | 71,750 | 71,750 |
| ENERGY EFFICIENCY-RETRO-FITTING | 0 | 30,454 | 30,454 |
| REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME | 0 | 38,000 | 38,000 |
| PRIVATE HOUSING GRANTS | 0 | 57,000 | 57,000 |
| MORTGAGE ALLOWANCES | 0 | 600 | 600 |
| AFFORDABLE HOUSING/ SHARED OWNERSHIP SUBSIDY | 4,000 | 0 | 4,000 |
| INFRASTRUCTURE FUND | 0 | 130,000 | 130,000 |
| PYRITE RESOLUTION BOARD | 0 | 32,000 | 32,000 |
| HOUSING & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AGENCY | 10,000 | 0 | 10,000 |
| RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD/INSPECTIONS | 11,511 | 950 | 12,461 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 2,496 | 0 | 2,496 |
| WATER SERVICES | 623,561 | 660,970 | 1,284,531 |
| WATER QUALITY PROGRAMME | 14,849 | 8,300 | 23,149 |
| RURAL WATER PROGRAMME | 24,000 | 23,000 | 47,000 |

| 2019 | Current | Capital | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| FORESHORE | 5,458 | 670 | 6,128 |
| IRISH WATER | 562,500 | 622,000 | 1,184,500 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITIES | 16,500 | 0 | 16,500 |
| LEAD REMEDIATION/DEVELOPER PROVIDED INFRA-STRUCTURE | 0 | 7,000 | 7,000 |
| WATER ADVISORY BODY | 220 | 0 | 220 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 34 | 0 | 34 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT | 191,155 | 11,675 | 202,830 |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND | 185,000 | 0 | 185,000 |
| FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES | 1,250 | 11,175 | 12,425 |
| FRANCHISE | 3,912 | 500 | 4,412 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 993 | 0 | 993 |
| PLANNING | 45,279 | 93,945 | 139,224 |
| AN BORD PLEANÁLA | 18,088 | 460 | 18,548 |
| PLANNING TRIBUNAL | 5,582 | 0 | 5,582 |
| OFFICE OF THE PLANNING REGULATOR | 2,367 | 0 | 2,367 |
| PLANNING POLICY | 420 | 0 | 420 |
| FORWARD PLANNING | 250 | 0 | 250 |
| MY PLAN | 135 | 0 | 135 |
| URBAN RENEWAL/REGENERATION | 0 | 76,000 | 76,000 |
| ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND | 14,778 | 985 | 15,763 |
| LAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY | 3,549 | 16,500 | 20,049 |
| OTHER SERVICES | 110 | 0 | 110 |
| MET EIREANN | 4,988 | 1,500 | 6,488 |
| SUBS TO INTERNATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL ORGANISATIONS | 4,838 | 0 | 4,838 |
| FLOOD FORECASTING AND WARNING SERVICE | 150 | 1,500 | 1,650 |
| GROSS TOTAL | 1,874,888 | 2,112,590 | 3,987,478 |
| APPROPRIATIONS IN AID | 61,175 | 0 | 61,175 |
| NET TOTAL | 1,813,713 | 2,112,590 | 3,926,303 |

Budget 2019

667. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the rationale of programme expenditure F, appropriations-in -aid, as detailed on page 209 of the budget 2019 expenditure report.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42299/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Appropriations-in-aid are receipts arising in the normal course of a Department's business

which, in accordance with public financial procedures, may be retained by the Department to meet the cost of voted expenditure instead of being paid directly into the Exchequer. These include, in the case of my Department in 2019, items such as pension-related deductions from remuneration, amounts payable to Met Éireann in respect of the provision of services to aviation, and receipts arising from EU co-financed programmes.

Question No. 668 answered with Question No. 662.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

669. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which the 4,800 SCHEP funded homes listed on page 115 of the budget 2019 expenditure report related to the other targets for build, acquisition, long-term leasing, RAS and HAP detailed in pages 114 and 115 of the report. [42301/18]

672. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for the social housing current expenditure programme in 2019. [42350/18]

673. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for the rental accommodation scheme in 2019. [42351/18]

675. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget allocation for long-term leases in 2019. [42354/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 669, 672, 673 and 675 together.

