

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 10, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 11 to 39, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 40 to 44, inclusive, answered orally.*

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

45. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the July provision for special needs children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26081/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's July Provision Grant Scheme provides funding for an extended school year for students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities and students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

The scheme was developed to reduce potential regression in learning associated with these specific categories of special education needs over the summer holidays.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which advises me on these matters published its Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism in July 2016 which included a review of the July Scheme.

The review found that in general parents value July provision because it provides day-time respite for families and a structured day for students. The NCSE review found a number of problems with the scheme as currently organised.

These include concerns that the scheme may be inequitable because it is not provided to all students with complex special educational needs.

The Council recommended that the relevant Government Departments consider how an equitable national day activity scheme could be developed for all students with complex special educational needs.

The proposed scheme would provide a structured, safe, social environment for all students with complex special educational needs.

My Department has convened an Implementation Group to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered.

There has been consultation with a number of other Departments and State agencies regarding the future direction of the July Education Programme.

It is expected that the Group will make recommendations shortly concerning a revised

scheme which would be implemented next year at the earliest. Before any changes are made, there will be consultations with stakeholders.

Following settlement which was reached last week regarding 2 High Court cases where children with special educational needs were seeking access to the July Provision Scheme, officials from my Department are meeting with Down Syndrome Ireland today. I look forward to meeting with the organisation myself shortly.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

46. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to meet the requirements and objections as set out in the school building programme by county throughout 2019; if he remains satisfied that the objective as set out can be met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26588/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Under Project Ireland 2040, the Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector nationally, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

In 2019, capital allocation for the school sector amounts to €622m which is an increase of €80m on the allocation for 2018.

It is anticipated that construction activity in 2018 and 2019 will deliver approx. 40,000 additional and replacement school places. This will facilitate the replacement of over 600 prefabs which is a key element of our prefab replacement programme. It will also facilitate the provision/modernisation of the sports facilities and science laboratories in these schools.

In April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement followed 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 new 16 classroom primary school (to be established in September 2019) in Ashbourne and a new special school in Dublin 15 were also announced in 2019 bringing the overall total to 44.

As the deputy is aware I announced details of the structural remediation programme last week which has now commenced.

My Department regularly updates the current position on all projects on the school building programme and this information is available in county format on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

*Questions Nos. 47 to 53, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

54. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the detail of the plans for a permanent site for Dún Laoghaire Educate Together; the timeframe for the site; the rationale for developing a temporary site for three years when a permanent site is due to be announced in Autumn 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26628/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can confirm to the Deputy

that my Department is committed to providing a permanent accommodation solution for the school in question.

There are multiple school site requirements in the South Dublin City area, including that for Dun Laoghaire ETNS. A number of viable site options have been identified and are being progressed with the relevant stakeholders, including relevant State bodies.

Once all critical information is to hand a determination regarding the optimal configuration of school sites will be made.

Officials in my Department are working to advance matters as quickly as possible with a view to providing better clarity on the permanent location for Dun Laoghaire ETNS by the end of the summer.

The timeframe for the subsequent delivery of the school's permanent accommodation cannot yet be confirmed as it will be subject to the statutory planning process and procurement, among other factors. It is intended to provide a new school building for Dun Laoghaire ETNS as part of my Department's Design and Build programme.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

55. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of interaction with the board of management and design team of a school (details supplied) with a view to agreeing the best approach for providing the increased capacity needed for the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26625/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The major building project for the project referred to by the Deputy is at Stage 1 of architectural planning which entails preliminary design of site and location suitability and initial sketch scheme.

A revised Stage 1 submission, including an up to date cost plan, was requested from the Design Team following an increase in the schedule of accommodation to cater for up to 1,200 pupils. That submission has been received and a review has been completed with comments for action issued to the School and its Design Team.

A further review has yielded a proposal for an increase in accommodation to a 1,300 pupil school, which has been accepted by the school. The Design Team has been instructed to provide an initial sketch scheme for a 1,300 pupil school, and submit to the Department for review.

Following this review my Department will then be in contact with the Board of Management of the school with regard to the progression of the project.

This project is included in my Department's Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

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

56. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the Enough is Enough - Every Voice Counts campaign; his views on whether the constitutional right to education is upheld in circumstances in which children with autism do not have access to school places; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26612/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am aware of the need for additional school places for children with special educational needs for school year commencing next September.

Enabling children with Special Educational Needs including Autism to receive an education appropriate to their needs is a priority for me and the Government.

We have significantly increased the availability of special placements for children with special educational needs as well as bringing more and more children into mainstream education.

The number of ASD special classes has more than doubled in the last 5 years from 511 in 2014 to 1,196 across the country now. Provision in special schools has increased from 6,848 placements in 2011 to 7,872 this year. The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish approx. 156 new ASD special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year to meet currently identified need.

The NCSE has formally advised me that there is insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15.

This letter is the formal activation of section 37A of the Education Act 1998 (as inserted by section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018). This contains a procedure through which the capacity of schools in an area can be tested and through which ultimately a Ministerial direction can be made requiring a school to make additional special education provision available.

I am not happy with the progress made so far and additional special classes are required. I am therefore appealing to the communities concerned to open their schools to receive children with special education needs into their schools next September.

The NCSE and my Department are available to advise and support school boards of management in making decisions to open new special classes.

### **Youthreach Programme Review**

57. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the recent report by the Economic and Social Research Institute on the evaluation of the national Youthreach programme; his plans to ensure early school leavers are tracked, followed up with and offered a place on a Youthreach or other suitable programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26591/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** As part of a series of reviews of Further Education and Training programmes, SOLAS commissioned an independent review of the National Youthreach Programme which was conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). The review report, launched on 17 June, provides a comprehensive evaluation of the National Youthreach Programme and, making use of both quantitative and qualitative data, demonstrates the positive impact of Youthreach for learners.

There are significant supports in place within the school system to support retention of students to the end of post-primary. This includes the comprehensive package of measures delivered through DEIS and the various elements of the School Completion programme managed by Tusla. There are also formal statutory mechanisms for follow up by Tusla in respect of students under the age of 16. School retention rates been steadily improving and 91% of learners now

complete senior cycle.

However, there is no formal mechanism in place to refer early school leavers over the age of 16 into second chance education. The evaluation noted that the referral process to Youthreach was often through informal networks and, although centres typically had good engagement with schools and services, steps should be taken to ensure that all early school leavers who are interested in Youthreach have the opportunity to avail of it. My Department will be engaging with SOLAS and other partners on the implementation of this recommendation.

### **Counselling Services Provision**

58. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the recent survey indicating that record numbers of third level students are seeking counselling for mental health problems; if the number of counsellors per student is low compared to the recommended ratio agreed by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26552/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Student services and associated activities are an integral part of the whole student experience at third level. Student services support each individual student to achieve his/her intellectual, cultural and social potential while supporting and complementing the formal academic programme. Student services can fall under a number of headings, particularly ‘Welfare and Guidance’ which includes counselling services, health promotion, careers service, multi-faith, racial and ethnic cultural support.

In relation to the provision of services within the institutions, the position is that my Department’s provides recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority for direct disbursement to its designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to these institutions, and the internal disbursement of this funding, including the funding of student services, is a matter for the individual institution.

The National Youth Mental Health Task Force Report, 2017 made a number of recommendations in this area and highlighted the good practice and innovative initiatives aimed at supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties in many institutions, as outlined in the AHEAD report *Mental Health Matters*. The Department of Health is developing a National Healthy Campus Framework whose aims include to support and recognise the work of institutions in improving the health and wellbeing of campus communities, and to generate and disseminate knowledge for promoting health and wellbeing on campus. In addition a working group has been convened by the Higher Education Authority to progress actions under the Connecting for Life (CfL) strategy, and the first meeting of the group was in December 2018. The group includes representatives from my Department, higher education institutions, student counsellors, and USI.

### **Back to School Costs**

59. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reduce back to school costs for the 2019-20 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26615/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I strongly support any measures that can be put in place to reduce back to school costs for parents.

It is important that we work to make life easier for families and this is a priority for the Taoiseach.

In the Action Plan for Education, I have committed to the restoration of capitation payments. My Department has commenced the process of restoring capitation this year with a 5% increase in capitation funding that will apply from the start of the 2019/2020 school year.

As the Deputy may be aware, my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty T.D., has recently announced an increase to the back to school allowance for the 2019/2020 school, bringing the total budget provision for the scheme to over €56 million this year.

I also want to give parents a strong voice in ensuring costs are always kept to a minimum. My Department published a Circular in 2017 which details the measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs. In addition, work on the drafting of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 is close to being finalised and I intend to seek Government approval shortly for its publication. Under the Bill, each school will be required to prepare, publish and implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national guidelines to be published by the Minister after consultation with the education partners. The charter legislation will include requirements for consultation and engagement with parents and students on matters relating to school life and will include provision for full transparency in relation to costs and the use of any voluntary contributions sought by schools.

I believe that these actions will also significantly strengthen the focus on reducing back to school costs for parents.

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

60. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a special school (details supplied) can expect to have a permanent site; his views on whether it is appropriate for a school that provides for children on the autism spectrum will be beside a building site for the whole of autumn 2019 and its outdoor space will be inaccessible due to the lack of a permanent site for both the school and Dún Laoghaire Educate Together. [26629/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school referred to by the Deputy is currently located in temporary accommodation and arrangements are in train to improve this accommodation. The Consultant which the school has appointed for this purpose is currently preparing the material required to lodge an application for planning permission with the local authority. This accommodation, when installed, will replace the school's existing accommodation which will be removed from the site.

The new prefab accommodation will meet the short term needs of the school. The medium to longer term permanent accommodation needs will be kept under review and considered in the context of the rollout of the National Development Plan.

My Department is also committed to providing a permanent accommodation solution for Dún Laoghaire Educate Together National School.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

61. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the project brief for a school redevelopment project at a school (details supplied); the most

recent contacts with the school patron in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26630/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that a project for the school in question is included in my Department's school building programme to be delivered under the National Development Plan (NDP).

My Department has undertaken a site visit to the school as part of the preparatory work associated with progressing the project. The accommodation brief for the project is currently being finalised and this process is expected to be completed shortly. My Department has been liaising with the Patron of the school in relation to the proposed project and will be in further contact when the accommodation brief has been finalised. The project will be devolved to the Patron for delivery.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

62. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress of the delivery of a permanent home for a school (details supplied) and the delivery of temporary accommodation for the coming school year. [26427/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under the Department's Design & Build Programme. The brief for this project is to provide a 16 classroom primary school with a two classroom special needs unit.

A planning application for the permanent accommodation for the school was lodged in January 2019. Additional information sought by the local authority was provided and a notification of decision to grant planning permission was received on 24th May 2019. The final grant of planning permission will enable the project to proceed to tender after the tender documentation is finalised.

Final Grant of Planning Permission for the additional temporary accommodation required for September 2019 was received from Dublin City Council on 27 May 2019. The 7 Day Commencement Notice has been lodged with Dublin City Council, and the Contractor is expected to start on site Monday 8th July 2019.

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

63. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that children are being taught in schools without the necessary supports needed due to delays in assessments for children attending school who have developmental issues and may require specialised support; the efforts being taken to clear the backlog; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26082/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can inform the Deputy that in 2017 my Department introduced a new model to support pupils with special educational needs. This means schools are now front-loaded with additional teachers to enable them to respond to pupil needs, rather than requiring an assessment to allow them to apply for such additional resource. This reduces the administrative burden on schools as schools will no longer have to complete an application process annually and apply for newly enrolled pupils who require additional teaching support. Children who need support can have that support provided immediately

rather than having to wait for a diagnosis.

Additionally some pupils with developmental issues may require an assessment of need, which is provided by the HSE services.

My Department's National Educational Psychological Service delivers a tiered, consultative model of service. Each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and intervention for pupils with difficulties including those with developmental delay. Teachers consult with their NEPS psychologist for assistance should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts, in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become directly involved with an individual child for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological support. I would advise that parents of children in schools for whom concerns exist in relation to developmental delay should, in the first instance, raise the matter with the principal of the relevant school with a view to involving the assigned NEPS psychologist in the issue, where appropriate.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

64. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a development at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26458/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that this project has been devolved to Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB) for delivery.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that DETB has appointed a new architect to complete the delivery of the extension project. It will now work with the existing design team to finalise the Stage 2A process prior to lodging planning permission, which is still expected to take place in September/October.

I can also inform the Deputy that, in the meantime, approval has been given by my Department to carry out a series of works that will take place over this coming Summer. These works will include surveys of the existing main building to investigate issues with it, refurbishment works on the existing temporary accommodation on site, and works to address disabled access issues.

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

65. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will meet parents (details supplied) regarding ASD units in their area. [26576/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am aware of the need for additional school places for children with special educational needs for the school year commencing next September.

Enabling children with Special Educational Needs including Autism to receive an education appropriate to their needs is a priority for me and the Government.

We have significantly increased the availability of special placements for children with special educational needs as well as bringing more and more children into mainstream education.

The number of ASD special classes has more than doubled in the last 5 years from 511 in 2014 to 1,196 across the country now. Provision in special schools has increased from 6,848 placements in 2011 to 7,872 this year. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has informed my Department that they intend to establish approx. 156 new ASD special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year to meet currently identified need.

The NCSE has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). In this regard, SENOs meet schools and parents.

This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned.

The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

Individual school boards of management are responsible for the establishment of special classes. It is open to any school to make application to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to establish a special class.

When the NCSE sanction a special class in a school, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class and/or to construct additional accommodation.

Similarly, where special schools wish to expand provision, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to accommodate additional placements.

The new power to compel schools to make additional special education provision available has yet to be invoked.

While the NCSE and the Department continue to encourage stakeholders to open special classes, the process under the admissions legislation will continue and may lead to interaction with education providers entering a more formal process.

The NCSE is currently undertaking Policy Advice on Education Provision in Special Classes and Special Schools to examine whether placement in specialist settings brings about improved educational outcomes and experiences, relative to their ability, for students with special educational needs. This Policy Advice is to be completed and a report submitted to the Minister no later than June 2020.

Parents who need assistance/advice or who are experiencing difficulties in locating a specialised placement, should contact their local SENO. All local SENO the contact details are available on the NCSE website at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them from September is a key priority for this Government.

66. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he remains satisfied regarding the availability on an ongoing basis of sufficiently qualified young persons with the skill sets sufficient to meet the demands of the modern workplace, academically and technically; the degree to which corrective steps are needed to address deficiencies in this vital area in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26589/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The tertiary education system has a number of key strategies in place at all levels to ensure we meet existing and future skills demands in the workplace and equip young people and the working population more generally with the skills and capacity to meet these demands, to enhance the level of human capital in Ireland and provide a solid basis for long-term economic sustainability and rising living standards. These strategies include, in particular, the National Skills Strategy 2025 and the Action Plan for Education 2016-2019.

According to an OECD 2017 Report, the employment prospects and expected financial benefits from completing tertiary education in Ireland are higher than in most other European countries, indicating that the education system provides skills that are relevant to the labour market. This finding is supported by the analysis contained in the recent independent impact assessment of Irish universities carried out by Indecon and commissioned by the Irish Universities Association.

In relation to graduate supply, in 2017 there were a total of 48,931 graduates from the Higher Education system. Of this number, a significant proportion were in key skills areas, 2,765 were in ICT, 5,729 in Engineering Manufacturing and Construction and 4,200 in Science and Maths.

The National Employer Survey completed in Q2 2018, has shown that employers are very satisfied with graduate recruits across a range of personal and workplace attributes, including computer and technical literacy, working effectively with others and numeracy/processing numerical data. Overall satisfaction with higher education graduates was 86% and for further education and training graduates overall satisfaction was 84%. The satisfaction with the computer and technology literacy of graduates is very high (88% for Higher Education, 83% for Further Education and Training).

Future Jobs Ireland, which was launched in March 2019 is a new whole-of Government plan to secure Ireland's economic success. A key element of Future Jobs Ireland is to support business, invest in the development of people and to ensure our education and training system is responsive to enterprise needs.

Technology Skills 2022: Ireland's Third ICT Skills Action Plan which is a collaborative effort by Government, the higher and further education and training system and industry to meet Ireland's high level ICT skills needs was recently published. The plan has devised measures that will boost the supply of ICT graduates to meet the ambitious level of demand forecast for the coming years. By 2022, the interventions outlined in this plan aim to deliver up to an additional 5,000 graduates per annum through indigenous supply, with the remainder serviced by inward migration.

In addition, I recently launched the Report of the independent Review of Career Guidance Tools and Information carried out by Indecon International Consultants. The report which contains 18 far reaching recommendations under four themes: Reforms to Governance and Delivery Arrangements, Improvement in Career Guidance Tools and Career Information, Enhancement of Enterprise Engagement and Promotion of Inclusion, will ensure that my Department is providing high quality, relevant career guidance information to students from post-primary level up to further and higher education. A Departmental internal taskforce has been established to examine each of the recommendations and develop a prioritised implementation plan.

I am satisfied that these and other important elements of my Departments strategies, developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, will help ensure that we are well prepared to meet our skills needs on an ongoing basis and to support the long-term success of our economy.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

67. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress being made for a new school building for a school (details supplied). [26456/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at Stage 1 of architectural planning which entails preliminary design of site and location suitability and initial sketch scheme.

A revised Stage 1 submission, including an up to date cost plan, was requested from the Design Team following an increase in the schedule of accommodation to cater for up to 1,200 pupils. That submission has been received and a review has been completed with comments for action issued to the School and its Design Team.

A further review has yielded a proposal for an increase in accommodation to a 1,300 pupil school, which has been accepted by the school. The Design Team has been instructed to provide an initial sketch scheme for a 1,300 pupil school, and submit to the Department for review. Professional fees have been agreed with the Design Team members for this additional task.

Following this review my Department will then be in contact with the Board of Management of the school with regard to the progression of the project.

This project is included in my Department’s Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

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

68. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the number of language units is being decreased rather than increased (details supplied); the policy in place regarding the continuation of language units; his plans for a new type of provision replacing the current model; the level of provision of education services for children with a diagnosis of developmental language disorder; his views on whether it is meeting the demand for services; the policy in place for provision of language devices to children who need a device in order to communicate and attend a school setting; the application process for parents with children that need such language devices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26619/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** 63 Specific Speech and Language Disorder special classes in mainstream primary schools will be provided for the 2019/20 school year. This compares to 60 such special classes in 2011/12. In the period 2011 to 2019, the number of SSLD special classes has ranged from 60 - 65, depending on need.

My Department provides an extensive range of supports for pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD). This includes provision for the establishment of special classes for pupils with SSLD in primary schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including applications to establish special class-

es for SSLD. Applications meeting the criteria for establishment are approved by the NCSE.

The NCSE continues to monitor and review the requirement for special class places in particular areas and has capacity to establish such new classes or retain current classes where necessary, subject to the willingness of schools to open/retain classes. The NCSE welcomes expressions of interest from schools in opening special classes to meet the demand for special class provision. In deciding on the location of a special class SENOs take into account both the present and the future potential need for special class provision, and they must also be satisfied that the special class is sustainable and appropriately located. SENOs liaise with relevant professionals in their area to arrive at an informed decision.

The opening and retention of a Speech and Language class is, however, contingent on the HSE being in a position to provide Speech and Language therapy to the students in the class. The availability and provision of speech and language therapy is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

My Department has recently set up a working group to consider the criteria for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Specific Speech and Language Therapy (SSLD). The aim of the working group is twofold:

- To review the current definition of SLD and SSLD, which continues to be used as a criteria for entry to Reading schools, special SLD classes, for Assistive Technology and other supports for students with SLD

- To develop a new definition/criteria for SLD and SSLD and for entry to special Reading Schools and special SLD and SSLD classes.

NCSE SENOs also make recommendations to my Department where assistive technology is required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in making recommendations for support, which is set out in my Department's Circular 0010/2013.

In order to qualify for equipment under the assistive technology scheme, a student must have been diagnosed with a physical or communicative disability and must also have a recommendation in a professional assessment that the equipment is essential in order to allow the student to access the curriculum. It must also be clear that the existing I.T. equipment in the school is insufficient to meet the child's needs.

Communication devices which are not specific educational interventions, or equipment specifically required as essential for school educational access, and which have a general application outside of school, are normally provided for children with disabilities by the Health Service Executive (HSE) through the HSE Aids and Appliances scheme are not provided for under this scheme.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

69. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reverse the changes introduced in the pupil-teacher ratio for two, three and four-teacher schools in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26546/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am holding a symposium tomorrow to engage with people and organisations who work in and with small schools. I am interested to listen to the views of the experts, but more importantly to engage with ideas and proposals on how to support and sustain small schools as a key component of the primary edu-

cation system.

Budget 2012 increased the appointment and retention ratios for small schools, i.e. schools with four classroom teachers or fewer.

Since 2015, measures have been introduced to improve the staffing of these schools which has seen improvements in the appointment and retention thresholds for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th classroom teacher and more favourable enrolment thresholds for one teacher schools situated 8km or more from the nearest school of the same type of patronage and/or language of instruction.

Budget 2017 announced two adjustments in relation to one teacher schools. Additional supports were introduced for primary schools on the islands. In relation to single teacher schools generally with an enrolment of 15 or more pupils the school can apply to the staffing appeal board for a second post where the single teacher has children across 6 or more class groups.