All three of the current expenditure funded schemes – the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) - are critical components of the accelerated delivery of social housing envisaged under Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

The annual cost of the three schemes to the exchequer is made up of the continuing cost of supporting the tenancies and contracts in place at the end of the previous year, and the additional cost of the new tenancies and contracts supported over the course of the year to which the allocation relates. The cost of the schemes in future years is therefore dependent on the number of new social housing homes and tenancies falling to be funded within each of the schemes and the rental or lease payments involved.

The Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) is a funding programme that supports the delivery of social housing by providing financial support to local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the long term leasing of houses and apartments from private owners and developers.

The SHCEP budget funds the ongoing current costs of homes delivered using a variety of different delivery mechanisms, including properties built or acquired by AHBs using funding under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) and leased to local authorities; properties leased on a longterm basis from private property owners by AHBs or local authorities, including properties secured through specific programmes such as the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) and the Enhanced Leasing Scheme. Therefore, SHCEP is a complementary funding stream to a range of capital expenditure programmes like RLS, CALF and the Mortgage to Rent Scheme.

The 2019 budgetary provision for the SHCEP is €155 million which represents an increase

of €40 million on the 2018 provision. This is expected to fund the ongoing cost of the existing social housing homes secured with support of the Programme at the end of 2018 which will amount to almost 14,000. In addition, over 4,800 new social housing homes, targeted for delivery across the build, acquisitions and leasing streams in 2019 are to be funded under the Programme.

The breakdown of the new social housing homes, by delivery stream, to be funded by SHCEP 2019 is set out in the following table.

| Delivery Type | 2019 (Target) |
|---------------|---------------|
| Build | 1,988 |
| Acquisition | 700 |
| Leasing | 2,130 |
| Total | 4,818 |

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) introduced in 2005 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 through Rent Supplement.

€134.3 million is being provided to support RAS in 2019, and this funding will go towards supporting 600 additional RAS tenancies targeted to be achieved by local authorities in 2019, and the ongoing cost of supporting approximately 19,200 continuing RAS contracts expected to be in place at the end of 2018.

Funding of €422m is being made available for HAP under Budget 2019. This will provide for the continued support of existing HAP households and also enable the additional 16,760 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2019, as well as supporting the roll-out of the Homeless HAP Place Finder Support Service across the country.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service is now available to each of the 31 local authorities, with the options to pay deposits and advance rental payments for any households in emergency homeless accommodation, in order to secure accommodation via the HAP Scheme.

Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure

670. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for HAP in 2019. [42348/18]

671. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for homeless HAP in 2019. [42349/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 670 and 671 together.

Under Budget 2019, the total Exchequer funding available for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), including Homeless HAP, next year is €422m. This funding will provide for the continued support of existing HAP households and also enable the additional 16,760 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2019, as well as supporting the roll-out of the Homeless HAP Place Finder Support Service across the country.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service is now available to each of the 31 local authorities, with the options to pay deposits and advance rental payments for any households in emergency homeless accommodation, in order to secure accommodation via the HAP Scheme.

Questions Nos. 672 and 673 answered with Question No. 669.

Capital Expenditure Programme

674. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of the capital budget for housing in 2019. [42352/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Capital funding of over €1.4 billion has been allocated for housing in 2019, an increase of 24% over the 2018 provision. The provisional breakdown, which will be finalised in the context of the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019 to be published later this year, is set out in the following table.

| - | (€000)* |
|---|-----------|
| HOUSING | 1,334,000 |
| LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING* | 747,471 |
| CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME | 94,875 |
| COMMUNAL FACILITIES | 500 |
| MORTGAGE TO RENT | 23,000 |
| CAPITAL ADVANCE LEASING FACILITY | 94,400 |
| TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT | 13,000 |
| ESTATE REGENERATION/REMEDIAL WORKS | 71,750 |
| ENERGY EFFICIENCY-RETROFITTING | 30,454 |
| REPAIR AND LEASING SCHEME | 38,000 |
| PRIVATE HOUSING GRANTS | 57,000 |
| MORTGAGE ALLOWANCES | 600 |
| INFRASTRUCTURE FUND | 130,000 |
| PYRITE RESOLUTION BOARD | 32,000 |
| RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD/INSPECTIONS | 950 |

*An additional €77m is being provided by certain local authorities through LPT self-funding.

Question No. 675 answered with Question No. 669.

Rent Pressure Zones

676. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if County Sligo will be included as a rent pressure zone in view of the 29% increase in renting costs since 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42393/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016 provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone. For the purpose of the Act, 'area' is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001. There is no provision for any other type of area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

For an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as inserted by section 36 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016):

(i) the annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and

(ii) the average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,094 per month in Q2 2018).

The RTB Rent Index Report includes a summary in Table 9 of the data used to establish whether each Local Electoral Area fulfils the criteria for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. This allows everyone to see exactly where their area stands in relation to average rent levels and increases and possible designation.

Further information on Rent Pressure Zones and designations is available on my Department's website at <https://www.housing.gov.ie/PUBLICATIONS> by searching 'rent pressure zones - information'.

The data from the Rent Index Report for Q2 2018 relating to the 2 local electoral areas in County Sligo is detailed in the following table.

| Local Electoral Area | Quarters > 7% | Average 2018 Q2 (€) |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Ballymote –Tubbercurry | 4 | €548.04 |
| Sligo | 3 | €691.40 |

Neither of the local electoral areas in County Sligo has been designated as RPZ's to date and it remains the position that neither fulfils the criteria for designation.

The Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

Building Regulations

677. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will publish his Department's annual reviews of the building control amendment regulations; and the outcomes or recommended reforms that have been proposed or implemented as a result of these reviews. [42484/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014, known

within the industry as BCAR, require owners, builders, and registered construction professionals to demonstrate through the Statutory Register of Building Control Activity that the works or buildings concerned have been designed and constructed in compliance with Building Regulations.

The roles and responsibilities of owners, designers, builders, assigned certifiers, etc. during building works are set out in the Code of Practice for Inspecting and Certifying Buildings and Works (September 2016). This has brought clarity and accountability, a focus on compliance and a new order to bear on construction projects.

31 Local Authorities are designated as Building Control Authorities and they monitor compliance with Building Regulations in their area, and have strong powers of inspection and enforcement under the Acts.

Prior to the Regulations coming into effect on 1 March 2014, the then Minister signalled the intention to review their effectiveness following the first twelve months of operation. This review was announced in April 2015 and an Open Policy Seminar on Building Control was hosted later that month. Written submissions were invited by May 2015. The scope and objectives of the review were:

- (a) To review the operation of the Regulations in consultation with industry and local authority stakeholders and members of the public;
- (b) To consider in particular the impact of the Regulations on single dwellings and extensions to existing dwellings having regard to specific concerns which have been raised in relation to the cost burden of the regulations and the level of certification required for this sector;
- (c) To consider more generally the impact of the Regulations on owners, occupiers and users of buildings having regard to the statutory purposes for which building regulations may be made (i.e. public safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, efficient use of resources and good building practice);
- (d) To make recommendations that will strengthen and improve the arrangements in place for the control of building activity in keeping with the principles of good and fair administration; and
- (e) To report with recommendations to the Minister as soon as possible, but in any event no later than 30 June 2015.

The final Report on the Building Control Regulations Review 2015 is available on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/building-standards/other/20150805-bcar-review-report-final>.

A key outcome of this review was the introduction of amending regulations which contain a provision for a single dwelling or single unit development to opt out of statutory certification.

On 13 June 2017, the report of the Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks was published and included eight recommendations, which my Department is advancing. The Panel expressed the view that the introduction of the opt out for new single dwellings, on a single development, as provided for in the Building Control (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2015, was a retrograde step that may contribute to further building failures such as those experienced in counties Donegal and Mayo. The Panel recommended that the opt-out facility under the 2015 Regulations should be reviewed with a view to removing that provision. My Department will be undertaking this review shortly.