Small schools have also benefitted from the 1 point improvement to the primary staffing schedule for all schools implemented in 2016 and again in 2018. For the current school year, the staffing schedule at Primary level operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher (26:1) which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

In addition, the staffing process includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria, including a specific appeal measure for small schools, to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

Any additional improvement in the pupil teacher ratio would have to be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process, alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

70. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the site acquisition to accommodate a school (details supplied); the timeline of works to ensure that the school campus is completed as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26459/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the provision of new accommodation for the schools in question is included in my Department's capital programme. The project to provide this school accommodation requires the acquisition of a suitable site and this has proved to be extremely challenging to date, despite the best efforts of my Department and of officials in Donegal County Council who are assisting under the Memorandum of Understanding.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department is doing its utmost to deliver a solution for the schools at the earliest possible date and officials in both my Department and Donegal County Council are actively engaged in this process.

### **School Staff**

71. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of meetings with representatives of school secretaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26610/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I recognise the very important work done by school secretaries, and indeed by other support staff, in the running of our schools and I am grateful to them for the contribution they make to our education system. I have spoken to a number of school secretaries about their employment conditions and understand the issues they have raised.

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

These schemes have been superseded by the more extensive capitration grant schemes. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes. It is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs. Where a school uses the grant funding for caretaking or secretarial purposes, any staff taken on to support those functions are employees of individual schools. Specific responsibility for the pay and conditions rests with the school.

On foot of a Chairman's Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries and caretakers, including through an independent arbitration process in 2015. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for staff and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 be phased in over that period. This arbitration agreement covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

The arbitration agreement was designed to be of greatest benefit to lower-paid secretaries and caretakers. For example, a Secretary or Caretaker who was paid the then minimum wage of €8.65 per hour in 2015 prior to the arbitration has from 1 January 2019, been paid €13 per hour which is a 50% increase in that individual's hourly pay.

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim.

This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff which lasts until December 2019. The Department will seek to establish the full current cost of the trade union's claim. This is standard practice.

FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

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

72. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the exclusion of

children with Down's syndrome from the July provision will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22695/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's July Provision Grant Scheme provides funding for an extended school year for students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities and students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

The scheme was developed to reduce potential regression in learning associated with these specific categories of special education needs over the summer holidays.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which advises me on these matters published its Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism in July 2016 which included a review of the July Scheme.

The review found that in general parents value July provision because it provides day-time respite for families and a structured day for students. The NCSE review found a number of problems with the scheme as currently organised.

These include concerns that the scheme may be inequitable because it is not provided to all students with complex special educational needs.

The Council recommended that the relevant Government Departments consider how an equitable national day activity scheme could be developed for all students with complex special educational needs.

The proposed scheme would provide a structured, safe, social environment for all students with complex special educational needs which might include some children with Down syndrome.

My Department has convened an Implementation Group to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered.

There has been consultation with a number of other Departments and State agencies regarding the future direction of the July Education Programme.

It is expected that the Group will make recommendations shortly concerning a revised scheme which would be implemented next year at the earliest. Before any changes are made, there will be consultations with stakeholders.

Officials from my Department are due to meet with Down Syndrome Ireland this week and I look forward to meeting them in the weeks to come.

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

73. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, further to the enactment of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, he has instructed schools to make additional provision for children with special needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26584/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 was passed by the Oireachtas on 4th July 2018, and was signed into law by the President on the 18th July 2018.

The Act will create a more parent-friendly, equitable and consistent approach to how school

admissions policy should operate for schools.

The first stage of commencement on 3rd October 2018 brought a number of sections of the Act into operation including the banning of admission fees and the amendment of the Equal Status Act 2000 to remove, in the case of recognised denominational primary schools, the existing provision that permits such schools to use religion as a selection criterion in school admissions. Under this provision, there will be a protection to ensure that a child of a minority faith, can still access a school of their faith or a similar faith.

Section 8 of the Act, which commenced on the 3rd of December 2018, also provides the Minister with a power, after a process of consultation with the 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. A number of sections of the Act were commenced in 2018.

Whereas most children, including children with special educational needs, will be able to be enrolled in the school or school placement of their choice there are circumstances where it may be difficult for parents to obtain the school or special class placement of their choice.

The Government is spending nearly one euro in every five of the education budget on special education – about €1.9 billion. We have significantly increased the availability of special classes for children with special educational needs as well as bringing more and more children into mainstream education.

Notwithstanding the extent of this additional investment, there are some parts of the country where increases in population and other issues have led to pressure on school places for children with special needs, it is vital that all children, including those with special educational needs, can access an appropriate and sustainable placement.

I have been assured that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), an independent agency of the Department, is actively engaging with schools, patron bodies, parents, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services for children with special educational needs to try to ensure that each child has a school placement appropriate to their needs for the 2019/20 school year.

As Minister, my objective is for children, including children with special educational needs, to access education in as inclusive a setting as possible where they will experience a welcoming school environment.

Following the commencement of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, a power has been created to allow me to compel a school to make additional provision for special education.

The power has yet to be invoked and I believe it should only be used as a measure of last resort.

As Minister, I hope that schools, patrons and boards of managements can be encouraged to work together with the NCSE to meet demand in the best interests of the children concerned.

Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them from September is a key priority for me and my Department.

## **School Transport**

74. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address school transport issues, particularly in counties Carlow and Kilkenny, regarding the nearest school rule; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26616/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time will be accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available on existing services after eligible children have been accommodated.

Families wishing to avail of transport on a concessionary basis should, having completed the online application process, liaise with their local Bus Éireann office regarding the availability of such services for the 2019/20 school year.

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

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

75. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason in the recent SNA allocation announcement of May 2019 that SNA allocations to schools were cut rather than increased in schools in which both teachers and principals were recommending and requesting an increase; the number of schools nationally that experienced a decrease in the number of SNAs and SNA hours granted for the 2019-20 school year; the justifications given in cases in which a reduction was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26618/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I announced on 27th May that 792 additional SNA posts will be allocated to schools for the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, with up to 130 additional posts expected to be allocated by December 2019.

By the end of this year, there will be up to 15,950 SNAs working in our schools, an increase of over 51% since 2011.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

tion.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed.

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

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

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

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

The NCSE publish the allocations for individual schools for each school year and this information is available on their website, [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### Schools Site Acquisitions

76. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there has been progress on the signing of a contract for the site for the new school building for a school (details supplied); and the progress in tendering. [26457/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The major building project for this school is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b – Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been obtained.

Following a legal challenge, authorisation to re-commence the pre-qualification process issued to the Design Team and school. This advert has recently closed and the Design Team is currently in the process of compiling a shortlist of contractors for tender stage.

When the pre-qualification process for the main contract and reserved specialists contracts is complete, the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

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

Regarding the site acquisition, legal representatives for both vendor and purchaser are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. There has been progress on foot of close engagement between both parties.

The present position is that the draft Contract for Sale, (incorporating a number of amendments) has been recently referred for consideration to the vendor's legal representatives. When the vendor's legal representatives have had an opportunity to consider all the points, a meeting of both parties is being proposed in order to finalise matters.

### **Teacher Supply**

77. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the policies he is proposing to bring home the 6,000 Irish teachers working abroad, with significant numbers in the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar; and the expected outcome of his visit to the United Arab Emirates. [26596/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Management bodies and schools have, in recent years, reported difficulties in recruiting teachers. At primary level this relates mainly to the recruitment of substitute teachers and at post primary to the recruitment of teachers of particular subjects such as STEM, modern foreign languages, Irish and Home Economics.

In response to these difficulties, the Teacher Supply Steering Group, which is chaired by the Secretary General of my Department, was established in March 2018.

The Steering Group is considering the issues that relate to teacher supply under four policy headings: initial teacher education policy, provision, funding and support; data/research requirements; policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher mobility/supply; and promotion of the teaching profession.

The Steering Group oversees the implementation of the Action Plan for Teacher Supply, which I published in November 2018. Several of the actions are aimed at supporting Irish teachers who are considering returning to Ireland to take up teaching positions, including:

- The commencement of a new teacher sharing scheme for post-primary schools in the 2019/20 school year, as set out in my Department's Circular 0015/2019. This scheme will support young teachers in obtaining full time employment and enhance curricular choices in post primary schools.

- An online teacher recruitment portal is being developed which will facilitate the recruitment of short term substitute teachers by primary and post primary schools. It is intended that the portal will be in place for the coming school year.

- The use of digital technology by schools to facilitate interviewing applicants, for teaching posts, is also being explored, particularly in the case of qualified applicants resident outside the State.

- The Teaching Council is developing more streamlined processes for the registration of teachers, including those originally from Ireland, who qualified in jurisdictions outside the State.

- In December 2018, a national campaign to promote the teaching profession was launched across a number of platforms, including radio and digital media, supported by a new dedicated webpage [www.gov.ie/teachingtransforms](http://www.gov.ie/teachingtransforms). This website provides useful information about teaching as a career in Ireland.

The Deputy is referring also to my recent Education Trade Mission to the UAE.

While in the UAE, I engaged with 450 Irish teachers at two meetings in Abu Dhabi and

Dubai. These meetings gave me the opportunity to hear the challenges facing these teachers and also gave them a chance to offer practical solutions to some issues.

The meetings allowed me in my role as Minister to meet with these teachers and discuss first hand with them the challenges they face in returning to Ireland and to consider ways that we can work together, to support them, when and if they decide to return to work in Ireland.

To facilitate this, teachers volunteered to form a group to liaise on the identified issues with the embassy and my Department. Arrangements are being made for the first meeting of this group in the Autumn.

I want to thank the Irish ambassador and his staff in the Embassy, the local Irish groups, including the GAA, and the Irish living in the UAE for the work they did to make this visit a success.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

78. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress being made on four school projects (details supplied) in County Donegal; the timeline for the delivery of the school buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26349/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): St Eunan's College, Letterkenny**

This major building project is included on my Department's ADAPT Programme. My Department is currently in the process of finalising the appointment of a Project Manager for this Programme. The process to appoint a Design Team for this project has also recently commenced and is underway.

#### **Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maistri**

This major building project is currently at Stage 2a (Developed Design). At this stage the preferred option design is developed to a stage where the project is fully cost planned and can be prepared to lodge for statutory approvals.

#### **Little Angel's Special School**

The major building project for Little Angels is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b (Detailed Design). The Stage 2(b) submission has been reviewed by my Department and comments have issued to the school and its' Design Team.

The Design Team is currently working on a submission to my Department outlining the steps required to achieve compliance with Part L of the Building Regulations 2017 (NZEB "Near Zero Energy Building").

#### **Scoil Mhuire, Stranorlar**

This major building project is also at Stage 2b. The pre-qualification process to select a shortlist of contractors for tender stage has been completed. The Design Team is currently completing work on its NZEB submission.

When the Design Team's revised NZEB submission has been considered, my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management at that time with regard to the further progression of the project.

## Teachers' Remuneration

79. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to return to the principle that teachers would start at point three of their pay scale instead of the first point; his plans to reinstate additional payments to teachers with masters qualifications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26594/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The public service agreements have allowed a programme of pay restoration for public servants to start. The starting salary for a new entrant teacher in 2012 was €30,702. As a result of the programme of pay restoration, the starting salary of a teacher is now €36,318 and from 1 October 2020 onwards will be €37,692.

Section 11 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 provides that “the Minister [for Public Expenditure and Reform] shall, within three months of the passing of this Act, prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the cost of and a plan in dealing with pay equalisation for new entrants to the public service.”

The report laid before the Oireachtas on foot of this provision by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform assesses the cost of a further change which would provide a two scale point adjustment to new entrants recruited since 2011. The total cost of such an adjustment across the public sector is of the order of €200 million, of which Education accounts for €83 million. The report also acknowledges that, during the financial crisis, there were policy changes which affected remuneration in different occupations across the public sector (including education).

The matter of new entrant pay is a cross sectoral issue, not just an issue for the education sector alone. The Government supports the gradual, negotiated repeal of the FEMPI legislation, having due regard to the priority to improve public services and in recognition of the essential role played by public servants.

On 24 September 2018, an agreement was reached between the Government and the public services committee of ICTU in respect of new entrant pay.

This agreement will benefit 16,000 teachers and nearly 5,000 SNAs within the education sector. The deal provides for a series of incremental jumps for new entrants.

I am aware that the teacher unions have outstanding issues of concern following the September 2018 agreement. These outstanding matters will be given full consideration. This will happen either in the context of any pay review mechanism agreed by the parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement, or in the context of the next round of pay talks. The positions of each of the parties on these matters must be given due regard in endeavouring to reach a mutually agreed resolution.

The matter of the H. Dip Allowance is the basis of a claim under the TCC. Discussions are taking place under the auspices of the TCC, to which the Department, school management and teacher unions are all party. As the proceedings of the TCC are confidential, it would not be appropriate for me to make any further comment.

The current series of restorative measures for new entrants have been achieved through continued engagement and collective bargaining between the Government and the public service unions and shows the benefits that such engagement can bring.

## Special Educational Needs Data

80. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of additional school places secured in existing schools in Dublin 15 for the provision of autism-specific education for the academic year 2019-20; if existing schools cannot provide the necessary number of places, his plans to ensure children do not go without a school place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26590/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am aware of the need for increased specialist education provision in the Dublin area.

The Government is spending nearly one euro in every five of the education budget on special education – about €1.9 billion in 2019. We have significantly increased the availability of special placements for children with special educational needs as well as bringing more and more children into mainstream education.

Notwithstanding the extent of this investment, issues remain. There are some parts of the country where increases in population and other issues have led to shortages in capacity in the school system.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) wrote to me on 18th April pursuant to provisions now contained in the Education Act through which ultimately a Ministerial direction can be made requiring a school to make additional special education provision available.

The NCSE identified that provision is required for 40 special school places for students with complex needs, including ASD, in Dublin 15.

As existing special schools could not provide the necessary number of places within the timescale, it is necessary to establish a start-up special school in the area.

Work is well advanced on the establishment of a new special school in the Dublin 15 area.

The NCSE and my Department are actively engaging with education service providers in order to encourage them to address the shortage of places. The NCSE will keep in regular contact with the parents of the children concerned to advise them of progress and identify placements as they become available.

The new power to compel schools to make additional special education provision available has yet to be invoked. While the NCSE and the Department continue to encourage stakeholders to open special classes, the process under the admissions legislation will continue and may lead to interaction with education providers entering a more formal process.

In short, ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them from September is a key priority for this Government.

Parents/guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement should contact their local SENO who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child. Contact details are available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **Institutes of Technology**

81. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the future for the GMIT Castlebar campus in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26281/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Firstly, I would like to reit-

erate the Government's commitment to the future sustainability of the Castlebar Campus of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) which was the motivation for establishing the Working Group so as to develop a plan to safeguard the future of the campus.

The Report of the Working Group was published in December 2017. It provides a wide-ranging assessment of the context within which the campus is currently operating and outlines a proposed vision for the future of the Mayo Campus, as well as a strategic and comprehensive plan to address the financial and sustainability issues which have been experienced by the GMIT Mayo Campus.

As the Deputy is aware, the plan includes 33 recommendations, the majority of which are for GMIT to implement. A sub-committee has been established to oversee and monitor the implementation of the working group report. My Department has prioritised the recommendations that relate specifically to the Department. This includes the allocation last year of €750,000 per annum for a period of 5 years to assist the sustainability of the campus. The provision of this additional funding is contingent on GMIT continuing to make progress on implementing the recommendations of the review which is subject to ongoing review by the HEA. My Department also provided the capital funding for the replacement of the roof of the GMIT campus which was in need of repair.

My Department and the HEA are continuing to work closely with GMIT to ensure that all of the recommendations of the report are progressed. The working group report acknowledged the complexities and the necessary implementation time required for a number of the recommendations.

I would like to again assure the Deputy that my Department and the HEA will continue to work with GMIT on ensuring that the recommendations of the Working Group are implemented as soon as possible, and with appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders, to ensure the future sustainability of the Castlebar campus.

### **Insurance Costs**

82. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will report on special schools that have raised the issue of insurance costs; the number of schools that have contacted his Department; the advance capitation released to date; the increased insurance costs reported by schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26609/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The work done by the 124 special schools is invaluable. Since my appointment as Minister I have had the opportunity to visit a number of these schools and see first hand the work they do.

My Department is aware of issues relating to very significant increases in insurance costs in some special schools, through correspondence received from some special schools, through discussions with the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) and media reports.

These increases appear due, in some instances, to an annual increase in insurance costs generally and, in some cases, an increase in claims against special schools.

Securing and maintaining adequate and appropriate insurance cover is a matter for the managerial authority of each school.

My Department is working as a matter of urgency with NABMSE and relevant Government

departments, including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the State Claims Agency, to seek a resolution to the issue of increased insurance costs in special schools.

A number of options have been identified to address the issue. These include the development of a group insurance scheme for special schools. NABMSE met with boards and patrons on 6th June to discuss the matter and options available. An official from my Department attended this meeting.

At this stage, the Group Scheme proposal appears to be the most viable. The importance of all schools signing up for such a scheme was emphasised at the recent meeting and all school representatives who were in attendance, were in favour of exploring the Group Scheme option.

15 special schools have contacted my Department directly, who are experiencing difficulty in paying insurance premiums currently. These schools report increases in insurance of between 30% to over 700% in the last 2 years. My Department has advanced school capitation payments on an exceptional basis to 2 special schools to date, amounting to € 36,860. My Department is currently engaging with the other schools in this regard.

It is not sustainable however for my Department to continue to advance capitation payments as a way of meeting vastly increased insurance premiums.

I know that this is a cause of concern to schools as well and it is my hope that a speedy and cost effective resolution can be secured for impacted special schools.

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

83. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that following the review by the National Council for Special Education of special needs assistants that schools in an area (details supplied) have lost approximately 12 SNAs despite a promise by the previous Minister for Education and Skills that each child requiring a SNA will have access to one; his views on the negative impact the loss of the SNAs will have on children with special needs and take steps to reverse same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26502/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I announced on 27th May that 792 additional SNA posts will be allocated to schools for the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, with up to 130 additional posts expected to be allocated by December 2019.

By the end of this year, there will be up to 15,950 SNAs working in our schools, an increase of over 51% since 2011.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

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

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

the pupils from its current level of resources.

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

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

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

84. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reduce primary school class sizes; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Ireland currently has the largest class sizes in the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26224/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. 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 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains extensive data in relation to our schools including pupil teacher ratios and teacher numbers. 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.

### **Education Funding**

85. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on OECD figures that indicate investment in education here as a percentage of national wealth is at the

bottom end of the league table for wealthy countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26593/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Government has significantly increased investment in education and training. My Department's gross expenditure allocation in 2019 will be nearly €10.8 billion, the highest amount ever allocated to education and training. Since 2016, the Department's allocation has increased by around €1.7 billion, an increase of some 18.7%.

It is also important to note that GDP, which is usually used as the measure of national wealth in international comparisons, can give a misleading picture of Ireland's relative position compared to other States, given that globalisation effects disproportionately impact the measurement of the size of the Irish economy.

### **School Accommodation**

86. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the guidelines for new school builds; if new school build plans must include an autism spectrum condition class in the building being adhered to; the way in which the stipulation is being monitored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26617/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In the case of all new schools, it is general practice to include a Special Education Needs Base (SEN Base) in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required. Typically, a two classroom SEN Base is provided in new primary schools and a two or four classroom SEN Base is provided in new post primary schools.

The Government is spending nearly one euro in every five of the education budget on special education – about €1.9 billion in 2019. We have significantly increased the availability of special placements for children with special educational needs as well as bringing more and more children into mainstream education.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE). This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

When the NCSE sanction a special class in a school, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class and/or to construct additional accommodation. Similarly, where special schools wish to expand provision, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to accommodate additional placements.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish over 167 new special

classes nationally for 2019/20 school year of which 156 will be new ASD special classes.

Notwithstanding the extent of this investment, issues remain. There are some parts of the country where increases in population and other issues have led to shortages in capacity in the school system.

The NCSE and my Department are actively engaging with education service providers in order to encourage them to address the shortage of places. The NCSE will keep in regular contact with the Parents of the children concerned to advise them of progress and identify placements as they become available.

The new power to compel schools to make additional special education provision available has yet to be invoked. While the NCSE and the Department continue to encourage stakeholders to open special classes, the process under the admissions legislation will continue and may lead to interaction with education providers entering a more formal process.

In short, ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them from September is a key priority for this Government.

### **DEIS Eligibility**

87. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 70 of 22 January 2019, the further analysis being undertaken of other variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage in the context of resource allocation; the person or body undertaking the analysis; if the analysis has been completed; if not, when it will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26614/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As previously advised, my Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need, including the examination of variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage. All schools at both Primary and Post Primary are being assessed using the new identification model.

This analysis is being carried out by members of the DEIS Technical Group which contains representatives of the Department's Statistics and Social Inclusion Units, the Inspectorate and the Educational Research Centre. Work is ongoing by this group, including consultation with relevant experts. I am confident that the culmination of this analysis will facilitate the ultimate aim of matching resources to identified need and will allow us to target extra resources at those schools most in need.

Until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

The DEIS advisory group (which includes school management bodies and unions) was briefed last month by officials from my Department on progress and it is intended to schedule a further meeting of the DEIS advisory group for October this year.

### **Departmental Circulars**

88. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the low completion rate of the consultation requested in circular 0038/2018 in Education and Training Board schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26613/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Circular 0038/2018, which issued to schools last year requires all schools to consult with teachers, students and parents in developing policy for the use of smart phones and personal devices in school. This requirement to consult will be underpinned in law once the Students and Parent Charter Bill is enacted. I will publish this Bill in the Autumn. Schools are not required to report to my Department on the implementation of circulars and my Department is not aware of any issues in the implementation of this Circular in ETB schools.

Decisions on the use of smart phones and other such devices in schools are taken at local level by the Board of Management of a school, who under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 have responsibility for the direct governance of a school.