National Parks

678. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when signs regarding the dangers of Lyme disease will be erected at the entrance of Killarney National Park (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41781/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The issue of Lyme disease is not confined to the National Parks. Ticks are widespread in the country and areas of rough vegetation and forestry and are not at all confined to National Parks, Nature Reserves or state lands. Ticks can be found on a variety of domesticated and wild animals including sheep, goats, horses, cattle, dogs, deer, rodents and various wild mammal species.

With regard to signage and notices, information on ticks for members of the public intending to visit the Park is contained in the health and safety section of the dedicated website <http://www.killarneynationalpark.ie/visit/health-safety> and is available in the visitor centre at Killarney House.

Information on Lyme Disease is available from the HSE and, their booklet:

<http://www.hpsc.ie/a-/vectorborne/lymedisease/informationforthepublic/Lyme%20DL%20April2017%20-%20D2.pdf> contains useful information in this regard.

The National Parks & Wildlife Service of my Department would be willing to engage with the Local Authority on any county-wide initiatives they (or the HSE) wish to propose.

Wildlife Data

679. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the findings of the BIM survey on the seal population at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41905/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am not aware of BIM surveys at the location mentioned in the question.

My Department is processing data on seal populations accumulated over several years, and plans to further survey the Blaskets population in the spring of 2019. I understand that the results will be published as a report in the second part of 2019.

Departmental Staff Data

680. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in her Department and bodies under her aegis appointed to principal officer arising from internal competitions since 7 July 2015, by year. [41841/18]

681. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of persons appointed from the panels arising from the 2015 open competition and the 2017 open competition for principal officer run by the Public Appointments Service, by year; if a table (details supplied) will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41854/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 680 and 681 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table. I am advised that, of the four internal Principal Officer appointments, three were from a special Irish language competition conducted by my Department, having decided in consultation with PAS that this was the most resource efficient way of filling these positions. With regard to PO appointments in agencies under the remit of my Department, I am informed that there was one internal Principal Officer appointment in Údarás na Gaeltachta in 2016. I am further advised that my Department appointed a Principal Officer from the Senior HR Management Opportunities 2017 competition which was run by PAS. For completeness: I am also advised that, during the period 2015-2017, appointments were made at Principal Officer level following external recruitment in the National Museum of Ireland, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and the Crawford Art Gallery.

| Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht: | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from internal competitions since 7/7/15 | | | 4 | |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2015 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 1512210) (Effective 7/7/15) | | 1 | | |
| No. of Principal Officer appointments arising from 2017 PO Open competition run by PAS (Campaign ID: 17101202) (Effective 23/11/17) | | 0 | | |

Foras na Gaeilge

682. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sí ar an eolas go bhfuil go leor oibrithe i bhForas na Gaeilge, atá ar phá laghdaithe ar threoir a Roinne, nach bhfuil ar Aguisín 2A de Chiorclán 22/2017, cé gur fostaíodh iad i ndiaidh 1995 atá ag íoc ÁSPC d'aicme A agus atá ag íoc pinsin; agus an dtabharfaidh sí treoir don Roinn na hoibrithe cuí ar Aguisín 2A a íoc láithreach agus socrú a dhéanamh chun na híocaíochtaí siarghabhálacha a bhaineann leis seo agus a théann siar na blianta a réiteach freisin. [42120/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): I dtús báire, ba choir dom a mhíniú go mbaineann ceisteanna maidir le pá fostaíthe Fhoras na Gaeilge le cúinsí oibríochtúla inmheánacha na háisíneachta.

Tuigtear dom go mbaineann Ciorclán 22/2017 le státseirbhísigh agus, ag brath ar a gcúinsí, d'fhéadfadh sé nach mbaineann sé le comhlachtaí Stáit eile.