My Department recognises the requirement to safeguard children from the negative impact of using digital devices. It is also important that we continue to work together to raise awareness to the benefits of new technologies and to recognise the value of digital technology to enhance teaching and learning for all students while also safeguarding our children online

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

89. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projected timeline for the delivery of a new building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26624/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** At this juncture it is premature to give a timeline for the delivery of the new building to replace the school to which the Deputy refers. A new site is required for the replacement building and my Department has commenced the site identification process. When a suitable site is identified and agreed for purchase, architectural planning for the new building has to be undertaken and planning permission sought. Then the project has to be tendered for construction. I can assure the Deputy that my Department is making every effort to progress the site identification.

### **Oireachtas Joint Committee Reports**

90. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education inequality and disadvantage and Barriers to Education, published in May 2019, will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26051/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The mission of my Department as set out in *Cumasú*, my Department's Action Plan for Education 2019, is to facilitate individuals through learning to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social economic and cultural development. Goal 2 in the Action Plan commits to advancing the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of our vision.

The Report on Education Inequality and Disadvantage and Barriers to Education by the Joint Committee on Education and Skills was published recently.

The Joint Committee met on two occasions to during 2018 to discuss the topic of education inequality and disadvantage. At these meetings it also heard from a range of Stakeholders

including senior officials from my Department.

The aim of the examination by the Joint Committee was to focus on solutions to the issue of education inequality and disadvantage. Areas covered in the examination include my Department's DEIS programme and if it can be improved; if an education system can be created which increases participation in post-secondary education, especially among groups with traditionally low rates of participation; the benefits that equal access to education can provide particularly among groups who experience high instances of poverty, addiction and other social issues especially those who live in areas of deprivation.

Based on the contributions made at both meetings, the Joint Committee made six conclusions and forty four recommendations in the Report.

My Department is investing heavily in supporting learners at risk of educational disadvantage.

DEIS is the main policy initiative of my Department to tackle educational disadvantage. DEIS provides additional supports to 896 schools identified as having the highest concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged communities, serving approximately 183,000 pupils, at an overall cost of €125 million per annum. Schools can use these additional resources to meet the identified needs of their pupil cohort.

My Department's Further Education and Training Strategy set out a vision to transform the sector, and provide a focus for the annual funding and investment priorities, to deliver a world-class integrated system of further education and training that would support economic development, increase social inclusion and to meet the needs of all who engage with the sector. SOLAS are currently developing a new Further Education and Training Strategy which will cover the next five year period from 2020. This provides an opportunity to refresh commitments on how further education and training can support inclusion of diverse and marginalised groups in education and training, society and the labour market.

The Progress Review of the National Access Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education was published in December 2018. It highlighted an increase in participation rates across a number of the target groups with particularly high increases for students with disabilities and among socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund comprises dedicated funding to support access to higher education. €16.2m secured through the budgetary process has enabled three strands of the PATH fund to be rolled out.

My Department is currently examining those recommendations made by the Joint Committee which come under its remit, in the context of the supports currently available.

### **School Transport Eligibility**

91. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reduce the number of eligible pupils required for a school bus service from ten to eight in order to reduce the carbon footprint; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26547/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special edu-

cational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Changes to the School Transport Scheme introduced in Budget 2011, derived from recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the Scheme and encompassed a number of elements such as an increase from seven to 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality to retain or establish a school transport service, provided this can be done within reasonable cost limits.

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

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme Eligibility**

92. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of open applications to the residential institutions statutory fund, Caranua, as at 2 August 2018; the number of applications in which supports and services have been given to date; the number refused; the number of open applications awaiting support; the number given supports in the past; the average waiting time for support to be provided in an approved application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26585/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Caranua is an independent statutory body and I have no role in relation to its day to day operations. The organisation publishes regular monthly updates on its website ([www.caranua.ie](http://www.caranua.ie)) which contain information on the number of applications received, the current status of applications, the expenditure incurred, feedback and complaints, etc. The position as of 2nd August 2018 can be ascertained from the update published on 31 July 2018. If the information sought by the Deputy is not contained in the published updates, there is a facility for direct contact with Caranua through the dedicated e-mail for members of the Oireachtas.

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

93. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) has lost its special class placement after more than 20 years; and if same will be reinstated. [26376/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned.

The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

As the Deputy's question relates to a particular school, I have arranged for the question to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

94. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the project brief for a school redevelopment project at a school (details supplied) has been finalised; when he expects the brief will proceed to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26631/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's school building programme to be delivered under the National Development Plan (NDP).

The accommodation brief for the project is currently being finalised and this process is expected to be completed shortly. My Department has been liaising with the Patron of the school in relation to the proposed project and will be in further contact when the accommodation brief has been finalised. The project will be devolved to the Patron for delivery.

### **School Placement**

95. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase second level provision in County Meath, particularly in the south of the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26611/19]

**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 and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools;
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools;
- Provision of a new school or schools.

Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

As the Deputy will be aware, in April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). The announcement followed nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country.

A new 500 pupil post-primary school to be established in Enfield in 2020 was included in the new schools announcement.

In addition the following developments in the south of County Meath may be of interest to

the Deputy:

- In 2014, a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school, De Lacy College, was established under the patronage of Louth and Meath ETB to serve the Ashbourne school planning area. The school has a current enrolment of some 400 pupils in the 2018/19 school year.

- A project to provide an extension to St. Peter's College, Dunboyne to cater for an additional 225 students was recently completed.

- Dunshaughlin post-primary school planning area is catered for by Dunshaughlin Community College. The school operates under the patronage of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and has a current enrolment in the region of 1,000 pupils. The school is experiencing demand for additional school places and the LMETB is open to assisting in meeting this demand. The ETB has submitted an application for additional accommodation which my Department is currently considering. The outcome will assist my Department in determining the future need in the area. In the meantime, my Department has approved the provision of additional temporary accommodation - 8 general classrooms and 1 science lab - to LMETB to meet the school's immediate needs.

- An extension project for Ratoath Community College, to provide for a total of 1,300 pupils in the school, is currently in the final stages of being re-tendered.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and will have regard for the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

### Gender Balance

96. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the plans of the CSO to undertake a gendered analysis of full employment to establish the gap between male and female participation in the workforce. [26687/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne):** There is no commonly agreed measure of what constitutes full employment for Ireland.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source of labour force (ILO) estimates in the State. The CSO publishes data on male and female participation in the workforce as part of the quarterly LFS release. The most recent LFS figures available are for Q1 2019.

The following table below shows the ILO Economic Status and key economic rates for persons aged 15 years and over classified by gender in Q1 2019.

**Table 1 Persons aged 15 years and over classified by gender and ILO Economic Status and key economic rates, Q1 2019**

Gender	ILO Economic Status	Q1 19
		'000
Males	In labour force	1,303.5
	of which: In employment	1,237.5
	Unemployed	65.9
	Not in labour force	610.0
	Total males	1,913.5

Gender	ILO Economic Status	Q1 19
		'000
	Employment rate %	74.3
	Unemployment rate %	5.1
	Participation rate %	68.1
Females	In labour force	1,112.8
	of which: In employment	1,064.4
	Unemployed	48.4
	Not in labour force	870.2
	Total females	1,983.0
	Employment rate %	64.3
	Unemployment rate %	4.4
	Participation rate %	56.1
All persons	In labour force	2,416.3
	of which: In employment	2,301.9
	Unemployed	114.4
	Not in labour force	1,480.2
	Total persons	3,896.5
	Employment rate %	69.3
	Unemployment rate %	4.8
	Participation rate %	62.0

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

Data may be subject to future revision.

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

Reference period: Q1=Jan-March.

The employment rate is the number of persons aged 15-64 in employment expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 15-64 years.

The unemployment rate is the number of persons unemployed expressed as a percentage of the total labour force aged 15-74 years.

The participation rate is the number of persons in the labour force expressed as a percentage of the total population aged 15 years and over.

### Freedom of Information Data

97. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26399/19]

**The Taoiseach:** The details requested by the Deputy regarding the freedom of information

requests received in my Department in 2018 are as follows:

Requests received - 490

Granted - 111

Part-granted - 243

Refused - 46

No records exist - 70

Transferred - 3

Withdrawn - 13

Handled outside FOI - 4

### **Cabinet Committee Meetings**

98. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach the number of times Cabinet committee C, European Union, including Brexit, has met in 2019; and when it is next scheduled to meet. [26703/19]

**The Taoiseach:** Cabinet Committee C, which covers EU and international issues, including Brexit, last met on 21 June 2018.

Given the significance of Brexit for the country, it is important that all Cabinet Ministers are fully across what is happening.

Therefore, over the past 12 months, it has been discussed on at least 25 occasions at full Cabinet level.

Recently Memos were brought to Cabinet for discussion on Brexit Preparedness Planning.

I also meet with individual Ministers or groups of relevant Ministers to focus on particular issues, including those relating to Brexit and other EU and international issues.

The date of the next meeting of Cabinet Committee C has not been confirmed.

The Tánaiste continues to hold Brexit Stakeholder Forum engagements, most recently on 29 May.

### **Freedom of Information Data**

99. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26389/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department received a total of 140 requests in 2018 for records under the Freedom of Information Acts. The table below shows the breakdown of these requests.

Among the reasons for the refusal of requests was that the records sought did not exist.

	No.
Granted	28
Part-Granted	34
Refused	47
Transferred	13
Withdrawn	13
Dealt with outside of FoI	5
Total number of FoI requests received in 2018	140

### Defence Forces Remuneration

100. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his attention has been drawn to the Public Sector Pay Commission report on the Defence Forces; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26445/19]

101. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on whether the level of pay for personnel in the Defence Forces is adequate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26447/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 100 and 101 together.

Similar to other sectors in the public service, the pay of Permanent Defence Force personnel was reduced as one of the measures to assist in stabilising national finances during the financial crisis. The recovery in the economy has provided the fiscal resources to restore pay scales to all public servants in an affordable and sustainable manner. Pay is being restored to members of the Defence Forces and other public servants in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, provides for increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement. The increases due under the agreement to date have been paid to Permanent Defence Force personnel. Further increases in pay are scheduled in 2019 and 2020.

By the end of the current Public Service Pay agreement the pay scales of all public servants (including members of the Defence Forces), earning under €70,000 per annum, will be restored to pre FEMPI levels. The restoration of the 5% reduction to allowances cut under FEMPI is also scheduled as part of that agreement.

New entrants who joined the Defence Forces since 2011, may also benefit from the measures which will see interventions at points 4 and 8 of the pay scales for all such relevant new entrants to the public service.

The Public Service Pay Commission has conducted a comprehensive examination and analysis of underlying difficulties of recruitment and retention in the Defence Sector. The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is expected to bring the report prepared by the Commission to Government shortly. The Government will give due consideration to the findings and recommendations in the report.

### Defence Forces Allowances

102. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated full-year cost of restoring the Defence Forces annual instructors allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26603/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Non-commissioned officers who are filling appointments in the Establishment for Instructors in the Military College, Training Depots, Corps Depots and Schools and in the Observer Corps are paid an allowance at the weekly rate of €23.28 or €24.50 depending on personal pension contributions payable by the individual. This continues to be paid for duties performed.

In accordance with the Public Service Stability Agreement, 2013-2016, (the Haddington Road Agreement), all sectors across the public service were required to contribute to additional pay and productivity measures. Other sectors delivered these savings through a variety of approaches including additional working time and reduced rates of overtime payments.

As part of the cost saving measures to be secured in the Defence sector under the agreement, it was agreed with the Representative Association for Commissioned Officers (RACO) that payment of Special Instructors Allowance to Officers of the Permanent Defence Force would cease. The individuals who were in receipt of the allowance at that time were compensated in agreement with the representative association.

There are no plans to reinstate the allowance and in this regard the cost of restoring the allowance has not been computed.

### Defence Forces Recruitment

103. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a new cadetship competition for the Permanent Defence Force will open in quarter 4 of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26604/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The 2019 competition for cadetships in the Defence Forces was launched in April of this year and the assessment process for applicants is underway. It is envisaged that the next competition for cadetships in the Defence Forces will take place in Quarter 1 of 2020.

### Air Corps Strength

104. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of aircraft technicians in the helicopter wing of the Air Corps in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and the number that left during same period. [26706/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The following table, provided by the military authorities, sets out the number of aircraft technicians in No 3 Operations Wing:

Year	Date	Strength
2017	31/12/2017	47
2018	31/12/2018	43
2019	20/06/2019	45

The military authorities have also confirmed that a total of 13 Aircraft Technicians discharged from No 3 Operations Wing between 1st January 2017 and 20th June 2019.

### **Defence Forces Equipment**

105. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if funding will be provided for the purchase of two additional water tender ladder fire appliances for the Curragh camp fire station; and the frequency with which fire appliances are replaced in military barracks. [26707/19]

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

The acquisition of new equipment and the upgrading of equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process. The principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements both at home and overseas.

The Defence Forces operate a fire station at the Defence Forces Training Centre (DFTC), Curragh Camp with one fire crew on duty at all times. The main purpose of the fire station is to provide a rapid response in the event of a fire at the Ammunition Depot, and also to respond to fire alarms and fire emergencies within the DFTC.

Certain purchasing is carried out by the Defence Forces directly under delegation of financial responsibility which permits the Defence Forces to procure a wide range of goods and services directly, this includes the purchasing of fire appliances. I am advised by the military authorities that the fire station is adequately equipped with a Class B Fire Appliance which was delivered in 2018 following an open tender competition, and there is currently no requirement for the acquisition of additional fire appliances for the DFTC.

The only other military installation with a requirement for a fire service is Casement Aerodrome Baldonnell, where a fire and crash rescue service is required for airfield operations. A contract was awarded last year for the supply of one Rapid Intervention Foam Tender (RIFT) for the Air Corps Fire Service which is due to be delivered into service in June 2020. The delivery into service of the RIFT vehicle will augment the existing capability of the Air Corps Fire and Rescue Service at Casement Aerodrome Baldonnell.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the necessary modern and effective range of equipment available to them in order to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans for a recruitment campaign in the UK to recruit a military psychiatrist for the Permanent Defence Force. [26708/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** A recruitment campaign for a civilian consultant psychiatrist for the Defence Forces will commence shortly.

To ensure that there is a broad field of candidates as possible, all options for publicising the vacancy are being considered, including the possibility of advertising the post abroad as well as in Ireland.

### Defence Forces Expenditure

107. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on replacing military police vehicles in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26753/19]

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

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process. The principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements, including response to security risks and other emergencies, both at home and overseas.

There is also continuous investment in the non-armoured vehicle fleet and funding is provided on an on-going basis for the required maintenance of vehicles in the military transport fleet, both at home and overseas.

Certain purchasing is carried out by the Defence Forces directly under delegation of financial responsibility which permits the Defence Forces to procure a wide range of goods and services directly, and this includes Military Police vehicles.

The following table sets out details of the amount spent on “blue light” Military Police vehicles from 2017 to date in 2019.

Year	Number of Vehicles	Cost	Remarks
2017	Nil	Nil	
2018	Nil	Nil	
2019	4	€127,680	Vehicles delivered to DF and currently under-going fit-out. (There will be further costs for fitting of blue-lighting)

### Rockall Island Ownership

108. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the detail of the historical negotiations with the UK with regard to ownership of Rockall; if a formal agreement with the UK on the exclusive economic zone of Rockall was made in 2013 as per an article (details supplied); and the developments of all countries contesting ownership claims on the continental shelf to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. [26065/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Rockall is a small uninhabitable rock located approximately 160 nautical miles west of the Scottish

islands of St. Kilda and 230 nautical miles to the north-west of Donegal. It marks a point at which the Rockall Bank, part of the very large Hatton-Rockall area of continental shelf extending under the north-east Atlantic Ocean, protrudes 21 metres above sea level. During the 1960s and 1970s the issue of Rockall was a source of legal and political controversy in both Ireland and the United Kingdom. The UK claimed sovereignty over Rockall in 1955 and sought to formally annex it under its 1972 Island of Rockall Act.

While Ireland has not recognised British sovereignty over Rockall, we have never sought to claim sovereignty ourselves. The consistent position of successive Irish Governments has been that Rockall and similar rocks and skerries should have no significance for establishing legal claims to continental shelf. This position is now reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides at Article 121, paragraph 3 that: ‘Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.’ Accordingly, sovereignty over Rockall and rights to the Hatton-Rockall area of continental shelf on which Rockall sits are two separate issues.

Under the UN Convention all coastal states are entitled to a continental shelf that extends to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles if the geological continental margin does not actually extend that far. Where a State claims a continental shelf that extends beyond 200 miles it must demonstrate to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf that geologically the margin extends beyond that distance and must provide data to support its case.

In 1988, Ireland and the UK reached agreement on the delimitation of areas of the continental shelf between the two countries in both the Hatton Rockall area of the North East Atlantic and in the Celtic Sea to the south, stretching out up 500 nautical miles from their respective coastlines. Under the UN Convention the location of Rockall was irrelevant to the determination of the boundary in the Hatton-Rockall area.

Notwithstanding the 1988 agreement between Ireland and the UK, the claims by both countries to the Hatton-Rockall shelf beyond 200 miles are not accepted by Iceland or Denmark (on behalf of the Faroe Islands), which make their own claims. The four countries began to meet regularly from 2001 in an effort to resolve the overlapping claims issue, but to date have been unable to reach agreement.

The UN Convention imposes a ten-year deadline for the making of continental shelf submissions to the UN Commission and the deadline expired for Ireland in May 2009. The Government therefore arranged to make the submission in March of that year, as did the British Government in respect of the UK’s claim. Denmark submitted its claim on behalf of the Faroe Islands in 2010. Iceland has not made a submission to date.

The UN Commission’s rules of procedure prevent its consideration of a submission relating to a disputed area without the consent of all the States concerned and Iceland does not currently consent to the consideration of these submissions. However, Ireland’s submission within the deadline preserved the State’s legal position and since then the Government has continued to work for the creation of conditions that will permit its consideration by the UN Commission as soon as possible.

The exclusive economic zone (or EEZ) is the body of water beyond the territorial sea that lies above the continental shelf between 12 and 200 nautical miles from shore. In 2013 Ireland and the UK reached agreement on boundaries between the two countries’ EEZs. The 2013 agreement built on the 1988 Agreement that established continental shelf boundaries and it provides that those boundaries, slightly adjusted to ensure that no waters were lost to the high seas, shall also be the EEZ boundaries. This created a single maritime boundary between 12 and 200

miles in the water and on the seabed beneath.

Nothing in either agreement altered Ireland's longstanding position on Rockall, nor does either agreement have any implications for the present difficulties between Ireland and Scotland over fishing within 12 miles of Rockall.

### **Foreign Policy**

109. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the extradition law proposed in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26210/19]

110. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the measures used against protestors in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26211/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 109 and 110 together.

I am aware of the bill that was proposed in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region which sought to amend local legislation to allow for extradition to the Chinese Mainland, Macau and Taiwan. I note that, on 15 June, the passage of this legislation was suspended indefinitely by the Hong Kong authorities in response to ongoing protests by Hong Kong citizens.

The Consulate General in Hong Kong has been closely monitoring and reporting on developments in relation to the proposed extradition bill and the related demonstrations. The Consul General, along with the EU Office and representatives of other EU Member States, has engaged directly with the Hong Kong authorities to set out our concerns with the proposed bill.

In this House last week, I highlighted Ireland's support for the right of citizens to assembly and freedom of expression, which are provided for under Hong Kong's Basic Law. I urged demonstrators to express their rights in a peaceful manner, and for the police to respect these rights and to exercise restraint in response. I note that while the demonstrations have continued since the suspension of the proposed legislation, they have largely passed without incident, which is welcome.

Ireland will continue to monitor the situation through our Consulate General in Hong Kong.

### **Travel Documents**

111. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the documentation persons (details supplied) require to travel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26227/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Passport Service, within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, is responsible for the issuance of passports to Irish citizens, as set out in the Passports Act 2008, as amended.

Immigration or administrative requirements for entry into other States, including what documentation is acceptable for those purposes, are not matters that are within the competence of my Department.

## European Parliament Elections

112. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the European Commission has carried out a review on whether there were attempts by outside agencies and State actors to manipulate the European Parliament elections in May 2019; if so, the findings of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26244/19]

113. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on reports that Russian sources conducted disinformation campaigns designed to suppress voter turnout and sway public opinion during the May 2019 European Parliament elections; if action will be taken in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26245/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 and 113 together.

Protecting democratic processes and institutions from disinformation is a major challenge for all societies. In order to tackle this challenge, the EU is building a robust framework for coordinated action which is fully in line with European values and fundamental rights.

The most recent EEAS / European Commission Report on the implementation of the EU's Action Plan Against Disinformation was released on 14 June 2019. The Report found that available evidence did not permit the identification of a distinct cross-border disinformation campaign from external sources specifically targeting the European elections. However, it concluded that the evidence collected revealed a continued and sustained disinformation activity by Russian sources, aiming to suppress turnout and influence voter preferences.

According to the EU's East Strategic Communication Task Force, activity covered a broad range of topics, ranging from challenging the Union's democratic legitimacy to exploiting divisive public debates on issues such as migration and sovereignty.

While it is too early to draw final conclusions about the level and impact of this disinformation, it is clear that the measures adopted to date by the European Council - the EU Joint Action Plan against Disinformation and the dedicated Elections Package - helped to deter attacks and expose disinformation.

Within the framework of these actions, individuals and organisations, including journalists, fact checkers, online platforms, national authorities, researchers and civil society organisations contributed to raising awareness about how to counter the threat. This increased public awareness made it harder for malicious actors to manipulate the public debate.

More broadly, the EU has strengthened its capabilities to identify and counter disinformation, via the Strategic Communication Task Forces and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell in the European External Action Service. A Rapid Alert System has also been established to facilitate the prompt exchange of information between Member States and the EU institutions where suspect disinformation campaigns have been detected.

During the election period the EU worked closely with online platforms and industry through a voluntary Code of Practice to increase the transparency of political communications and to prevent the manipulative use of their services. This allows users to know why they see specific political content and ads, and see where they come from and who is behind them.

The fight against disinformation is a long-term challenge that concerns all parts of our societies and requires continuous commitment and efforts. The private sector, especially the online

platforms, have a particular responsibility. The Commission will shortly report back to the European Council in more detail on the implementation of the measures introduced during the election period and on the effectiveness of the Voluntary Code of Practice. Further proposals to strengthen our collective action in response to this ever-evolving threat are likely.

### Foreign Policy

114. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to reports that a number of Ukrainian journalists are being detained in Russia and Crimea; the actions the EU has taken with regard to the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26378/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Ireland and its EU partners closely follow developments in relation to media freedom and the treatment of journalists in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and monitor the environment for journalists and any legislation which encroaches on the freedom of speech. Developments are discussed on a regular basis in Brussels and by EU Missions in Moscow and Kyiv.

The EU plays a key role in funding the European Centre for Press and Media freedom (ECPMF) and Ireland supports the targeted protection of journalists through Human Rights Defenders programmes.

At the European Council on 20 June, EU leaders discussed developments in Eastern Ukraine and the Azov Sea and the overall implementation of the Minsk agreements and negotiations in the Normandy format. EU leaders unanimously agreed to roll over the economic sanctions on Russia for another six months and called for an urgent resumption of negotiating efforts to implement the Minsk agreements. The European Council will continue to monitor the situation in Ukraine and stand ready to consider further options, including non-recognition of Russian passports issued in contradiction to the Minsk agreements.

### Freedom of Information Data

115. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26393/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** A breakdown of the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by my Department in 2018 is set out in the table below. A total of 320 requests were received in 2018, plus 16 requests received in 2017 which were carried over into 2018 for reply.

Freedom of Information	Number of requests
Number of FOI requests granted	60
Number of FOI requests part-granted	91
Number of FOI requests refused	40
Number of FOI requests withdrawn	51
Number of FOI requests withdrawn and handled outside of the Act	69
Number of FOI requests transferred to other FOI bodies	7

Freedom of Information	Number of requests
Number of FOI requests carried over into 2019 for reply	18

### Departmental Properties

116. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the full rental and-or purchase costs, maintenance and-or upkeep and-or alteration costs associated with all property outside the State that his Department has an interest in, that is, properties that are embassies, Consulates General and official accommodations by accommodation type, cost per year per property and location of property for the past five years to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26586/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department delivers Ireland's foreign policy objectives through our Embassy network. At present, my Department is responsible for 159 properties comprising Embassies, Consulate Generals, Permanent Missions, Permanent Representations, Secretariats, Representative Offices and official accommodation.

As part of the duty of care to staff, their families and visitors to our buildings for meetings and functions, the Department must ensure that security and health and safety standards are met, as well as provision of universal access facilities. The Department maintains appropriate health, safety and security standards in our properties overseas while also applying any additional international standards in the location in question, as necessary. All refurbishment and maintenance at missions are conducted in line with the Department's procurement obligations under Government public tendering and contracting rules, including both national and EU public procurement thresholds.

The full rental and or purchase costs, maintenance and/or upkeep and or alteration costs for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are outlined in the first table.

A list of offices by type and location are set out in the second table.

The purchase costs of properties purchased by the State from 2014 to 2018 are listed in the final table. The purchases were official accommodation in Lilongwe, land to build Ireland House Tokyo in Japan and purchase of an adjacent building to the Embassy of Ireland in Washington to allow for its expansion.

Table 1. Cost per Mission (€) 2014-2018

Location	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
ABU DHABI	229,252	258,047	300,226	366,315	292,580
ABUJA	215,770	269,383	151,915	183,141	318,248
ADDIS ABABA	164,208	188,699	199,438	218,037	360,175
AMMÁN	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	99,727
ANKARA	134,098	138,453	264,230	332,270	586,751
ARMAGH	408,325	422,910	435,644	414,194	413,699
ATHENS	170,266	167,579	154,752	226,106	171,335
ATLANTA	56,534	66,574	60,308	97,664	82,692
AUSTIN	14,144	246,429	123,424	135,571	135,990
BANGKOK	N/A	550,087	197,067	173,483	197,191
BEIJING	1,018,923	170,658	656,734	605,323	779,418

Questions - Written Answers

Location	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
BELFAST	274,250	201,098	273,381	820,869	369,077
BERLIN	443,042	400,390	366,171	374,641	360,362
BERNE	100,251	134,420	212,280	125,703	114,438
BOGOTA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BOSTON	160,370	202,275	204,859	177,847	241,461
BRASILIA	270,189	266,868	242,179	244,283	170,018
BRATISLAVA	186,270	188,683	184,005	188,819	237,426
BRUSSELS (EMBASSY)	398,275	369,174	172,237	137,726	131,280
BRUSSELS (PfP)	167,320	172,634	231,664	176,022	172,085
BRUSSELS (PR-EU)	1,857,073	2,233,370	1,721,385	1,791,836	1,802,174
BUCHAREST	268,657	277,487	235,395	177,732	174,217
BUDAPEST	260,946	277,364	283,846	294,287	290,816
BUENOS AIRES	156,158	202,745	222,107	226,258	229,978
CAIRO	231,784	282,837	318,009	268,105	272,426
CANBERRA	148,227	133,946	155,420	143,096	132,535
CAPETOWN	N/A	27,742	724.23	41,214	15,168
CARDIFF	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
CHICAGO	95,709	110,989	118,777	116,380	115,346
COPENHAGEN	66,615	260,608	74,112	134,558	89,868
DAR ES SALAAM	178,928	156,295	159,982	165,726	147,541
EDINBURGH	101,420	115,988	83,301	80,523	80,540
FREETOWN	136,687	196,756	143,358	130,701	128,268
GENEVA	527,828	614,230	599,581	693,211	525,395
HANOI	263,976	297,161	329,580	393,347	319,292
HELSINKI	275,714	268,682	197,395	287,312	323,109
HOLY SEE	N/A	101,748	135,272	139,303	140,609
HONG KONG	70,307	667,275	377,003	342,955	403,528
JAKARTA	560,125	667,911	355,533	602,059	214,921
KAMPALA	461,474	286,780	306,748	345,671	502,530
KUALA LUMPUR	224,495	156,310	266,985	167,367	181,751
LILONGWE	149,937	182,651	161,646	565,070	108,687
LISBON	164,411	159,823	168,759	235,630	679,691
LJUBLJANA	174,963	169,794	156,017	147,350	149,665
LONDON	1,128,679	1,263,321	1,069,698	1,318,672	3,270,254
LUSAKA	110,640	123,751	123,803	144,577	112,849
LUXEMBOURG	179,560	124,230	118,430	111,768	111,579
MADRID	339,922	282,320	280,628	301,302	322,823
MAPUTO	280,192	211,840	256,144	216,123	210,334
MASERU	32,288	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MEXICO	223,290	266,849	255,426	286,783	261,087
MONROVIA	7,511	2,610	43,748	44,884	38,432
MOSCOW	469,459	239,783	276,151	306,094	299,344
MUMBAI	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10,184
NAIROBI	32,919	348,401	504,470	212,954	204,966

Location	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
NEW DELHI	690,172	840,329	889,434	862,586	822,366
NEW YORK - C.G.	1,018,992	1,214,806	1,250,791	1,227,057	1,133,043
NEW YORK - PMUN	897,309	1,103,880	1,151,669	1,195,844	1,540,357
NICOSIA	118,925	120,724	119,520	125,391	146,073
OSCE - VIENNA	264,814	261,275	256,214	295,620	229,672
OSLO	280,978	425,774	261,858	240,414	338,398
OTTAWA	145,699	168,692	156,383	168,598	185,044
PARIS	954,226	463,781	616,324	539,064	538,663
PRAGUE	239,335	228,622	222,710	231,895	241,959
PRETORIA	256,188	294,029	263,065	311,603	305,365
RAMALLAH	147,526	199,024	173,503	167,634	158,852
RIGA	98,268	89,981	91,595	99,871	118,987
RIYADH	206,926	206,144	200,513	162,015	210,128
ROME	209,630	211,445	241,990	165,259	147,277
SAN FRANCISCO	210,081	249,143	266,360	275,730	281,258
SANTIAGO	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SAO PAULO	N/A	16,663	123,022	660,694	190,195
SEOUL	171,124	182,851	589,533	172,839	205,640
SHANGHAI	376,028	346,540	334,816	331,077	316,845
SINGAPORE	501,492	438,781	394,198	427,263	423,803
SOFIA	229,886	235,510	217,331	196,235	209,301
STOCKHOLM	271,699	264,753	200,492	183,977	274,296
STRASBOURG	112,911	110,989	119,880	124,875	111,821
SYDNEY	299,657	199,205	255,825	262,580	268,334
TALLINN	321,105	366,703	199,175	202,742	210,560
TEL AVIV	374,381	396,831	532,657	443,899	400,442
THE HAGUE	168,895	210,618	172,034	260,568	228,791
TOKYO	597,042	552,372	889,391	8,633,108	953,306
VALLETTA	233,879	225,059	182,080	156,869	161,281
VANCOUVER	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19,800
VIENNA	258,856	374,704	256,784	284,634	271,062
VILNIUS	201,363	148,429	154,305	153,592	156,221
WARSAW	418,924	478,642	413,159	402,165	403,805
WASHINGTON DC	229,085	147,450	140,806	173,057	3,939,344
WELLINGTON	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13,778
ZAGREB	3,986	249,043	148,609	153,826	144,153

Table 2. List of Offices by Type and Location

Mission
Abu Dhabi chancery
Abu Dhabi official accommodation
Abuja chancery & official accommodation
Addis Ababa chancery

Mission
Addis Ababa official accommodation
Amman chancery
Amman official accommodation
Ankara chancery
Ankara official accommodation
Armagh Joint Secretariat
Armagh official accommodation
Armagh Staff Apartments
Athens chancery
Athens official accommodation
Atlanta CG chancery
Austin CG chancery
Bangkok chancery
Bangkok official accommodation
Beijing chancery and official accommodation
Beijing Visa office
Belfast British-Irish Intergovernment Secretariat
Belfast official accommodation
Berlin chancery
Berlin official accommodation
Berne chancery
Berne official accommodation
Bogota chancery
Bogota official accommodation
Boston chancery
Brasilia chancery
Brasilia official accommodation
Bratislava chancery
Bratislava official accommodation
Brussels Embassy official accommodation
Brussels, Deputy Permanent Representative official accommodation
Brussels, P.S.C. official accommodation
Brussels, Permanent Representation chancery & Embassy
Brussels, Permanent Representative official accommodation
Bucharest chancery
Bucharest official accommodation
Budapest chancery
Budapest official accommodation
Buenos Aires chancery
Buenos Aires official accommodation
Cairo chancery
Cairo official accommodation
Canberra chancery & official accommodation Compound
Capetown chancery

Mission
Cardiff chancery
Chicago CG chancery
Copenhagen chancery
Copenhagen official accommodation
Dar Es Salaam chancery
Dar Es Salaam official accommodation
Edinburgh CG chancery
Freetown chancery
Freetown HOM official accommodation
Geneva chancery
Geneva official accommodation
Hanoi chancery
Hanoi official accommodation
Helsinki chancery
Helsinki official accommodation
Holy See chancery
Holy See official accommodation
Hong Kong CG chancery
Jakarta chancery
Jakarta official accommodation
Kampala chancery
Kampala official accommodation
Kuala Lumpur chancery
Kuala Lumpur official accommodation
Lilongwe chancery
Lilongwe official accommodation
Lisbon chancery
Lisbon official accommodation
Ljubljana chancery
Ljubljana official accommodation
London chancery and official accommodation
London, Passport Information Centre
Lusaka chancery
Lusaka official accommodation
Luxembourg chancery
Luxembourg official accommodation
Madrid chancery
Madrid official accommodation
Maputo chancery
Maputo official accommodation
Mexico chancery
Mexico official accommodation
Monrovia chancery
Monrovia official accommodation

Mission
Moscow chancery and official accommodation
Mumbai chancery
Nairobi chancery
Nairobi official accommodation
New Delhi chancery
New Delhi official accommodation
New York, Consulate General chancery
New York, Consulate General official accommodation
New York, PMUN chancery
New York, PMUN official accommodation
Nicosia chancery
Nicosia official accommodation
Oslo chancery
Oslo official accommodation
Ottawa chancery
Ottawa official accommodation
Paris chancery and official accommodation
Paris, OECD official accommodation
Prague chancery
Prague official accommodation
Pretoria chancery
Pretoria official accommodation
Ramallah chancery
Ramallah official accommodation
Riga chancery
Riyadh chancery and official accommodation
Rome chancery
San Francisco Consulate General chancery
Santiago official accommodation
Santiago chancery
São Paulo Consulate General chancery
Seoul chancery
Seoul official accommodation
Shanghai chancery
Singapore chancery
Singapore official accommodation
Sofia chancery
Sofia official accommodation
Stockholm chancery
Stockholm official accommodation
Strasbourg chancery
Strasbourg official accommodation
Sydney Consulate General chancery
Tallinn chancery & official accommodation

Mission
Tel Aviv chancery
Tel Aviv official accommodation
The Hague chancery
The Hague official accommodation
Tokyo chancery
Tokyo official accommodation
Valletta chancery
Valletta official accommodation
Vancouver CG
Vienna chancery (Embassy & OSCE)
Vienna official accommodation
Vienna, OSCE official accommodation
Vilnius chancery
Vilnius official accommodation
Warsaw chancery
Warsaw official accommodation
Washington chancery
Washington chancery (adjoining site purchased 2018)
Washington official accommodation
Wellington chancery
Wellington official accommodation
Zagreb chancery
Zagreb official accommodation

Table 3. Purchase cost of properties 2014-2018

	Year of purchase	Purchase value (€)
Lilongwe official accommodation	2017	410,619
Tokyo Chancery and official accommodation - purchase of land	2017	7,739,705
Washington Chancery 2018	2018	3,489,976

### Election Monitoring Missions

117. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the name and age range of each observer appointed to the 2018 election observer roster; the country in which each resides; if they were members of the previous roster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26641/19]

118. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason no long-term election observer from Ireland was sent to the election events in Ukraine in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26642/19]

119. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason the 2018 call for election observers made no provision for reasonable accommodation for disabled applicants; if his officials have been contacted by the Department of Health

regarding the matter; if this aspect of the selection process will be reviewed having regard to the obligations of Ireland under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; his plans to appoint disabled election observers whose marks suffered due to the absence of reasonable accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26643/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 117 to 119, inclusive, together.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade administers and maintains a roster of suitably skilled individuals who are available to deploy on international election observation missions organised, in the main, by the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

A new roster was mustered in January 2019. As the security vetting of the persons short-listed to that roster continues, the position regarding the disclosure of the list of names of the new roster remains as stated in the response to Parliamentary Question No. 73 of 29 May 2019, to which I refer the Deputy.

The roster mustering process is now complete. The Department did not receive any request for a reasonable accommodation during the seven week period for the submission of applications, or any stage prior to the appeals process deadline. The issue of reasonable accommodation has been addressed in the responses to Parliamentary Questions No. 60 of 23 January, No. 153 of 5 February, No. 65 of 6 February, No. 58 of 7 February, No. 124 of 12 February, Nos. 100 and 105 of 26 February, Nos. 117 and 119 of 5 March, Nos. 74, 76 and 81 of 6 March, No. 68 of 12 March, No. 157 of 26 March, No. 115 of 16 April and No. 73 of 29 May 2019. Further information is set out in the Information Note attached to this response.

The EU and the OSCE-ODHIR regularly issue calls for the nomination of observers to participate in the election missions organised under their auspices. The Department reviews each call and responds accordingly on a case-by-case basis, including with regard to the overall annual budget available for participation in election observation missions and the resources of the Department's Elections Desk.

Information concerning Ireland's substantial contribution to the OSCE election observation mission in Ukraine is set out in the response to Parliamentary Question No. 51 of 18 April 2019, to which I refer the Deputy.

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq117-25-06-19\_en.pdf">Election Observation Roster note</a>]

## **Brexit Preparations**

120. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the provisions that have been made to protect in as much as feasibly possible all-island financial services in a no-deal Brexit scenario; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26697/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Department of Finance has policy responsibility for matters relating to Financial Services.

Throughout the Brexit process, Ireland and the EU have been at one in our determination to do all we can, deal or no deal, to protect the peace process and to avoid a hard border. The Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland which was agreed as part of the Withdrawal Agreement underpins, in a dynamic way, continuing North-South cooperation and the all-island economy

as well as recognising the Common Travel Area.

Supporting the financial services sector to prepare for Brexit is a key part of our whole-of-Government approach to prepare for Brexit, and a number of key steps have been taken at both EU and national level.

These includes legislative provisions which have been passed by the Oireachtas in the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019. This remains ready to be deployed if and when required.

The Government is continuing its intensive preparations for the possibility of a no deal Brexit. At its meeting of 21 May the Government agreed that this work should continue to be taken forward as a matter of priority by all Government Departments and Agencies.

### **Diplomatic Representation**

121. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the foreign ambassadors that have an embassy here who he has met formally to date in 2019. [26713/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are 62 resident Embassies in Dublin.

Opportunities to meet Heads of Mission - Ambassadors or Chargé d'Affaires - at each Embassy arise on a frequent basis. I will meet Heads of Mission from the entire diplomatic corps (both resident and non-resident) at the National Day of Commemoration on 14 July.

I also meet Heads of Mission on the occasion of visits by my counterparts to Ireland; at regular events I attend across Ireland; when participating in credential ceremonies at Áras an Uachtaráin and on numerous other occasions.

To date in 2019, in addition to the foregoing, I have had formal bilateral meetings with four resident Ambassadors: the Ambassador of India; the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the former Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### **Consular Services**

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to open a new Consulate General office in Darwin, Australia. [26714/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Ireland's interests in Australia are currently represented by our Embassy in Canberra and our Consulate General in Sydney. These Missions are at the forefront of efforts to promote our political and economic interests, our values, and in providing important services to the Irish community in Australia. Ireland is also represented in Perth by an Honorary Consul. Honorary Consuls are an important element of the State's global engagement and provide consular services and assistance, as well as a range of other supports to citizens.

With the launch last year of 'Global Ireland 2025', we are committed to significantly expanding our diplomatic, commercial and cultural networks, while also continuously reviewing the scale of Ireland's overseas network. In considering the expansion of our diplomatic repre-

sentations overseas, a range of factors are taken into account, including our national political, economic, and trade priorities, as well as availability of resources.

There are currently no plans to open a Consulate General in Darwin.

### **European Council Meetings**

123. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the matters that were discussed under specific foreign policy issues at the recent EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting; if Iran and Israel and Palestine were included in the discussions. [26560/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 17 June. The agenda covered the EU Global Strategy, CFSP Effectiveness and Sudan.

Ministers discussed the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, three years following its launch, and in light of High Representative Mogherini's Assessment Report on the progress made. Ireland looks forward to advancing all five strands of the Strategy.

The FAC also examined the effectiveness of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Ministers discussed ways in which the EU can ensure greater unity, coherence and consistency in its external action, to allow us to respond to future foreign and security challenges in a more flexible and strategic way.

On Sudan, the Council condemned the use of violence against civilians and reiterated support to the African Union. The priority for Sudan is to find a swift consensus that allows the transfer of power to a civilian-led authority.

Foreign Ministers also discussed regional issues with the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Ayman Safadi, including the Middle East Peace Process, the Gulf, Iran and Syria. Ireland and our EU partners recognise and greatly appreciate the stabilising role that Jordan plays in the Middle East region.

### **Employment Rights**

124. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to or if he has engaged with either the Revenue Commissioners or companies (details supplied) in respect of cases of bogus self-employment contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26203/19]

125. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding bogus self-employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26301/19]

134. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the issue of bogus self-employment contracts in respect of companies (details supplied); if he has engaged with the Revenue Commissioners on this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26195/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 124,

125 and 134 together.

Section 851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 requires Revenue to uphold taxpayer confidentiality and prohibits the release of any information that could lead to the identification of taxpayers. The Deputies will also be aware that I am precluded from being involved in individual tax cases.

Revenue has however, assured me that it carries out a full range of interventions to combat all types of tax evasion and non-compliance. This includes a clear focus on the practice of disguised employment and challenging the inappropriate classification of workers as self-employed contractors. Revenue has also advised me that it carries out significant numbers of outdoor 'site' visits each year, many of which are conducted on a multi-agency basis with other Departments or Agencies, including the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to identify and rectify bogus self-employment situations and ensure the proper operation of the PAYE system.

I am also advised that there are dedicated processes and procedures in place to deal with situations where taxpayers are dissatisfied with Revenue determinations or actions. These include Revenue's own complaints procedures, the details of which are available on its website at [/www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/customer-service/cs4.pdf](http://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/customer-service/cs4.pdf) and by way of appeal to the independent Tax Appeals Commission (TAC).

While Revenue has not provided me with any details, it has confirmed that it is aware of the issues to which the Deputies are referring.