Ar ndóigh, ní hionann socrúithe pá agus pinsin na státseirbhíse agus socrúithe do na forais trasteorann, ag eascairt as a stádas uathúil ag fostú foirne sa dá dhlínse. Go hachomair, i gcás na bhforas trasteorann, tuigtear dom go bhfuil cúrsaí pá don fhoireann ó dheas ag brath ar chatagóir a mballraíochta sa Scéim Pinsin Thuaidh Theas, sin é, an bhfuiltear sa bhunscéim nó sa scéim le cearta forchoimeáta.

Is féidir liom a rá, áfach, go bhfuil treoir shoiléir faighte ag Foras na Gaeilge, ó mo Roinn agus ón Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe i ndáil le Ciorclán 22/2017 agus go bhfuil an treoir sin á cur i bhfeidhm.

Archaeological Sites

683. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a reply to a letter initially sent on 20 August 2018 (details supplied) will issue; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42137/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised the subject matter of the Deputy's correspondence is being examined by my Department's National Monuments Service.

As the Deputy will appreciate, I regularly receive requests to take archaeological sites into State ownership. The care, maintenance and presentation of national monuments in State care is undertaken by the Office of Public Works in consultation and with the advice of the Department's National Monuments Service. Such monuments already number some one thousand sites at over 760 locations around the country and they require very considerable resource commitments both in terms of funding and personnel. Any proposals for further acquisitions must therefore be carefully considered against that background and in the context of the immediate capital cost of the acquisition.

The site referred to in this case contains a national monument that is already in my ownership, as Minister, and which is managed in all respects by the Office of Public Works. It benefits from the full protections of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014 as do a number of other recorded monuments on the property.

My Department's examination of the case will be concluded as quickly as possible and I will ensure that the Deputy is informed of the outcome as soon as any decision is made.

Foras na Gaeilge

684. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad iad na príomhtháscairí feidhmíochta atá ag Foras na Gaeilge don ghearrthéarma agus don fhadtéarma. [42152/18]

685. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad iad na príomhtháscairí feidhmíochta atá á mbaint amach go rialta ag Foras na Gaeilge. [42153/18]

686. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé na gníomhartha atá á mbaint amach ag Foras na Gaeilge, ag eascairt as an eolas atá bailithe acu maidir le dul chun cinn, nó a mhalairt, a gcuid príomhtháscairí feidhmíochta. [42154/18]

687. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cad iad na príomhtháscairí feidhmíochta le haghaidh na n-eagraíochtaí atá ag fáil deontas ón bhForas agus conas a dhéantar a n-aschur a thomhas. [42155/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 684, 685, 686 agus 687 le chéile.

Faoin Acht um Chomhaontú na Breataine-na hÉireann 1999, tá ról reáchtúil ag Foras na Gaeilge chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ar bhonn uile-oileáin agus feidhmeanna a chur i gcrích mar seo a leanas:-

- úsáid na Gaeilge a éascú agus a spreagadh sa chaint agus sa scríbhneoireacht sa saol poiblí agus sa saol príobháideach;

- comhairle a thabhairt don dá lucht riaracháin, do chomhlachtaí poiblí agus do ghrúpaí eile

san earnáil phríobháideach agus dheonach;

- tionscadail tacaíochta a ghabháil de láimh, agus cúnamh deontais a thabhairt do chomhlachtaí agus do ghrúpaí de réir mar a mheasfar is gá;

- taighde, feachtais tionscnaimh, agus caidreamh poiblí agus caidreamh leis na meáin, a ghabháil de láimh;

- téarmaíocht agus foclóirí a fhorbairt; agus

- tacú le hoideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge agus le múineadh na Gaeilge.

Faoi reachtaíocht chéanna, caithfidh Foras na Gaeilge plean gnó bliana agus plean corparáideach trí bliana a aontú leis na Ranna Urraíochta agus leis an Ranna Airgeadais sa dá dhlínse roimh chead na Comhairle Aireachta Thuaidh Theas (CATT) a lorg. Sna pleananna sin, leagtar síos spriocanna agus táscairí feidhmíochta i ndáil le clár oibre Fhoras na Gaeilge agus déantar tuairisc ar an dul chun cinn ag gach cruinniú den CATT. Cé nach bhfuil an CATT ag feidhmiú i láthair na huair, tuigtear dom go bhfuil Foras na Gaeilge ag feidhmiú de réir na ndréachtphleananna cuí agus go ndéantar tuairisc ar an dul chun cinn ag cruinnithe monatóireachta leis na Ranna Urraíochta gach ráithe.