### **Illicit Trade in Fuel and Tobacco Products**

126. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on high-sulphur coal being smuggled across the Border region; if he has spoken to other Ministers regarding same; if actions are being taken to prevent this smuggling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26490/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am assuming that the Deputy, when referring to solid fuel smuggling, is enquiring about the movement of solid fuel into the State from Northern Ireland in the context of Solid Fuel Carbon Tax (SFCT). SFCT is an excise duty that applies to coal and peat when first supplied in the State for use as a fuel. Neither the movement of solid fuel into the State nor the physical presence of solid fuel in the State generate a liability to SFCT. Therefore, there is no smuggling offence, in terms of evasion of SFCT, attaching to coal coming into the State from Northern Ireland.

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

Currently in Northern Ireland, there is no carbon tax on coal and solid fuel environmental standards are lower than in the State. These factors combined with currency fluctuations and Northern Ireland's lower VAT rate on solid fuel can give rise to significant price differentials between the two jurisdictions.

As I, and my predecessor, have pointed out before, because of the price differential with

Northern Ireland, the collection by Revenue of SFCT is heavily reliant on the regulatory regime covering the marketing, sale, distribution and burning of solid fuels in the State. The regime is operated by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and is enforced by local authorities who have powers to inspect premises and vehicles being used for the sale and distribution of solid fuel, collect samples of coal to check for adherence to environmental standards and to prosecute traders involved in selling coal that does not meet these standards. The Regulations also provide for the establishment of a register of coal suppliers by the Environmental Protection Agency.

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

### **Credit Unions**

127. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if the policy that is set to increase the industry funding levy on credit unions from approximately €1.5 million per annum to approximately €7.8 million by the end of 2022 will be reversed to take into account the societal impact of credit unions when calculating the regulation activity levy in view of the fact that credit unions are not for profit, community based and volunteer led; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26735/19]

133. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase the industry funding levy on the credit union sector; the amount by which the levy will be increased; when changes to the levy will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26098/19]

150. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered an exemption for the credit union movement from the move towards 100% payment of regulatory costs by the industry in view of the social and volunteer ethos of the movement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26773/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 127, 133 and 150 together.

As the Deputies are aware, credit unions are regulated and supervised by the Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank who is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within his independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability, and to protect the savings of credit union members.

Since 2004 the amount of the Industry Funding Levy payable by each credit union has been capped at a rate of 0.01% of total assets.

Consultation Paper 95 'Joint Public Consultation Paper - Department of Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland - Funding the Cost of Financial Regulation' (CP95) was published in 2015 and set out proposals to move from partial industry funding of financial regulation towards full industry funding, noting the proposal set out in an earlier consultation conducted by the Central Bank (CP61 'Consultation on Impact Based Levies and Other Levy Related Mat-

ters') to move credit unions to fund 50% of the cost of regulating the credit union sector.

The Central Bank indicated, in its Funding Strategy and 2018 Guide to the Industry Funding Levy, that it intended to seek my approval to increase the proportion of financial regulation costs to be recovered from credit unions on a phased basis setting out an initial target of 50% to be reached by 2021.

In response to the Central Bank's request I recommended that credit union contributions should not increase beyond the 50% target until:

a. The levy trajectory has reached the planned 50% rate, at which time the impact on the viability of the sector will be better understood; and

b. A public consultation regarding increasing the levy rate for credit unions beyond 50% is undertaken, which would include a regulatory impact assessment of such a change on the sector.

In contrast to this, recovery rates in 2018 for all other industry categories ranged from 65% to 100% and the Central Bank intends to increase all to 100% funding over the next number of years.

The Deputy might also wish to note that the Department of Finance, in collaboration with the Central Bank, has prepared a public consultation paper on potential changes to the Credit Institutions Resolution Fund Levy, which is expected to reduce materially from 2020. This consultation, which has now been published on the Department of Finance website, is open to all persons and I would strongly encourage all stakeholders to submit feedback.

It is also important to note that as Minister for Finance I have reduced the Stabilisation Scheme Levy materially and that since 2017 no further levies have been charged by the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo).

### **Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme**

128. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the qualification criteria for the primary medical certificate; and his views on whether the current criteria are too restrictive and that qualification needs to be relaxed in view of the fact that there is no motorised transport grant for persons. [26806/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT (up to a certain limit) on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a Fuel Grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must satisfy one of the following conditions:

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

- be without one or both legs;
- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

The Scheme represents a significant tax expenditure. Between the Vehicle Registration Tax and VAT foregone, and the fuel grant, the scheme cost €65m in each of 2016 and 2017, rising to €70m in 2018. This figure does not include the revenue foregone in respect of the relief from Motor Tax provided to members of the Scheme.

I understand and fully sympathise with any person who suffers from a serious physical disability and can't access the scheme under the current criteria. However, given the scope and scale of the scheme, any possible changes to it can only be made after careful consideration, taking into account the existing and prospective cost of the scheme as well as the availability of other schemes which seek to help with the mobility of disabled persons, and the interaction between each of these schemes.

Accordingly, I have no plans to amend the qualifying medical criteria for the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme at this time.

Finally, I would like to point out that legislation is being brought forward by the Minister for Health to replace the closed Motorised Transport Grant.

### **European Council Meetings**

129. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if there was a discussion regarding the recent quantitative easing expansion and the impact it will have on the EU economy at the recent ECOFIN meeting. [26563/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At EU level, through both the ECOFIN and Eurogroup meetings, Ministers work alongside the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB) to take stock of the latest economic situation, including the risks and opportunities for European economies in the short to medium-term. I regularly attend these meetings to discuss these developments with my European counterparts and the European Institutions.

At the recent ECOFIN meeting on June 14, there was a general update on the EU economic situation given by the Commission and the ECB but no specific discussion on the expansion of the ECB's quantitative easing (QE programme).

Momentum in the global economy slowed sharply towards the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, amidst a downturn in global manufacturing and trade. Euro Area headline inflation rate in May was 1.2 per cent, down from 1.7 per cent in April 2019. On this basis, average annual Euro Area inflation in the first five months of 2019 is 1.4 per cent. The ECB projects that inflation will remain below target – an inflation rate of below, but close to, 2 per cent – across the forecast horizon, reaching 1.6 per cent in 2021.

The current performance of the global economy is set against a background of increased uncertainty. Risks to economic outlook are significant and include the timing and nature of Brexit, a slowdown in the US and Chinese economies, further intensification of trade tensions,

and increasing global indebtedness.

I am aware of the ECB President Mario Draghi's recent speech (18 June) on twenty years of the ECB's monetary policy, where he referred to the current economic outlook and downside risks facing the European economy. President Draghi noted that in the absence of a return of inflation to the ECB's target additional stimulus will be required. Further, that in the coming weeks, the ECB Governing Council will consider how the instruments at their disposal can be adapted commensurate to the severity of the risk to price stability.

### **Bond Markets**

130. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if all funds raised through the sale of green bonds will be spent directly on NDP-listed green spending totalling €23 billion in view of the fact that proceeds from green bond sales will be held in the central fund. [26094/19]

131. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the projected timeline for the sale of green bonds; and the projected target for sales in order to finance green capital spending. [26095/19]

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount raised through the sale of green bonds to date; and the value and maturity date of each in tabular form. [26096/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 130 to 132, inclusive, together.

Following the €3 billion syndicated transaction by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) last October, there is one Irish Sovereign Green Bond (ISGB) outstanding. This bond, which was the first bond issued under the ISGB Framework published in September 2018, matures on 18 March 2031.

As regards the use of ISGB proceeds, the Framework provides that the intention is that an amount equal to the net proceeds of any ISGB will be allocated to finance new projects or to refinance existing projects, which qualify as Eligible Green Projects. As set out in the Framework, an annual Allocation Report will be made available which will include, amongst other things, the total amount allocated to Eligible Green Projects.

I am advised by the NTMA that the first ISGB Allocation Report will shortly be published. The Report was prepared by the ISGB Working Group, chaired by the Department of Finance, which includes representatives from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the NTMA.

The Report will show that just under €2 billion – representing 65% – of the funds raised in the syndicated transaction last October was allocated to Eligible Green Projects outstanding as at end-2018. This leaves an amount of just over €1 billion yet to be allocated.

The NTMA expects to raise additional funds from the issue of ISGBs. In the first instance, this would be done by issuing more of the existing 2031 bond with timing dependent on market demand and investor feedback.

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 outlines an extensive set of projects and programmes, many of which meet the Eligible Green Project criteria set out in the Framework and therefore eligible for allocation. These include projects aimed at the following national strategic outcomes:

- Sustainable mobility
- Transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society
- Sustainable management of water and other environmental resources

*Question No. 133 answered with Question No. 127.*

*Question No. 134 answered with Question No. 124.*

### **Tax Residency**

135. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the income tax treatment of Irish citizens whose principal work of three-to-four days per week is in another EU country and who spend the remainder of their time here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26259/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My understanding is that this question relates to an Irish citizen whose principal work of 3 to 4 days per week is performed in another EU country and who spends the remainder of his or her time in the State. It has not been confirmed whether the principal work concerned refers to an Irish or foreign employment and whether the time spent in the State is for work or personal reasons. Moreover, information concerning the individual's Irish tax residence and domicile position is not provided. In such circumstances, it is only possible to give an overview of the taxation provisions as they apply generally.

I am advised by Revenue that an individual's Irish income tax position will depend on the source of the income and his or her tax residence position.

A statutory residency test applies, whereby an individual is regarded as resident in the State for tax purposes for a tax year if he or she is present in the State for -

1. 183 days in that tax year, or
2. 280 days between that tax year and the previous tax year with a minimum of 30 days in any year.

In certain circumstances, an individual may also elect to be resident in the State for a tax year. Further guidance material regarding tax residency rules and the concept of domicile can be found on Revenue's website, available here.

Where an individual is considered tax resident and domiciled in the State for a tax year, he or she will be taxable on his or her worldwide income for that year. This is subject to any relief under the terms of a relevant Double Taxation Agreement (DTA).

Where an individual is not tax resident, but is ordinarily resident and domiciled in the State, he or she will be taxable on his or her worldwide income with the exception of foreign employment income earned wholly abroad together with any other foreign source income, provided it is less than €3,810. This is also subject to any relief due under the terms of a relevant DTA.

Where an individual is neither tax resident nor ordinarily resident in the State, he or she will be liable to Irish income tax on his or her Irish source income only. This position applies regardless of where the individual is domiciled.

Where an individual is tax resident, but not domiciled, in the State, he or she will be liable to Irish income tax on both his or her Irish source income and his or her foreign income to the extent it is remitted.

Where an individual is not tax resident in the State but is ordinarily resident in, and not domiciled in, the State, he or she will be liable to Irish tax on his or her Irish source income and his or her foreign income to the extent it is remitted. However, income from an employment all duties of which are performed outside the State is not liable to Irish income tax, even if remitted.

### Central Bank of Ireland Data

136. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of judgments sought in each year since 2011 by unregulated loan owners, retail credit firms and banks with regard to farm-related debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26310/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** While the Central Bank of Ireland collects and publishes a wide range of statistical data, I have been advised by them that it does not collect data relating to the number of judgements sought by unregulated loan owners, retail credit firms and banks with regard to farm related debt.

### Central Bank of Ireland Data

137. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank gathers data on farm-related debt; the number and value of farm-related debts in the economy; the number and value in distress; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26311/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Statistics division of the Central Bank provides data on the outstanding stock of Credit Advanced to Irish Resident Private-Sector Enterprises by Irish banks relating to the Primary Industries sector, of which the main constituent is lending for Agriculture.

This information can be found in Table A.14.1 -Credit Advanced to Irish Resident Small and Medium Sized Enterprises on the Central Bank's website (link as follows).

The annual outstanding stock since 2016 is summarised below in Euro millions.

Lending for the purpose of:	2016	2017	2018
Primary Industries	3,898	3,909	3,990
of which: Agriculture	3,221	3,428	3,465

<https://www.centralbank.ie/statistics/data-and-analysis/credit-and-banking-statistics/sme-large-enterprise-credit-and-deposits>

### Carbon Tax Yield

138. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the value of tax received in 2018 from carbon-related tax, that is, carbon tax, excise on petrol and diesel and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26313/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the aggregate value of receipts collected from Carbon Tax, plus the Excise and VAT on petrol, auto

diesel and other products that carry a carbon charge, is estimated at €3.5 billion for 2018.

A breakdown of these receipts is provided in the following table.

	€ Millions
Light Oils	598
Heavy Oils	1,565
LPG	0.20
Carbon Tax	431
VAT	858
Total	3,452

### Vehicle Registration

139. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vehicles imported in 2016 and 2017; the cost to the Exchequer in each of the years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26322/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is assumed that the Deputy is referring to the number of used vehicle imports.

I am advised by Revenue that the total number of used vehicles imported into the State in 2016 and 2017 is provided in the following table. The table also includes the amounts of Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) collected by Revenue in respect of those vehicles for the years in question (all imported vehicles are liable to VRT).

Year	Number of Imported Vehicles	VRT Collected (€ Millions)
2016	93,073	189.0
2017	119,834	260.5

### Freedom of Information Data

140. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26392/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In response to the Deputy's question, the following table outlines the Freedom of Information requests processed by my Department in 2018:

Freedom of Information	Requests processed by Dept.
Total Processed	389
Granted	44
Part Granted	206
Refused	80
Transferred	12
Withdrawn	33
Handled outside of FOI	14

### VAT Rate Application

141. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the practice of value added tax being added to carbon tax in the process of charging persons for their energy use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26434/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that VAT is charged on the full consideration which the supplier is entitled to receive in return for goods or services supplied. What constitutes consideration for a supply of goods or services is defined in EU VAT law and consists of everything that the supplier is entitled to receive including taxes, duties, levies and charges, excluding the VAT itself. Therefore, VAT is chargeable on the carbon tax element of energy supplies.

### State Claims Agency Data

142. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance the number of claims pending against the State Claims Agency relating to historical child sexual abuse; the number of claims that have been paid to date; the total paid out to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26515/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The State Claims Agency (SCA) is part of the National Treasury Management Agency, which is a body under the aegis of the Minister for Finance. As such, the SCA have supplied the information included in this report, and confirmed that it is correct as of 20th June 2019.

Table 1 shows the number of active claims managed by the SCA in relation to historical child sexual abuse claims as recorded on the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Historical child sexual abuse claims are assumed to be claims with a Date of Incident recorded on NIMS as 2000 or earlier.

Location	Number of Active Claims
Minister for Justice & Equality (Dept. of Justice and Equality, An Garda Síochána, Irish Prison Service)	13
Children's Detention Schools	5
Day Schools	104
HSE	6
Residential Institutions	9
Tusla	34
Total	171

Table 1: Historical child sexual abuse claims

Table 2 details the number of claims paid to date and the total paid to date the number of claims managed by the State Claims Agency in relation to historical child sexual abuse claims as recorded on NIMS.

Number of Claims	Amount Paid
389	€14,918,288.12

Table 2: Amount Paid on historical child sexual abuse claims

Please note that the total amount paid reflects payments on all historical child sexual abuse claims, regardless of the status of the claims i.e. active and finalised claims. Therefore it differs to the query from Parliamentary Question No. 145 in 2018 [21158/18] which reflected payments made on finalised claims only.

### **Proposed Legislation**

143. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the Central Bank (amendment) Bill will be published; if the Central Bank consultation will take place after the legislation has been enacted or before the legislation has been published; when consultation will take place; when it will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26573/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As I announced last week, I received the agreement of Cabinet to begin the process of drafting heads of a Central Bank Amendment Bill. This follows extensive preparatory work by my officials, in consultation with the Central Bank, over the past year. Any new regulatory regime must be practicable and proportionate, and the issues being addressed by this legislation are complex and required to be constitutionally sound in the event of legal challenge. The Attorney General and his office have reviewed the proposals and given thorough and excellent advice to ensure that any legislation brought forward will be robust and sound. The proposed legislation is necessary and timely and will drive positive changes in terms of wider banking culture, greater delegation of responsibilities, and enhanced accountability while simplifying the taking of sanctions against individuals who fail in their financial sector roles.

It is intended that the legislation will give the Central Bank the power to make regulations intended to drive greater accountability in the financial sector, raising the standards of expected behaviour for individuals and firms, in order to achieve better outcomes for consumers and improve the sustainability of the financial system.

My Department is now beginning further engagement with the Attorney General's Office in order to draft Heads of Bill to be brought to Government, to provide for:

- Introduction of a Senior Executive Accountability Regime (SEAR) which places obligations on firms and senior individuals within them to set out clearly where responsibility and decision-making lies;

- Introduction of Conduct Standards for individuals and firms to provide for statutory powers to set and impose binding and enforceable obligations on all Regulated Financial Service Providers (RFSPs) and individuals working within them with respect to expected standards of conduct;

- An enhanced Fitness & Probity Regime which includes provisions to enhance the Fitness & Probity regime to ensure the effective operation of the regime and the ability of the regime to support the Central Bank's proposed individual accountability framework and the conduct standards for individuals and firms.

- Breaking the "Participation Link" which addresses the known deficiency in the legislation which requires the Central Bank to first prove a contravention of financial services legislation against a RFSP before it can take an action against an individual;

- Technical amendments to improve existing legislation and clarify certain statutory processes.

I also intend to address the principles set forth in Deputy Pearse Doherty's private Member's legislation, around the provision of false and misleading information to the Central Bank.

The Central Bank's consultation with industry will take place after the legislation had been enacted.

Following engagement with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel it my intention to bring

forward draft heads of Bill towards the end of the year.

### **Motor Insurance Claims**

144. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the National Claims Information Database, NCID, will be an aggregate database; if not, if users will be able to assess individual claims or claims patterns with regard to individual claimants; the key difference between the NCID and the proposed claim by claim database; when the NCID will be established; when the claims by claims database will be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26648/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At the outset, it is important to clarify that the main recommendation (recommendation 11) of the Cost of Motor Insurance Report was to establish the National Claims Information Database (NCID) on a legislative basis to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of annual trends in motor insurance claims. This was seen as key to developing an understanding of how claims costs are impacting premiums, in particular understanding the relationship between the price paid by a customer for motor insurance and the cost to insurance undertakings.

The NCID therefore will produce an annual statistical analysis of the factors related to the cost of insurance, including the underlying trends in the market such as where claims are settled, the various costs associated with the claims process etc. It is this bigger picture perspective that needs to be obtained, if we are to develop a greater clarity on how the market operates, in order to provide us with the evidence necessary for an appropriate policy response. Arising from this, the majority of information collected will be at an aggregate level only, i.e. not on a claim-by-claim basis. Some claim-by-claim level information will be collected on very large claims, but no personally identifiable information, as defined by GDPR regulations, will be collected.

It was also recommended that the Department of Finance explore the feasibility of an insurance claim-by-claim register in the longer term. This was implemented through the Department of Finance's Report on the Feasibility of an Insurance Claim-by-Claim Register (<https://assets.gov.ie/8837/e7cd3007a92546748af02a4fa51bf188.pdf>). This report concluded that based on its public consultation exercise and on its own analysis that a compelling case had not been put forward for the establishment of a claim-by-claim register. It indicated that it was not possible to fully assess in detail the feasibility of such a register as no clear need or purpose has been put forward on which to base a consideration of:

- the specific data that would be required;
- the appropriateness of that data in terms of necessity, effectiveness and proportionality;
- the specific data protection and commercial sensitivity impacts;
- the logistics involved in collection, processing, access and sharing of the data, including the likely need to procure a technology services provider to administer the register; and
- whether the financial cost, which would likely be similar to that of the Central Credit Register, would be worthwhile.

In addition, an important point that the Oireachtas considered during deliberations on the NCID legislation was on the need for the database to be established in the short-to-medium term. The aggregate nature of the data collected has meant that there are fewer legal and technical complexities involved, and that is why it has been possible to have the NCID established

already. To that end, the NCID came into operation earlier this year, with the enactment and commencement of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018. If we were to have gone down a claim-by-claim approach, there would be major data protection implications (GDPR would be a major factor) which would almost certainly take a long time to address and which would add to the complexity and cost of the project without necessarily providing much added value.

To conclude on this, I understand that the Central Bank has commenced collecting the required data under the NCID from insurers and I look forward to its first report later this year.

### **Brexit Preparations**

145. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies that to date have not obtained an economic operators' registration and identification, EORI, number that will need one in order to continue to trade with the United Kingdom following its departure from the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26698/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that they identify businesses that trade with the UK by analysing the VAT Information Exchange System (VIES) data and that they have now analysed VIES data from 2018. This has identified that approximately 92,000 businesses traded with the UK during this period. On further examination of the data, Revenue have identified that 65,400 of these businesses do not currently hold an EORI number.

I am by Revenue that in line with this most recent data they in the period between now and the end of October they will be supporting individual businesses through an intensified and targeted engagement approach, with a focus on businesses that trade with the UK, designed to encourage action by each business to make sure they are ready for Brexit.

I am advised by Revenue that there has been a significant increase in registrations for Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) numbers year on year.

Details of the number of EORI registrations issued since 2017 is as follows:

Year	Number of EORI Registrations
2017	2,595
2018	2,976
2019 (to 19 June)	6,885

These increased registrations reflect Revenue's ongoing work to encourage businesses to prepare for Brexit and acquire, as a critical first step, an EORI number.

### **Revenue Commissioners Resources**

146. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance if funding will be provided for the purchase of three extra backscatter vans for the Revenue Commissioners. [26744/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that it currently has three mobile x-ray scanners, a 'backscatter van' scanner, and a specialist vehicle that contains both x-ray and radiation detection technology. All the scanners are mobile and can be

deployed to both frontier and internal operations.

The ‘backscatter van’ scanner is Revenue’s most recent acquisition, having been delivered in December 2018. The cost of the scanner was part funded by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Revenue has also advised me that it continually reviews its overall detection capability having regard to evolving risk, developments in technology and the obsolescence of existing equipment. Following its most recent review, Revenue is satisfied that the number of scanner vehicles currently available is sufficient.

### Ministerial Meetings

147. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance the dates in 2019 he has formally met the CEOs of banks (details supplied) in tabular form. [26745/19]

#### Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):

Bank	CEO	Date
AIB	Colin Hunt	19/02/2019
PTSB	Jeremy Masding	26/03/2019
BOI	Francesca McDonagh	01/04/2019

### Tax Code

148. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost to the Exchequer if the entry point to the higher rate of income tax was increased to €50,000 for single earners and €100,000 for couples who are both working and equivalent change for taxpayer units with one partner in work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26771/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Having regard to the Deputy’s reference to an “equivalent change for taxpayer units with one partner in work”, I have assumed for the purposes of this response that the estimated cost requested is for an increase to the standard rate cut off point for all income tax bands of €14,700, which would bring it to €50,000 for a single person, €59,000 for a married one income couple and €100,000 for a married two income couple in a single year.

I am advised by Revenue that the estimated full year cost of increasing the standard rate cut off points in this manner would be approximately €2.3 billion.

This estimated figure is based on projected 2019 incomes, calculated from actual data for the year 2016, and may be revised.

### Tax Code

149. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the work carried out to date on the issue of merging USC and PRSI; his plans to progress the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26772/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** An inter-departmental working group was established in February 2018 to examine and report on options for the amalgamation of

USC and PRSI over the medium-term. The working group completed their work, in line with their terms of reference and their report was submitted to me in late 2018.

The Report addresses a range of options for how amalgamation could be achieved, but also has identified a number of serious challenges that will need to be further considered.

The amalgamation relates to State funds with an estimated combined value of over €7 billion per annum, collected from over 2.5 million income earners. The issue is therefore a complex one that will take time to consider.

Follow-on decisions will be taken in due course and I will make these public at the appropriate time.

More generally, the Government is committed to measures that positively benefit workers while also keeping the tax base broad.

Our income tax system has been transformed since 2008, following a necessary reform to broaden the income tax base in the interest of ensuring a stable revenue stream to fund essential public services.

I am determined to balance the priorities of ensuring that our personal taxation system remains progressive, competitive but also resilient in the future.

*Question No. 150 answered with Question No. 127.*

### **Central Bank of Ireland Reports**

151. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank will follow up on its financial stability note, entitled “Who invests in the Irish commercial real estate market?”, in order to analyse investment in the residential real estate market here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26794/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I would draw to the Deputy’s attention that the analysis published in the Central Bank’s Financial Stability Note “Who invests in the Irish commercial real estate market?: An overview of non-bank institutional ownership of Irish CRE” includes available data on Irish-resident institutional investor holdings of residential real estate, as well as commercial real estate. The definition of commercial real estate (CRE) used in the Central Bank’s Financial Stability Note aligns as closely as possible to cover “income-producing” real estate holdings. In this way, traditional CRE sectors such as office, retail and industrial/logistics are covered, but so too is the institutionally owned private rental sector.

A forthcoming Financial Stability Note by the Central Bank will also analyse the investment in credit assets collateralised by Irish real estate.

This work constitutes part of the ongoing monitoring by the Central Bank of developments in the real estate market of relevance to financial stability, which the Central Bank comments on regularly in publications, including in its bi-annual financial stability review.

### **Revenue Documents Issuance**

152. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if a document will be issued by the Revenue Commissioners to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [26802/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the person concerned is registered for Income Tax as a Self-Assessed taxpayer.

Revenue also confirmed that a ‘Notice of Assessment’ for 2018 issued to the person on 14 June 2019. The ‘Notice of Assessment’ is the appropriate statement of income and tax liabilities for Self-Assessed taxpayers while the ‘P21 Balancing Statement’ is appropriate to individuals taxed under the PAYE system.

Revenue made direct contact with the person following receipt of the Deputy’s Question and clarified the matter with them.

### **Tax Code**

153. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the details of recent changes to the tax system for employers, which see payments to staff recorded on a real-time basis; and the supports that will be put in place to assist small business owners in ensuring their payroll systems are conducive to these changes. [26805/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The new administrative arrangements for PAYE (PAYE Modernisation) commenced on 1 January 2019 and Revenue has advised me that 167,000 employers, including many smaller employers, are successfully reporting pay and deductions details in respect of 2.7m employees via the new format.

PAYE Modernisation represents the most significant change to the PAYE system since its introduction more than fifty years ago. At the heart of the programme is the new real-time reporting requirement (to Revenue) for employers in respect of employee income and statutory deductions, including income tax, PRSI, USC and Local Property Tax, which must be completed with each payroll run. It is important to note that there is no change to the actual payment dates and as such no cashflow implications for employers.

PAYE Modernisation has streamlined the reporting process for employers by eliminating the need to complete the various forms and returns that were required under the old system (e.g. P30, P45, P46, P35, P60) and making it a by-product that is seamlessly generated with each payroll run. Crucially, it provides Revenue with the most up to date pay and deductions details for employees in real-time, which greatly helps in ensuring that taxpayers benefit fully from their various credits and entitlements. Also, for the first time, employees can view the information reported to Revenue on their behalf by employers.

I am aware that during the two-year design stage of PAYE Modernisation, Revenue worked extensively with all relevant stakeholders in a co-design approach to ensure the new arrangements provide optimum benefit for all to the greatest extent possible. This included employers, representative bodies such as the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), the Small Firms’ Association (SFA) and the Irish SME Association (ISME) as well as the payroll industry. Revenue has confirmed to me that working relationships built up during that time are still operating very effectively and are used to solve any issues that arise as the new arrangements settle down.

Arising from the co-design approach, Revenue now provides two main options through which employers can submit payroll details. The first involves a direct connection from a business’ payroll system to Revenue while the second allows employers input payroll details directly via Revenue’s Online Service (ROS). The second option is particularly aimed at smaller employers who may not use electronic payroll solutions. A paper option is also available where an employer is not e-enabled. Revenue also provides very extensive information for employ-

ers on its website at [www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/pay-modernisation/index.aspx](http://www.revenue.ie/en/employing-people/pay-modernisation/index.aspx) and provides a dedicated Employers Helpline at 01-7383638.

Overall, I am very satisfied with the extensive efforts Revenue has made to communicate with and assist employers during both the design and implementation phases of PAYE Modernisation and I congratulate it for delivering such a significant project within a relatively short period of time. Finally, if the Deputy is aware of any specific employers that require assistance with the new reporting requirements, he should advise them to contact Revenue at telephone number 01-6474094 for assistance.

### **Defence Forces Remuneration**

154. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the Public Service Pay Commission report on the Defence Forces; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26446/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Public Service Pay Commission was established to advise Government on public service remuneration policy. In the current phase, the second phase of the Commission's work, it was tasked by its Terms of Reference to undertake an examination of whether, and to what extent, there are difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in key areas of the public service identified in its first report. The Public Service Pay Commission has adopted a modular approach to its work programme for its present exercise.

As the Deputy will be aware, the first module was published by the Commission in August 2018 and deals with issues relating to Nursing and Midwifery, Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors and Hospital Consultants.

The Commission engaged on work in relation to the Defence Forces in accordance with its terms of reference. I understand that written submissions have been received from both the Employer and relevant staff associations and more recently, in March, oral presentations were also made to the Commission by both parties.

The Commission has now completed its examination of recruitment and retention matters in the Defence Forces and has submitted its Report to me for consideration.

This Report will be submitted to Government and published in due course and will then fall to be considered by the parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement, 2018 - 2020 (as per section 3 of that Agreement).

### **Capital Expenditure Programme**

155. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the impact of the Climate Action Plan 2019 on the multi-annual capital investment allocations for each Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26463/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The level of ambition set out in the Climate Action Plan will require significant investment across the entire economy. However, much of this investment was already anticipated and provided for through the commitments included in the NDP, which include over €30bn for climate action and sustainable mobility. The Government has agreed that the cumulative Exchequer costs of the commitments included in the Plan will need to be delivered within existing multi-annual

ceilings and the funding commitments made in the NDP.

### **Brexit Preparations**

156. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of infrastructure that will be required at ports, airports and all points of entry and exit that will be required in the event of a no-deal Brexit; if all necessary infrastructure has been completed at all appropriate locations; if it is ready to be operationalised in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26792/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** All of the required infrastructure in Dublin Port is in place and is ready to be operationalised in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Temporary infrastructure is in place in Rosslare Harbour and ready to be operationalised. Enhanced inspection facilities are being developed and will be in place by October 2019. Works are ongoing to provide permanent infrastructure in Dublin Airport and this will be ready to be operationalised in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

### **Capital Expenditure Programme**

157. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the planned spending for all €23 billion of climate-related spending outlined in the national development plan, NDP, by year; the projected budgetary impact; and the estimated impact on the general Government balance, that is, GNI\* in tabular form. [26092/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Government has committed to increasing public capital investment to about 4% of GNI\* and then maintaining public investment at this level over the remaining period of the National Development Plan (NDP).

The NDP has pledged that €21.8 billion will be invested in the low carbon transition. This includes €7.6 billion in Exchequer funding and €14.2 billion of non-Exchequer funding - mainly investment by the commercial State sector. In addition, €8.6 billion of Exchequer funding is allocated for investment in Sustainable Mobility, with €8.8 billion investment planned in Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources and a further €14.5 billion allocated to Compact Growth.

This investment will fund numerous flagship investment programmes, from supports for energy efficiency, to the delivery of major new public transport projects such as MetroLink. Details of the projects that will be supported by this investment are available from the relevant Departments.

The breakdown of the resource allocations for the delivery of the National Strategic Objectives most relevant to Climate Action over the period of the NDP (2018-2027) is provided in Table 1 attached. In terms of annual allocations, Departmental Exchequer capital allocations are available for the period 2019-2022 (see attached Table 2 which sets out the Exchequer capital allocations for the Departments most relevant to the climate action NSOs). The intention is to extend these further in Budget 2020.

Table 1. Indicative resource allocations for the delivery of NSOs, and for named Strategic Investment Priorities under each NSO, over the period 2018-2027

€ billion	Exchequer	Non-Exchequer	Allocation
Sustainable Mobility (Lead Department: DTTAS)			8.6
of which: Dart Expansion	2.0		
Metro Link	3.0		
BusConnects Programme	2.4		
Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society (Lead Departments: DCCAE, DTTAS, DAFM, OPW, commercial SOEs)			21.8
of which: Energy Efficiency - housing retrofit	3.0		
Energy efficiency in public buildings	0.8		
Boiler replacement	0.7		
Support Scheme for Renewal Heat	0.3		
Climate Action Fund		0.5	
Electric vehicles	0.2		
Flood Defences	1.0		
Energy Investment (renewables, interconnection, etc)		13.7	

Table 2. Departmental Capital Allocations

Departmental Capital Allocations 2018-2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Ministerial Vote Group				(€ million)
Communications, Climate Action & Environment	277	297	317	400
PER Group (incl. OPW)	201	214	223	232
Transport, Tourism & Sport	1,613	2,058	2,526	2,405
Agriculture, Food & the Marine	255	258	265	275

### Capital Expenditure Programme

158. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if an internationally recognised benchmark is being used for determining qualification as the €23 billion green capital spending outlined in the NDP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26093/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** While there is no standard taxonomy in place internationally to determine exactly what might qualify as green spending, it is clear that the items contained within Strategic Outcome 8 in the National Development Plan on Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society (€21.8 billion) would meet any reasonable definition of green expenditure.

For example, Ireland's Sovereign Green Bond was issued under a framework designed to align with the Green Bond Principles published by the International Capital Market Association. These principles are the most common principles in use internationally. Among other categories, the green bond principles consider investment in environmentally sustainable management of living natural resources and land use, sustainable water and wastewater management and clean transportation as eligible to be considered to be green.

As you will note, the National Development Plan took a narrower definition. The €8.6 billion investment in sustainable mobility was contained within a standalone National Strategic Outcome, as was the €8.8 billion investment in Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources and the €14.5 billion allocated to Compact Growth.

It is clear that were any standard benchmark of what constitutes green expenditure applied to the National Development Plan, the proportion of the NDP's expenditure that could be considered to be green would be vastly higher than the sums provided for National Strategic Outcome 8 on Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society.

### **Public Sector Pay**

159. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the planned unwinding of FEMPI measures in line with the Public Service Stability Agreement for each of the years 2019 to 2023 disaggregated by wage bracket. [26226/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Please see the below Tables.

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of costs in relation to the PSSA , on a yearly basis and also by pay band.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of costs in relation to the reversal of outstanding FEMPI measures. As the dates by which these payments must be made are not fixed, but dependent on the timeframes outlined in the act and detailed below, it is not possible to apportion these costs by year.

Chapter 5 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 outlines that for public servants who have not achieved full restoration by October 2020 (i.e. the date of the last PSSA increase), restoration of outstanding FEMPI amounts must be completed by way of Ministerial order. This Order must be made on the following dates:

For those with a post-PSSA salary of under €150,000:

- Covered public servants: a date after 1 October 2020 but before 1 July 2021.
- Non-covered public servants: on 1 July 2021.

For those with a post-PSSA salary in excess of €150,000:

- Covered public servants: a date after 1 October 2020 but before 1 July 2022.
- Non-covered public servants: a date after 1 July 2021 but before 1 July 2022.

Under Section 21 of the Act these restoration measures do not apply to certain officeholders including Cabinet members and the Attorney General.

[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\\_pq159-25-06-19\\_en.xlsx](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25_pq159-25-06-19_en.xlsx)

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

160. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will meet with representatives of community employment supervisors to discuss the implementation of an occupational pension scheme as recommended by the Labour Court in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26460/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** This issue relates to a claim by community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors who have been seeking, through their union representatives, the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a 2008 Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme.

The matter was the subject of extensive discussion at the Community Sector High Level Forum which was reconvened to examine certain issues pertaining to the Community Employment sector and in particular to ensure that the matter was fully examined having regard to both costs and precedent. The membership of this Forum includes public service management and union representatives. The implications arising from this claim extend beyond the CE Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors cadre and impact across the entire Community and Voluntary sector.

A detailed scoping exercise was carried out by my Department in 2017 in order to comprehensively examine and assess the full potential implications of the issues under consideration.

The scoping exercise clearly illustrated that this matter presents very significant issues for the Exchequer, with a potential cost exposure for the State of between €188 million per annum and €347m depending on the size of the sector which is difficult to ascertain, were consequential demands to be made to fund employer pension contributions for all similar State funded Community and Voluntary organisations. This excludes any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension for those imminently retiring, as sought, which could, depending on the size of the sector, give rise to a further Exchequer cost exposure of up to €318 million.

The Forum met in the period subsequent to the conduct of the scoping exercise where relevant matters in respect of this issue were discussed in comprehensive detail with the members of the Forum. These discussions provided a clear understanding to each of the parties of their respective positions in relation to this matter and in this context the formal engagement process between the parties was accordingly concluded on this basis.

It continues to be the position that state organisations are not the employer of the particular employees concerned and accordingly it is not for the State to provide funding for occupational pension scheme provision.

### **National Educational Psychological Service**

161. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will be put forward for a NEPS assessment; if he or she is facing a lengthy waiting period on the public waiting list; if the service provider can recommend an educational psychologist to carry out such an assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26058/19]

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have a NEPS assessment carried out; if they are facing a lengthy waiting period on the public waiting list; the circumstances in which his Department will recognise an educational psychological assessment carried out privately, for example, in circumstances in which a provider has been recommended by the service provider of the child; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26057/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 161 and 165 together.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service

(NEPS) provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments. (SCPA).

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process. Only in the event of a failure to make reasonable progress, in spite of the school's best efforts in consultation with NEPS, will the psychologist become involved with an individual child for intensive intervention or assessment.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention. I have made enquiries with the Cork NEPS Office and am informed that the child, the subject of the Deputy's question, has not been raised for assessment with the assigned psychologist.

I would advise therefore that if concerns exist in relation to the educational or social and emotional development of the child in question that her parents should raise them, in the first instance, with the Principal of the school she is attending, with a view to Principal discussing the situation with the assigned NEPS psychologist.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

162. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps that can be taken to improve the mental health of students at a college (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26740/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Student services and associated activities are an integral part of the whole student experience at third level. Student services support each individual student to achieve his/her intellectual, cultural and social potential while supporting and complementing the formal academic programme. Student services can fall under a number of headings, particularly 'Welfare and Guidance' which includes counselling services, health promotion, careers service, multi-faith, racial and ethnic cultural support.

In relation to the provision of services within the institutions, the position is that my Department provides recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority for direct disbursement to its designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to these institutions, and the internal disbursement of this funding, including the funding of student services, is a matter for the individual institution.

The National Youth Mental Health Task Force Report, 2017 made a number of recommendations in this area and highlighted the good practice and innovative initiatives aimed at supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties in many institutions, as outlined in

the ADEAD report Mental Health Matters. The Department of Health is developing a National Healthy Campus Framework whose aims include to support and recognise the work of institutions in improving the health and wellbeing of campus communities, and to generate and disseminate knowledge for promoting health and wellbeing on campus. In addition a working group has been convened by the Higher Education Authority to progress actions under the Connecting for Life (CfL) strategy, and the first meeting of the group was in December 2018. The group includes representatives from my Department, higher education institutions, student counsellors, and USI.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

163. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the proposal to develop a two-year apprenticeship course for healthcare assistants; when the course will be available for participants; and the colleges that will offer it. [26818/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** An apprenticeship focused on people in healthcare support roles is currently at an advanced stage of development and is due to be rolled out towards the end of the year. Griffith College is the co-ordinating education and training provider for the apprenticeship, supported by an industry-led consortium. In the initial phase of rollout the off-the-job training will be provided by Griffith College in its locations in Dublin, Cork and Limerick but there is scope to extend the training through other education and training providers.

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

164. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an appeal by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26056/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circulars 0007/2019 for primary schools and 0008/2019 for post primary schools provide details of how the allocations of Special Education Teachers have been updated for schools from September 2019, based on updated profile data.

All schools have now received revised allocations for September 2019.

As the re profiling occurred, some schools gained additional allocations, where the profile indicator data indicates these schools have additional needs. Some schools received slightly reduced allocations, where the data indicates less need, and some schools maintained their existing allocations.

No school has lost a full special education teaching post as a result of the re profiling process.

There has also been no reduction to the overall number of special education teaching posts within the school system. There are currently over 13,400 special education teachers in schools, an increase of 37% since 2011.

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

The school referred to by the Deputy has 15.95 special education teaching hours, for an

enrolment of 45 pupils at the time the profile was developed.

This represents a proportionately a high allocation ratio, which takes into account the school profile.

It gives an average allocation of 1 special education teacher to every 71 pupils, as opposed to a national average of 1 special education teacher to every 100 pupils in the primary school sector.

Both my Department and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) are committed to ensuring that all schools are treated equally and fairly in the manner in which their school profiles have been calculated.

Accordingly, a number of review processes have been put in place to support schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published details of an appeal process for the 2019 allocation process for schools on their website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

Schools were advised that the appeal will consider circumstances where schools considered that their school profile was calculated incorrectly, using the data set out in DES Circulars 007 and 008 2019. An appeal could be submitted for a review of the information used and of the calculation of the allocation.

The NCSE wrote to schools on 31st May, 2019 to advise them of the outcome of the appeals.

A second process will be put in place to address circumstances where the school profile significantly changed following the allocation process e.g. a developing school where the net enrolment numbers significantly increased.

The criteria for qualification for mainstream school developing school posts are set out in the Primary and Post Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2019/20 school year.

Schools who qualify for additional mainstream developing school posts, in accordance with these criteria, will also qualify for additional Special Education Teaching Allocations to take account of this developing status.

Finally, it is acknowledged that there are some circumstances, which may arise in schools, which fall outside the appeals process, or allocations for developing school status.

These relate to exceptional or emergency circumstances which could not have been anticipated e.g. where the school profile changes very significantly, or where other exceptional circumstances have arisen in a school and which may require a review of schools capacity to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who need it in the school, or of their utilisation of their allocations.

A process will also be available where schools can seek a review of their allocations in the coming months, including the utilisation of their allocations, in circumstances where a school considers that very exceptional circumstances have arisen subsequent to the development of the profile.

This process will recommence in September 2019.

I am satisfied that there are in place a number of processes which can review the special education teacher allocation for schools where necessary.

The very significant levels of additional provision we have made in recent years to provide

additional Special Education Teachers means that all schools are resourced to provide for the special educational needs of children in their schools.

*Question No. 165 answered with Question No. 161.*

### **Teaching Contracts**

166. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties facing secondary school teachers struggling to secure permanent positions; his plans to create additional positions in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26078/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Teacher allocations to all schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment.

After the redeployment processes have transacted, each school is permitted to fill any remaining vacancies through open recruitment. It is open to any suitably qualified teacher to apply for these advertised teaching positions as they arise.

The recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012).

The 2018/19 school year has seen an increase of over 6,000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

Budget 2019 will see numbers employed in our schools reach the highest ever level. Over 1,300 additional posts in schools will be funded in the 2019/20 school year, including more than 370 teaching posts to cater for growth in student population and additional special classes.

### **Education and Training Boards Staff**

167. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) employed in a project wholly funded by an ETB qualifies to be treated as working in a public service body as per section 1 of the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 under paragraphs (g), (h) and (i) as detailed in appendix 2 of circular 40/2007 for the purposes of being eligible for incremental credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26086/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The person referred to by the Deputy was employed by a body under the Local Training Initiative scheme funded by FÁS originally and then by Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board. This body does not qualify as a public service body under the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 as no public service pension scheme existed or applied to that body.