Tá eolas maidir le gníomhaíochtaí Fhoras na Gaeilge ar fáil ar shuíomh na heagraíochta ag www.forasnagaeilge.ie.

Foras na Gaeilge

688. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cá mhéad uair in aghaidh na bliana, le cúig bliana anuas, a chuaigh sise, nó an tAire Stáit, i dteagmháil le Foras na Gaeilge maidir le billí rialtais. [42156/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta, tá ról reáchtúil ag Foras na Gaeilge faoin Acht um Chomhaontú na Breataine-na hÉireann 1999 chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn ar bhonn uile-oileáin. I measc na bhfeidhmeanna sin, tá dualgas ar Fhoras na Gaeilge comhairle a chur ar fáil don lucht riaracháin mar aon le tacú le hoideachas trí mheán na Gaeilge agus le múineadh na Gaeilge

Sa chomhthéacs sin, bhí feidhmeannaigh mo Roinne i dteagmháil le Foras na Gaeilge maidir leis an mBille Oideachais (Iontráil Scoileanna) 2017 ar mhaithe le tuairimí tomhaiste a chur ar fáil don Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna ina leith.

Ar ndóigh, bíonn feidhmeannaigh mo Roinne i dteagmháil le Foras na Gaeilge i ndáil le ceisteanna ginearálta a bhaineann leis an Ghaeilge ar bhonn leanúnach.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

689. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta maidir leis an ngrúpa sinsearach d'oifigigh ardleibhéil ó Ranna cuí, a bhfuil cúraimí maoirseachta orthu i dtaobh an phlean gníomhaíochta don Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, ar tháinig sé le chéile go fóill agus, má tháinig, cá mhéad uair. [42158/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta leagtar amach sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022, a

foilsíodh i mí Meitheamh 2018, an cur chuige úr a bheidh i bhfeidhm maidir le monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fheidhmiú an Phlean. Glacaim leis mar sin, go bhfuil an Teachta ag tagairt don Choiste Stiúrtha a bhunófar mar chuid den cur chuige sin.

Maidir leis sin, tá áthas orm a chur in iúl don Teachta go bhfuil bunú an choiste sin idir lámha cheana féin ag mo Roinn i dtreo an chéad chruinniú den choiste a thionól go luath.

Arts Funding

690. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the supports available to young artists here to encourage their development and to encourage employment in arts and culture here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42219/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Under the Arts Act 2003, the Arts Council is the primary means through which the Government provides support for the arts sector including support for young artists. The Council's Strategy document entitled Making Great Art Work, which is being delivered through its Three-Year Plan 2017-2019, sets out its response to the changing nature of artistic practice and engagement with the arts including artists' support which is a defined category under its strategic investment plan. The Arts Council provides a range of schemes and initiatives for the development of young artists including the Next Generation artists award which aims to support promising artists across all disciplines at an early but pivotal stage in their career. Recipients can receive €20,000 and take part in a collective week-long residential programme in spring 2018. The Arts Council also funds bursary awards to artists. Bursaries support professional artists to develop their art practice and provide them with the time and resources to think, research, reflect and critically engage with their art.

In addition to this support my Department is leading the Creative Ireland Programme which is a cross-Government culture based programme designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. Participation and citizen engagement in creative activity is at the heart of the Programme. My Department provides funding of €2m across 31 local authorities to drive the Creative Ireland Programme at local level. The Department of Housing Planning and Local Government also provide funding of €1m towards this element of the Programme. This has led to increased opportunities for artists in communities across Ireland. In addition to this over €2m has been provided by my Department and the Department of Education and Skills to implement the measures set out in Creative Youth – the plan to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. One of the flagship projects is Creative Schools which will see 50 creative associates working with 150 schools across the country to develop to explore the potential impact of the arts and creativity on school life.