Therefore there is no eligibility to incremental credit under circular 40/2007 in respect of this employment.

### **Third Level Qualifications Data**

168. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of PhDs awarded in science and technology subjects in each of the years 1996 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26105/19]

169. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and level of sub-degree, degree and postgraduate degrees awarded in each of the years 1994 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26106/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 168 and 169 together.

Attached for the Deputy's information is data compiled by the Higher Education Authority on the qualifications, including PhDs, awarded annually in science and technology subjects between 1994 - 2017. The data set applies to universities, colleges of education and institutions such as the NCAD and RCSI. Data relating to Institutes of Technology applies to the period 2007 - 2017 with earlier data pre-2007 for this sector currently being compiled by the Department for transmission to the Deputy.

[[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\\_pq168-25-06-19\\_en.xlsx](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25_pq168-25-06-19_en.xlsx)] PhDs Awarded]

### **Residential Institutions Statutory Fund**

170. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of funding regarding Caranua; the funding received by Caranua; the funding to be received; the number of open applications with Caranua awaiting payment for services; when the Caranua fund is due to cease operations; the assurances which can be given to applicants the fund will remain open until they have received the services for which they have applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26149/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As I explained to the Deputy in a reply to his Parliamentary Question on 10 April 2019, Caranua (the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund) is entirely funded by cash contributions offered voluntarily by religious congregations in the aftermath of the publication of the report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the "Ryan Report"). As provided for in the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 (the "2012 Act") these cash contributions are received by my Department and are placed in an investment account established by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and are available to Caranua to meet costs incurred in supporting former residents and in meeting the organisation's operational costs and costs associated with the independent appeals process.

The 2012 Act caps the total cash contributions that may be paid into the NTMA investment account at €110 million (excluding added or accrued interest). To date, a total of €105 million, comprising contributions of some €103.6 million plus added interest of €1.382 million, has been received by my Department. Accordingly, a further €6.4 million in cash contributions is required to achieve the capped amount of €110 million set down in statute. A substantial voluntary cash contribution remains outstanding from the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

Caranua, which is an independent statutory body, publishes regular updates on its website ([www.caranua.ie](http://www.caranua.ie)) regarding expenditure, applications, etc. The most recent update shows that to end April 2019, Caranua had expended some €85 million on supports and services for former residents and that it had open applications on hands from 1,882 former residents. Administrative costs have also been incurred.

Having regard to the statutory limit on the funds available to it and the volume of applications on hands and anticipated, Caranua decided to cease to accept applications from 1 August 2018. It is now working to process those remaining applications. Its operations will be wound down during the course of 2019 and the organisation will be dissolved when it has completed the performance of its functions. It is a matter for the organisation to prudentially manage the funds available to it and to ensure that applicants are dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner having regard to the availability of funds.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff Data**

171. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special needs assistants sacked or who have faced sanctions under the grievance and disciplinary procedures for special needs assistants in recognised primary and post-primary schools 2011; the breakdown of the figures; and his plans to update the procedures. [26161/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Circular 0072/2011 sets down the Grievance and Disciplinary procedures to be followed by schools. My Department does not hold information on the number of Special Needs Assistants subject to Grievance and/or Disciplinary procedures, as such staff are the employees of individual schools. My Department retains limited information on Administrative Leave cases, some of which may be related to Grievance and Disciplinary procedures.

My Department has no plan to update these procedures.

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

172. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a child (details supplied) will be provided with a full-time special needs assistant when commencing secondary school in view of the fact the child has had same during primary education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26162/19]

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

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

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

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

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

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

### **Child and Family Agency Services**

173. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has contacted the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs to request that the educational welfare service of Tusla be extended to non-DEIS schools in counties in which the homeless crisis is most acute; the supports being provided to non-DEIS schools with homeless pupils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26052/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy in the first instance that Tusla's Educational Welfare Service, which operates under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, and is under the remit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is available to all schools and not just those which are DEIS schools.

In schools participating in my Department's DEIS initiative (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the Educational Welfare Services of TUSLA have responsibility for operational management of two school-based support services - the Home School Community Liaison Scheme and the School Completion Programme.

In terms of my own Department, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) supports schools in dealing with children with identified additional educational needs, including needs which may arise for children who are experiencing homelessness.

Identification of Need and Early Intervention Strategies are considered key components to supporting children who experience homelessness. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) works with schools through the DES Continuum of Support framework. The NEPS Model of Service works through a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to support schools to meet the needs of individual pupils.

NEPS psychologists can provide advice and guidance to Principals and teachers in relation to individual students needs and in the development of whole school approaches to support inclusion, participation and integration.

In addition the Department of Employment and Social Protection runs the School Meals Programme which provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children.

## **Occupational Therapy Provision**

174. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore the number of counselling sessions offered to teachers in view of the roll-out of the well-being policy, which is due to be fully implemented in all schools by 2023; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26241/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for teachers. The aim of this strategy is to promote the health of teachers in the workplace, with a focus primarily on prevention rather than cure. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises of the Employee Assistance & Wellbeing Programme (EAWP) and the Occupational Health Service (OHS) for teachers.

The EAWP is a free confidential service available to teachers and their family members. It is accessible by means of a Freephone dedicated helpline which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing counselling on a range of personal health and wellbeing issues given by qualified clinicians. Where counselling is requested, telephone and face-to-face counselling is offered with a maximum number of 6 counselling sessions available per case.

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 was launched in July 2018. The policy statement provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, on-going and developing work in the area of wellbeing. It builds on the good work already happening in schools to ensure that best practice in whole-school wellbeing promotion is embedded across the system. The policy outlines a multicomponent, whole school preventative approach to the promotion of wellbeing with interventions at both universal and targeted levels. This policy requires that a Wellbeing Promotion Process is developed and implemented, through the use of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process, in all schools by 2023. The Department has identified eight specific indicators of success embedded in the four key areas of wellbeing promotion:

- Culture and Environment
- Curriculum (Teaching and Learning)
- Policy and Planning
- Relationships and Partnerships

An Implementation Plan for 2018-2023 is included in the policy. The initial programme of work includes among other actions the raising of awareness regarding supports for teacher wellbeing.

## **School Management**

175. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider allocating a leadership and management day per week for teaching principals to help with workload burdens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26242/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Since my appointment as Minister for Education and Skills I have met with a number of Teaching Principals, including at this year's IPPN conference, and I appreciate the pressures they face. In Budget 2019, school leadership is again supported with an additional release day for teaching principals in primary schools and a further four additional release days for teaching principals in schools with special

classes. These additional release days - 18, 24, and 30 depending on the size of the school - will be effective from 1st September 2019.

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

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

### **Capitation Grants**

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to fully restore the capitation grants for primary and secondary schools that were cut during the recession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26243/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. Over the course of the school year 2019/20, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 million will be allocated in 2019.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

### **DEIS Eligibility**

177. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will be considered for DEIS status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26247/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, my Department has introduced an objective, statistics based model for assessing which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage. This new model involves a calculation of the level of disadvantage in each school, based on the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data as previously outlined and is based on the geographical CSO Small Areas where the pupil cohort resides. A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process under DEIS plan 2017 is available on my Department's website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>.

DEIS Plan 2017 states that the improved data on the socio-demographic of schools resulting from the new identification model will have an impact not only on the assessment of schools for inclusion in the programme but also on the scaling of resources to allow for more graduated levels of support. This in turn allows for the ultimate objective of allocating resources to best

meet the identified need of individual schools.

My Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need, including the examination of variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage. All schools, including the one referenced by the Deputy, are being considered using the new identification model. Until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

### **School Transport**

178. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the Minister that participated in the strategic dialogue with the European Commission regarding the school transport scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26249/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The European Commission commenced an investigation on State Aid to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus in 2007. The Commission's Decision was issued on 16th October 2014 and published on 21st November. It found the School Transport Scheme was existing aid since it is based on a 1975 arrangement and for this reason was not unlawful at the time the complaint was made.

The Commission indicated that it would initiate an informal dialogue with Ireland to agree on appropriate measures to ensure that the School Transport Scheme is compatible with the internal market State Aid rules into the future. Ireland is currently engaged in an informal dialogue with the Commission in this regard.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

179. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new build for a school (details supplied); if the new school will qualify as a DEIS school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26267/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The status of the new build for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of Architectural Planning (Stage 2(b) - Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

The design team is currently working on the Stage 2(b) Report which on completion will be submitted to my Department for review. In completing the Stage 2(b) Report the Design Team is required to upgrade the current design to ensure that the new school building is a Near Zero Energy Building (NZEB) in compliance with the 2017 amendment to Part L of the current Building Regulations.

Upon receipt and review of the Stage 2(b) Report my Department will revert to the school with regard to the further progression of this project at that time.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department has introduced an objective, statistics based model for assessing which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage. This new model involves a calculation of the level of disadvantage in each school, based on the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data as previously outlined and is based on the geographical CSO Small Areas where the pupil cohort resides. A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process under DEIS plan 2017 is available on my Department's website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>.

DEIS Plan 2017 states that the improved data on the socio-demographic of schools resulting from the new identification model will have an impact not only on the assessment of schools for inclusion in the programme but also on the scaling of resources to allow for more graduated levels of support. This in turn allows for the ultimate objective of allocating resources to best meet the identified need of individual schools.

My Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need, including the examination of variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage. All schools, Primary and Post Primary, are being considered using the new identification model. However, until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

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

180. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the ongoing provisions made for children with special needs (details supplied) who are entering post-primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26277/19]

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

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

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additional support 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.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school

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

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

181. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of a new school building for a school (details supplied); the stage the plans are at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26287/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB).

I understand from KWETB that procurement of the Design Team for the project will be completed by the end of July 2019. The Design Team will then take the project through the various stages of architectural planning and onwards through the statutory planning requirements and construction.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

182. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of replacing the existing prefabs in a school (details supplied) with a permanent two storey building; the stage the plans are at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26288/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** A building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department's Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

A tender exercise to establish a Project Manager framework was concluded on 10th April 2019. A tender competition to the newly established framework to appoint a Project Manager for the programme through which this project is being delivered will conclude shortly.

A project brief has been finalised and the scope of this project is to provide a stand-alone extension to the existing post primary school in order to increase capacity of the school to a long term projected enrolment of 850 pupils.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

183. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the request by a school (details supplied) for additional accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26289/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am pleased to advise the

Deputy that my Department approved capital funding for the provision of additional accommodation at the school in question.

A further application for increased accommodation was submitted and the school authority was advised that my Department's current priority is the provision of essential classroom accommodation where an additional teaching post has been sanctioned and where there is no suitable accommodation available within the existing school. In this regard, my Department was not in a position to provide the additional funding sought.

Further correspondence has recently been received for the school authority and this is currently under consideration. Once a decision has been made the school authority will be advised directly.

### **School Transport**

184. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has control over Bus Éireann that is similar to the control over his Department's functions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26295/19]

**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 my Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

My Department has responsibility for the overall governance of the scheme regarding policy and financial matters.

Bus Éireann administers the scheme on behalf of my Department. In this regard the company plans and manages the scheme nationally to ensure that services are in line with the specific requirements of my Department.

### **School Transport Data**

185. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when Bus Éireann will recommence charging the maintenance of school buses on a per mile basis as opposed to the charging arrangement it is now using; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26296/19]

186. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when it was agreed that Bus Éireann was allowed to change the maintenance charging system for school transport from the per mile basis system set out in the 1975 agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26297/19]

189. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the maintenance payments to Bus Éireann for school transport are legal or illegal state aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26304/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 185, 186 and 189 together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of my Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The service is delivered using a mix of Bus Éireann, both school transport and road passenger vehicles, and private contractor vehicles.

The health and safety of children and those on board school transport vehicles is the number one priority for the Department and Bus Éireann. In this context, Bus Éireann vehicles are brought into the garage every six weeks for full maintenance checks. The maintenance charges for these vehicles are based on identified required works.

In addition the Bus Éireann contract with private contractors includes a stipulation that requires planned maintenance programmes in place, with vehicle checking intervals of not more than six weeks. Contractors are obliged to ensure that their vehicles have an up to date roadworthiness certificate issued by an RSA accredited test centre when the contract is signed. They are further obliged to keep the roadworthiness certificates current and up to date at all times and provide Bus Éireann with evidence of this.

### **School Transport Tendering**

187. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason he has not put the school transport scheme up for public tender in accordance with EU procurement law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26300/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

The service is delivered using a mix of Bus Éireann, both school transport and road passenger vehicles, and private contractor vehicles. In this regard over 90% of school transport services are provided by private operator vehicles under contract to Bus Éireann.

The Value for Money Review published in 2011 recommended that a single national organiser (separate from the Department of Education and Skills) with a regional dimension should operate the scheme. The Review further recommended that the single national organiser should continue to be Bus Éireann.

Bus Éireann is obliged to tender all works, goods and services in line with the European Directives on public procurement, which includes school transport services performed by contractors under the School Transport Scheme. In this regard, some 20% of services provided by contractors are put out to tender each year and five year contracts are generally awarded following this tender process.

## School Transport Tendering

188. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expenditure of the surpluses generated from school transport since 2011, by item; if these expenditures will be cross-correlated to public contract notices on tenders and the Official Journal of the EU as required under legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26302/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

Bus Éireann, which operates school transport services on behalf of my Department, maintains a separate account for the School Transport Scheme. This account is audited each year by independent auditors and accounts in respect of the last number of years are available on my Department's website.

The 1975 Summary of Accounting Arrangements forms the basis of the payment to Bus Éireann for the operation of the School Transport Scheme.

The Department reimburses Bus Éireann for a range of costs identified as being directly incurred in the operation and administration of the scheme, together with an agreed charge to cover all other direct costs and indirect costs attributable to the work carried out for the Department, referred to as the Transport Management Charge.

The Department has invested in enhancements in a number of areas of the scheme in recent years, including IT, customer service and investment in fleet.

*Question No. 189 answered with Question No. 185.*

## School Transport Review

190. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to review the school transport scheme which has been in place since 2012; the timelines for a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26306/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

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

Changes to the eligibility criteria for my Department's School Transport Scheme were announced in Budget 2011 and derived from recommendations contained in the Value for Money review of the scheme.

In addition and arising from commitments in the Programme for Government, a review of the Concessionary Charges and Rules element of the School Transport Scheme was undertaken.

The review was published in December 2016 and made recommendations on both the charges and the rules element of concessionary school transport.

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

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

191. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a special needs assistant, SNA, will be organised in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26324/19]

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

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

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

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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.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

### **State Pension (Contributory)**

192. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has not been provided with her contribution record prior to 1990 in order to finalise her State pension application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26325/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** An official of my Department has written to the person referred to by the Deputy in relation to the PRSI records requested. The data that is available on the Department database system in relation to the request has been forwarded to her.

I understand that the person referred to has indicated in her correspondence that she had other teaching service. Officials of my Department will contact her in relation to the validation of that other service.

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

193. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision can be expected on a July provision appeal by a person (details supplied); his plans to ensure that provision is granted in view of the specific needs of the person and the supporting documentation provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26327/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The purpose of my Department's July Provision Grant Scheme is to provide funding towards an extended school year for children with a severe or profound general learning disability or children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) enrolled in recognised schools.

The eligibility criteria for the July Provision Grant Scheme 2019 is set out in the Department's Information Note on the scheme which was published with the application forms and is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

In the case referred to by the Deputy an application for home based July provision was received in the Department. The application was refused as it was outside the terms of the scheme. An appeal, with supporting documentation, was received in the Department on 11th June 2019. The appeal was considered and refused as the child in question does not have the required diagnosis and therefore does not qualify for the July Provision Grant Scheme.

The parent was notified of the decision by letter on 17th June 2019.

### **School Funding**

194. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) is eligible for financial support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26373/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in schools.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The focus in the medium term

will be on the provision of PE halls in post-primary schools. Therefore, my Department is not in a position currently to provide financial support to the school in question.

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

195. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the process of allocating special education teaching hours to primary schools when circumstances change significantly from one school year to another will be reviewed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26380/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circulars 0007/2019 for primary schools and 0008/2019 for post primary schools provide details of how the allocations of Special Education Teachers have been updated for schools from September 2019, based on updated profile data.

All schools have now received revised allocations for September 2019.

As the re profiling occurred, some schools gained additional allocations, where the profile indicator data indicates these schools have additional needs. Some schools received slightly reduced allocations, where the data indicates less need, and some schools maintained their existing allocations.

No school has lost a full special education teaching post as a result of the re profiling process.

There has also been no reduction to the overall number of special education teaching posts within the school system. There are currently over 13,400 special education teachers in schools, an increase of 37% since 2011.

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

The school referred to by the Deputy has 15.95 special education teaching hours, for an enrolment of 45 pupils at the time the profile was developed.

This represents a proportionately a high allocation ratio, which takes into account the school profile.

It gives an average allocation of 1 special education teacher to every 71 pupils, as opposed to a national average of 1 special education teacher to every 100 pupils in the primary school sector.

Both my Department and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) are committed to ensuring that all schools are treated equally and fairly in the manner in which their school profiles have been calculated.

Accordingly, a number of review processes have been put in place to support schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) published details of an appeal process for the 2019 allocation process for schools on their website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

Schools were advised that the appeal will consider circumstances where schools considered that their school profile was calculated incorrectly, using the data set out in DES Circulars 007 and 008 2019. An appeal could be submitted for a review of the information used and of the

calculation of the allocation.

The NCSE wrote to schools on 31st May, 2019 to advise them of the outcome of the appeals.

A second process will be put in place to address circumstances where the school profile significantly changed following the allocation process e.g. a developing school where the net enrolment numbers significantly increased.

The criteria for qualification for mainstream school developing school posts are set out in the Primary and Post Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2019/20 school year.

Schools who qualify for additional mainstream developing school posts, in accordance with these criteria, will also qualify for additional Special Education Teaching Allocations to take account of this developing status.

Finally, it is acknowledged that there are some circumstances, which may arise in schools, which fall outside the appeals process, or allocations for developing school status.

These relate to exceptional or emergency circumstances which could not have been anticipated e.g. where the school profile changes very significantly, or where other exceptional circumstances have arisen in a school and which may require a review of schools capacity to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who need it in the school, or of their utilisation of their allocations.

A process will also be available where schools can seek a review of their allocations in the coming months, including the utilisation of their allocations, in circumstances where a school considers that very exceptional circumstances have arisen subsequent to the development of the profile.

This process will recommence in September 2019.

I am satisfied that there are in place a number of processes which can review the special education teacher allocation for schools where necessary.

The very significant levels of additional provision we have made in recent years to provide additional Special Education Teachers means that all schools are resourced to provide for the special educational needs of children in their schools.

### **Freedom of Information Data**

196. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26390/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The following table gives a breakdown of the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests submitted to my Department in 2018, granted, part-granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside of FOI.

Department of Education and Skills - FOI Requests 2018

Requests Granted	Requests Part-Granted	Requests Refused	Requests Transferred	Requests Withdrawn	Requests handled outside FOI
78	139	110	20	159	48

### School Staff

197. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure changes are made to the system that sees primary school secretaries paid through the schools ancillary grant; his further plans to ensure that all secretaries are in future paid directly as employees of his Department; and his views on whether the current system is extremely unfair (details supplied). [26413/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I recognise the very important work done by school secretaries, and indeed by other support staff, in the running of our schools and I am grateful to them for the contribution they make to our education system. I have spoken to a number of school secretaries about their employment conditions and understand the issues they have raised.

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

These schemes have been superseded by the more extensive capitation grant schemes. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes. It is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs. Where a school uses the grant funding for caretaking or secretarial purposes, any staff taken on to support those functions are employees of individual schools. Specific responsibility for the pay and conditions rests with the school.

On foot of a Chairman's Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries and caretakers, including through an independent arbitration process in 2015. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for staff and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 be phased in over that period. This arbitration agreement covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

The arbitration agreement was designed to be of greatest benefit to lower-paid secretaries and caretakers. For example, a Secretary or Caretaker who was paid the then minimum wage of €8.65 per hour in 2015 prior to the arbitration has from 1 January 2019, been paid €13 per hour which is a 50% increase in that individual's hourly pay.

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim.

This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff which lasts until December 2019. The Department will seek to establish the full current cost of the trade union's claim. This is standard practice.

FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

### **Schools Amalgamation**

198. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the amalgamation of schools (details supplied); the timeline for the planned completion of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26435/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department understands that it is the Patron's intention to amalgamate the schools concerned on completion of the building project.

In that regard, the major building project is currently at stage 3 of the architectural planning process and as this is a live tender process, it would not be appropriate to give a timeline for the completion of the project until the tenders have been assessed and a contractor appointed.

### **Schools Mental Health Strategies**

199. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide psychological and counselling supports for children with mental health issues in school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26448/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's National Educational Psychological Service provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments. (SCPA).

In common with many other psychological services and best international practice, NEPS has adopted a consultative model of service and it supports schools in a continuum of support process. The focus is on empowering teachers to intervene effectively with pupils whose needs range from mild to severe and transient to enduring. Psychologists use a problem solving and solution oriented consultative approach to maximise positive outcomes for these pupils. NEPS encourages schools to use a continuum based assessment and intervention process whereby each school takes responsibility for initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention for pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Teachers may consult their NEPS psychologist should they need to at this stage in the process.

This system allows psychologists to give early attention to urgent cases and also to help many more children indirectly than could be seen individually. It also ensures that children are not referred unnecessarily for psychological intervention.