I recently announced funding of €1.2m for the National Creativity Fund 2018/2019 which will see 30 new creative partnerships developed with a range of organisations covering various types of projects including film visual art, architecture, heritage and others.

All of these measures support engagement and participation in creative activities and also support the development of young creatives and artists across the country.

Deer Culls

691. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there is considerable concern over the alleged mis-

management of native red deer in Killarney National Park and their future conservation status; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42364/18]

692. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the management plan that is in place and the way in which many sika and red deer are to be culled in the coming months by her Department's staff in Killarney National Park; the qualified staff available as conservation rangers with specific responsibility for the management of the herd and thereby reducing the impact on the park's wider ecosystem; if she will ensure that they are culled in a gradual manner with regard to animal safety; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42365/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 691 and 692 together.

I can assure the Deputy that the deer population in Killarney National Park is carefully monitored and managed by qualified staff in my Department. Every year, as part of this on-going management of deer populations within the Park, deer numbers may need to be reduced. Culls in Killarney are undertaken following consideration of a number of reports, population surveys and scientific advice. The cull in Killarney is carried out by trained, experienced and dedicated NPWS staff in a professional manner and is based upon scientific research. As part of this managed process, some 120 deer have been culled since January 2018. It is not possible to estimate how many more deer will be culled in 2018 due to weather and other factors. The following points should be noted:

- The 2018 cull was decided upon following consultation with NPWS professional staff, including scientific input as required.

- Shooting of deer in the Park is carried out only by NPWS professional staff members, who are fully trained, competent, expert and licenced in the use of firearms.

- The selection of deer shot is in accordance with normal deer management protocols. The deer are shot humanely by qualified NPWS marksmen.

- The remains are processed and disposed of in full compliance with the applicable Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine guidelines, and with the involvement, as appropriate, of officials from that Department.

There is a significant challenge in attempting to balance the demands of agriculture, forestry and conservation with the need to ensure that deer populations occupying the same land resources are managed at sustainable levels, and in a responsible and ethical manner. Ultimately, however, where deer species are increasing in range and numbers, depending on the annual count and instances of damage caused by deer to habitats (especially woodland), culls need to be carried out to ensure that deer populations do not reach levels that would have negative ecological consequences.

Deer Culls

693. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there is considerable concern regarding unnecessary vilification of wild deer which is not based on factual scientific data and that some wildlife crimes against wild deer have been committed and reported to An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42366/18]

694. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to make adjustments to the open season for wild deer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42367/18]

695. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will meet with an organisation (details supplied) to discuss the issue in relation to deer management and conservation here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42368/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 693, 694 and 695 together.

Wild deer in the State are protected under the Wildlife Acts. There is an annual open season during which deer can be legally shot under licence. The open season for deer operates generally from 1 September to the last day of February, depending on the species and gender of deer. I have no current plans to adjust this season.

My Department carries out localised annual deer counts on State lands such as National Parks and I am aware that deer species are increasing in range and numbers. Where appropriate, and depending on the annual count and instances of damage caused by deer to habitats, especially woodland, culls may be carried out to ensure that deer populations do not reach levels that would have negative ecological consequences.

Control of deer on private property is the responsibility of landowners who may apply to my Department for a permission under section 42 of the Wildlife Acts to cull deer where this is necessary outside the annual open seasons. These permissions offer a facility whereby a person can obtain a permit, on a case by case basis, to prevent serious damage caused by individual deer on specific lands. Permissions are only issued where there is evidence of such damage.

In relation to illegal deer hunting, officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department and an Garda Síochána have powers under the Wildlife Acts to bring prosecutions for illegal deer hunting. Some 19 prosecution cases have been taken by my Department for illegal deer hunting since 2010 to date which have included cases of hunting deer out of season, hunting at night and hunting on lands without landowner permission.

I have not received an invitation for a meeting from the organisation in question but I would consider any such invitation in the context of on my diary schedule. Finally, if the Deputy has evidence of suspected crimes against deer, my Department would be very grateful for that information.