This Government remains firmly committed to the maintenance of a robust and effective educational psychological service. In this connection as part of Budget 2019 the provision of an additional 10 psychologist post to NEPS from next September was announced, bringing overall number to 204 w.t.e to further strengthen the excellent service provided to our school community.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department launched its Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 in July 2018. This policy statement provides an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in the area of wellbeing, which encompasses social and emotional learning across the curriculum. It builds on the good work already happening in schools to ensure that best practice in whole-school wellbeing promotion is embedded across the system. It outlines a multicomponent, whole school preventative approach to the promotion of wellbeing with interventions at both universal and targeted levels.

The Department of Education and Skills does not make provision for therapeutic counselling in schools. When such counselling is considered to be required a referral is made to an outside agency. Schools are advised to have identified appropriate referral pathways in consultation with HSE and other mental health services in their local community. NEPS helps schools in the process of making referrals to external agencies as appropriate for students who require more specialised interventions.

### **School Staff**

200. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to allow for equal and fair rights for school secretaries; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that school secretaries work long hours without holiday pay, sick pay, pensions or access to public service salary scales; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26480/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I recognise the very important work done by school secretaries, and indeed by other support staff, in the running of our schools and I am grateful to them for the contribution they make to our education system. I have spoken to a number of school secretaries about their employment conditions and understand the issues they have raised.

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

These schemes have been superseded by the more extensive capitation grant schemes. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes. It is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs. Where a school uses the grant funding for caretaking or secretarial purposes, any staff taken on to support those functions are employees of individual schools. Specific responsibility for the pay and conditions rests with the school.

On foot of a Chairman's Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries and caretakers, including through an independent arbitration process in 2015. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for staff and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 be phased in over that period. This arbitration agreement covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

The arbitration agreement was designed to be of greatest benefit to lower-paid secretaries and caretakers. For example, a Secretary or Caretaker who was paid the then minimum wage of €8.65 per hour in 2015 prior to the arbitration has from 1 January 2019, been paid €13 per hour which is a 50% increase in that individual's hourly pay.

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

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FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

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

201. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is only one secondary school with an ASD unit in Dublin 24; his plans to remedy the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26497/19]

202. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) has no ASD unit for those in the senior cycle in view of the evident need for one; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26498/19]

205. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children with ASD in Dublin 24 not in full-time education due to an absence of appropriate supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26501/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 201, 202 and 205 together.

Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them from September is a key priority for this Government.

It is open to any school board of management to make an application to the NCSE to open a special class.

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 in schools or keeping waiting lists.

I am aware of the need for increased specialist education provision in the Dublin area.

The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish 167 new special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year of which approximately 156 will be new ASD special classes, which includes new ASD classes in the area referred to by the Deputy.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

There are undoubted challenges when it comes to the establishment of special school and class provision in some schools and communities.

From time to time, the NCSE identifies local areas where additional special class provision is required. In those circumstances, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS) work with the schools and families concerned to resolve the issues involved. This process is ongoing in the Dublin area and the NCSE are actively engaging with schools in relation to establishing ASD classes where there is an identified need for the 2019/2020 school year.

When the NCSE sanction a special class in a school, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class and/or to construct additional accommodation.

Similarly, where special schools wish to expand provision, the school can apply to my Department for capital funding to accommodate additional placements.

There are 37 special schools and 237 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Dublin.

The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 197 in 2018/2019. Of these, 17 are ASD Early Intervention Classes, 139 are ASD Primary Classes and 41 are ASD Post Primary Classes. Each ASD Special class provides 6 placements.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

As the matter raised by the Deputy refers to a particular area, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be forwarded to the National Council for Special Education for their attention and direct reply.

### **School Patronage**

203. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to progress with the patronage process for the new secondary school planned to open in September 2020 in Citywest, Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26499/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Government announced plans in April 2018 for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022) including a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in September 2020 to serve the Tallaght & Newcastle\_Rathcoole (Citywest/Saggart) school planning areas as a regional solution.

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

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

The new Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents and guardians which will allow them to make an informed choice in expressing a preference for their preferred model of patronage for their child's education.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department's assessment reports, the NSEG will submit a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on my Department's website.

The patronage process for the new post-primary school in Citywest/Saggart, will be run later this year, significantly ahead of its due opening. Updates in relation to further patronage processes will be announced on the OPPS website (<https://patronage.education.gov.ie/>) and my Department's website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)).

### School Admissions

204. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the controversy regarding admissions at a school (details supplied) in which multiple parents missed the deadline for admissions due to a change in the practice in the way notice of the deadline was given; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26500/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Parents have the right to choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. In schools where there are more applicants than places available, as in the case of Kingswood Community College, a selection process may be necessary.

It is a matter for the Board of Management which selection criteria are included in their enrolment policy and in what priority these criteria are applied. The selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department, or in the case of an Educational Training Board (ETB) school to the ETB in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school. Further information on the Section 29 appeals process is available on the Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol>.

A list of schools in the area can be found on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Find-a-School/>.

However, if parents are in a position that they cannot secure any place for their child they may wish to call the Education Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) which is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718500.

*Question No. 205 answered with Question No. 201.*

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme Data**

206. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount received from religious groups to address historical child abuse; the level of funding outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26508/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Contributions from the 18 religious congregations involved in the management of most of the residential institutions in which child abuse took place, towards the costs incurred by the State in responding to abuse is being made under two rounds: the legally binding 2002 Indemnity Agreement and the voluntary offers made in 2009 in the aftermath of the publication of the report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the "Ryan Report").

While the total cost of the State's response will be in the region of €1.5 billion, the amounts offered by congregations total some €480.6 million. To date contributions amounting to some €231 million have been made, in the form of cash, counselling and property transfers.

Some €125 million of the €128 million provided for under the 2002 Indemnity Agreement has been fully contributed with the transfer of two properties remaining to be fully completed.

The offers made in the aftermath of the publication of the Ryan Report included cash and properties and were valued by the congregations at €352.6 m. Some €106.4 million of the €352.6 million offered has been received to date, including €103.6 million in cash together with properties valued at €2.8 million. A cash amount of €6.8 million is due from the Congregation of Christian Brothers and is expected to be received in the near future, while an additional contribution of €1 million is expected from the Presentation Brothers.

Cash contributions from the 2009 offers, not exceeding a total of €110 million, are placed in an investment account opened by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) and are available to Caranua (the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund). Cash amounts in excess of the €110 million cap will go towards the costs of developing the National Children's Hospital as will any additional contributions received specifically for that purpose.

Under the 2009 voluntary offers a total of 18 properties were accepted by the Government for transfer to a number of State bodies. The transfer of 13 of these properties has now been completed but valuations have yet to be obtained in a number of cases. The transfer of most of the remaining five properties is at an advanced stage.

One significant element of the 2009 offers relates to playing fields and associated lands, valued at €127 million, offered by the Christian Brothers. This element is complex and is the subject of ongoing engagement between my officials and the Congregation.

Finally, I can advise the Deputy that my Department provides regular updates to Dáil Éire-

ann's Committee of Public Accounts in regard to contribution from religious congregation. The most recent update was provided in May 2019 and is published on my Department's website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/Former-Residents-of-Industrial-Schools/cash-property-transfers/may-2019-additional-information-provided-to-pac.pdf>.

## Child Abuse

207. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of survivors that have received compensation under the ex gratia scheme operated by the State Claims Agency further to the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in a case (details supplied); the level of compensation paid to date; the level of compensation outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26509/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In December 2014, the Government approved proposals to offer out-of-court settlements to those bringing cases of school child sexual abuse where the cases come within the terms of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights: Cases involving sexual abuse of a school child by a primary or post primary school employee [i.e., not simply teachers]; and in respect of whom there was a prior complaint of sexual abuse to a school authority (including an authority of a school in which the employee had previously worked) prior to the issue of the Department of Education guidelines to primary and post-primary schools in 1991 and 1992 respectively.

### Extant cases

On the date when the ECtHR Judgment was delivered, there were 35 cases extant before the domestic courts. Those cases were reviewed by the State Claims Agency to assess whether any of those plaintiffs in the extant cases came within the category of victims entitled to compensation which had been identified by the ECtHR.

Of the 35 extant cases, the SCA identified 7 cases which came within the terms of the Judgment and the Agency made settlement offers of €84,000 in those 7 cases. Six offers were accepted while in the remaining case, the settlement offer was withdrawn as the plaintiff died in August 2015.

The SCA wrote to the other 28 litigants in March 2015 advising that their circumstances do not appear to come within the parameters of the Judgment and inviting them to revert with any contrary evidence. To date, no evidence has been submitted to the SCA in any of these 28 cases.

### New Litigation since the date of the Judgment in relation to Historic Abuse Claims

Where other plaintiffs institute claims against the State in relation to historic school child sexual abuse which are not statute barred and their circumstances come within the terms of the ECtHR Judgment, the SCA is authorised to make settlement offers to those plaintiffs, on the same basis as the extant cases.

Since the ECtHR Judgement, the SCA has been notified of many new historic school child abuse claims. These are either (a) claims which are entirely newly instituted or (b) pre-existing claims against school authorities and in which claimants are now more recently seeking to join the State as a respondent.

### Discontinued cases

As part of the State's response to the ECtHR Judgment, the position of historical cases which

had been discontinued by plaintiffs was also reviewed. In July 2015, the Government agreed to respond to those persons who had instituted legal proceedings in relation to school child sexual abuse which were subsequently discontinued and which came within the terms of the Judgment, in a similar way to how it was dealing with persons in the previous two categories.

As these cases had been discontinued by the Plaintiffs, the proceedings were no longer before the domestic courts and therefore there was no litigation in existence which could be settled. Accordingly, it was determined that ex gratia payments would be offered to all those persons who come within the terms of the ECtHR Judgment and whose claims were not statute barred at the time of their discontinuance. This process is referred to as the ex gratia scheme and is operated by the State Claims Agency (SCA).

To date, 50 applications have been received, of which 44 applications have been declined. In respect of all of the declined applications, the applicants were advised that they could apply for an independent assessment of their application. 20 people chose to do so and it is expected that determinations in their cases will be reached within the next few weeks.

### **Child Abuse**

208. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of submissions to the independent assessor after an application to the ex gratia scheme was declined by the State Claims Agency; the number of applicants whom the independent assessor deemed eligible for a payment; the number of such applicants still awaiting compensation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26510/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As part of the State's response to the ECtHR Judgment in the Louise O'Keeffe case, the position of historical cases which had been discontinued by plaintiffs was reviewed.

As these cases had been discontinued by the Plaintiffs, the proceedings were no longer before the domestic courts and therefore there was no litigation in existence which could be settled. Accordingly, it was determined that ex gratia payments would be offered to all those persons who come within the terms of the ECtHR Judgment and whose claims were not statute barred at the time of their discontinuance.

To date, 50 applications were received by the State Claims Agency of which 44 applications have been declined. In respect of all of the declined applications, the applicants were advised that they could apply for an independent assessment of their application.

A retired Judge of the High Court, Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O'Neill, was appointed in November 2017 to act as an independent assessor in relation to determinations of the SCA on eligibility of applicants to the ex gratia scheme.

Between March 2018 and January 2019, Mr Justice O'Neill looked for a number of submissions on, inter alia: 'whether the imposition of the condition which required that there had to be evidence of a prior complaint of child sexual abuse on the part of the employee in question to the school authority (or a school authority in which the employee has previously worked), to establish eligibility for a payment under the ex gratia scheme, is consistent with and a correct implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Louise O'Keeffe v. Ireland'.

All of the responding submissions are published on the Department's website and can be seen at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

It is anticipated that there will be determinations on the 20 cases that have applied for an independent assessment in the next few weeks.

### **Third Level Education**

209. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of third level institutions offering sexual consent workshops to students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26511/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In recent years third level institutions have established sexual consent programmes and workshops for their students. On 5th April 2019 my colleague the Minister of State for Higher Education launched the Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions, “Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions”. This Framework outlines specific aims and outcomes for students, staff, third level institutions, as well as the Higher Education Authority and my Department. Funding of €400,000 is being made available by my Department over the period 2019-2020 to assist institutions in progressing initiatives in this area.

In relation to the information requested by the Deputy, I am arranging for the higher education institutions to be contacted in this regard.

### **Sexual Offences Data**

210. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of cases of sexual assault or harassment involving students investigated by third level institutions in each academic year 2013-14 to 2018-19 in tabular form; the level of compensation paid out in such cases; the systems in place for reporting sexual assault or harassment in third level institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26512/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** On 5th April 2019 my colleague the Minister of State for Higher Education launched the Framework for Consent in Higher Education Institutions, “Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions”. This Framework outlines specific aims and outcomes for students, staff, third level institutions, as well as the Higher Education Authority and my Department. Funding of €400,000 is being made available by my Department over the period 2019-2020 to assist institutions in progressing initiatives in this area.

The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available, and I am arranging for the higher education institutions to be contacted in this regard.

### **Teacher Training Provision**

211. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if audits of each of the programmes of primary initial teacher education at the four State-funded higher education institutions will be carried out; the way in which such audits will be structured; if such audits will also involve student feedback; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26513/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Changes to the duration and content of all initial teacher education programmes were made in response to recommendations

in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 and were incorporated into the Teaching Council's Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education and Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers. Both were published in 2011.

Improvements which were made to initial teacher education courses include the reconfiguration of the content and duration of courses, with the duration of concurrent (undergraduate) ITE programmes set at a minimum of four years while the consecutive (postgraduate) programmes of teacher education are set at two years, thereby facilitating an innovative re-conceptualisation of programmes.

The lengthened and reconfigured programmes include substantial periods of school placement as central to student teacher development and a number of mandatory elements including literacy and numeracy, teaching, learning and assessment including school and classroom planning, differentiation, behaviour management, inclusive education (special education, multiculturalism, disadvantage, etc) and ICT in teaching and learning. These reforms focused on improving the quality of teaching in schools, which is central to the educational outcomes of our children.

A first cycle of review and accreditation of all 70 ITE programmes, in accordance with these policies, was completed in 2015.

The Teaching Council is currently undertaking a review of the impact of the reconfigured ITE programmes and also of the Criteria and Guidelines, which will feed into an update of the procedures and criteria documentation. This review has involved an Impact Consultation Exercise which engaged with current and former ITE students, alongside other stakeholders. This will inform the next cycle of review and accreditation of all ITE programmes, primary and post-primary, which is due to start in 2020.

In addition to the Teaching Council's work, there are a number of other developments underway in relation to Initial Teacher Education policy and landscape, through the Teacher Supply Action Plan and the recent publication of *The Structure of Initial Teacher Education: Review of Progress in Implementing Reform*. My Department has commenced work on the development of a comprehensive Policy Statement for Initial Teacher Education, in collaboration with the Higher Education Authority and the Teaching Council and stakeholders in the higher education sector.

### **Counselling Services Provision**

212. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of funding provided for counselling and mental health supports in third level institutions in each academic year 2013-14 to 2018-19 in tabular form; the number of students accessing such services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26514/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to HEA designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to the institutions. As autonomous bodies, the internal disbursement of this funding, including the funding of student services, is a matter for the individual institution.

Details of expenditure incurred in respect of counselling services in the third level sector are outlined in the following table. Data in respect of subsequent academic years is not readily available at this time, however, it is expected that it would be broadly in line with previous

years.

Year	Universities & Colleges - (incl MIC, NCAD & St Angela's College)	IoTs
2013/14	€3,963,627	€2,038,106
2014/15	€3,853,638	€2,185,196
2015/16	€4,185,682	€2,299,286

As per information previously provided by the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland in 2017 – c. 13,400 students availed of counselling services for the 2015/16 academic year and it is expected this level of engagement with these services would be similar in other years.

Student services and associated activities are an integral part of the whole student experience at third level. Student services support each individual student achieve his/her intellectual, cultural and social potential while supporting and complementing the formal academic programme. Student services can fall under a number of headings, particularly 'Welfare and Guidance' which includes counselling services, health promotion, careers service, multi-faith, racial and ethnic cultural support.

The Deputy may wish to note that AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, is supported through an annual grant from the HEA towards the cost of the activities of the organisation. In 2016, AHEAD in partnership with the National Learning Network (NLN), published a report called 'Mental Health Matters', a study into the experiences of students with mental health difficulties. The study found that the majority of HEIs have services supporting students with mental health difficulties and some institutions have dedicated services for students.

### Schools Facilities

213. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding for a gym will be allocated on a phased basis to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26538/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in schools.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The focus in the medium will be on the provision of PE halls in post-primary schools.

### Schools Amalgamation

214. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 122 of 7 February 2019, if funding has been committed in respect of a proposed project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26541/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Further to Parliamentary Question No. 122 of 7 February 2019, my Department still awaits the additional information requested from the Patron body.

### **School Staff**

215. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if changes will be made to the system in which primary and secondary school secretaries are paid through the schools ancillary grant; if all secretaries in the future will be paid directly as employees of his Department; and his views on whether the current system is unfair (details supplied). [26572/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I recognise the very important work done by school secretaries, and indeed by other support staff, in the running of our schools and I am grateful to them for the contribution they make to our education system. I have spoken to a number of school secretaries about their employment conditions and understand the issues they have raised.

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.

Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

These schemes have been superseded by the more extensive capitation grant schemes. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991.

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes. It is a matter for each individual school to decide how best to apply the grant funding to suit its particular needs. Where a school uses the grant funding for caretaking or secretarial purposes, any staff taken on to support those functions are employees of individual schools. Specific responsibility for the pay and conditions rests with the school.

On foot of a Chairman's Note to the Lansdowne Road Agreement, my Department engaged with the Unions representing school secretaries and caretakers, including through an independent arbitration process in 2015. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for staff and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 be phased in over that period. This arbitration agreement covers the period up to 31 December 2019.

The arbitration agreement was designed to be of greatest benefit to lower-paid secretaries and caretakers. For example, a Secretary or Caretaker who was paid the then minimum wage of €8.65 per hour in 2015 prior to the arbitration has from 1 January 2019, been paid €13 per hour which is a 50% increase in that individual's hourly pay.

Officials from my Department attended a meeting of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the 9th of April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim.

This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff which lasts until December 2019. The Department will seek to establish the full current cost of the trade union's claim. This is standard practice.

FÓRSA's claim will be fully considered once the current costings have been determined on completion of a survey. The Department is fully open to having further dialogue with FÓRSA once this work has been undertaken.

### School Accommodation Provision

216. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools nationally in temporary buildings or on temporary sites; the length of time they are in these temporary situations; if permanent sites have been identified; the length of time it is expected that each of these schools will be waiting for the permanent build; the patronage of each of these schools by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26633/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that within the context of a rapidly increasing school population, my Department's priority is to ensure that every child will have access to a physical school place. In this regard, it is sometimes necessary to make use of temporary accommodation in order to meet the accommodation needs of schools.

Furthermore, it may also be necessary to make use of temporary rented accommodation when an immediate or short term need arises. For example, a school may require a temporary building in circumstances where a major school construction project is planned. Such temporary accommodation is removed when the major project concerned is completed. The length of time it is necessary to make use of temporary rented accommodation will vary from project to project.

I can confirm to the Deputy that there are 471 schools renting interim accommodation, either temporary prefabricated classrooms or an area within an existing permanent building. My Department does not hold a record of schools where such interim accommodation is secured from their own funds.

Where the acquisition of a permanent site by my Department is required, my officials work to secure such a site and confirm its location at the earliest possible date. However, given the challenges that can arise with the sometimes limited availability of suitable sites and the complexities that can arise during the negotiation and conveyancing stages, the timeframes for the acquisition of school sites can vary significantly. Details of those projects which are at site acquisition stage, and indeed all projects on the Building Works Programme, are listed and regularly updated on my Department's website, [www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie). This includes both projects where the school patron is acquiring the site and those where my Department is responsible.

In relation to the patronage of each of the schools in temporary accommodation by county, this information is not readily available. However, I will arrange for this information to be forwarded directly to the Deputy shortly.

### School Accommodation Provision

217. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if planning permission has been submitted for the Dún Laoghaire Educate Together and a school (details

supplied) regarding temporary accommodation; the timeline for the temporary accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26634/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware, the school to which he refers was granted approval under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2018 for the provision of pre-fabricated accommodation which will include 5 main-stream classrooms, en-suite toilets, shower area & staff toilets, multi-sensory room, 3 small safe places, storage, staff room & office/administration room. The Department is also approving refurbishment works to 2 existing currently unused prefabs at the Red Door campus to provide additional accommodation for both Red Door School and Dun Laoghaire ETNS for September 2019. The project is devolved to the school authorities for delivery.

My Department has received this week the submission from the school to proceed to lodge planning permission. This submission is currently being reviewed by my Department. Once this review is completed, and subject to any issues arising in that respect, the school authority will then be authorised to lodge its planning application for the project. Progression of the project will then lie with the school authorities.

### **Special Educational Needs**

218. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the outstanding elements of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 to be implemented; if the outstanding elements will be enacted on a statutory basis; and the cost of implementing the Act in full on a statutory basis and on a non-statutory basis. [26653/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that a number of sections of the Education for Persons with Special Needs (EPSN) Act 2004 have been commenced. The commenced provisions include those establishing the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and those providing for an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs.

The following sections of the EPSN Act were commenced in 2005.

Section 1 – Interpretation

Section 2 - providing for the inclusive education of children with Special Educational Needs

Section 14 – placing certain duties on schools

Sections 19 to 37 - placing the Council on a statutory footing

Section 39 - placing certain duties on Health Boards

Sections 40 to 53 - amending the Education Act

Schedule 1 – providing for meetings and membership of the Council

Schedule 2 providing for the Chief Executive Officer of the Council

The remaining sections of the Act have yet to be commenced. The Sections of the EPSN Act which have not been implemented are those which would have conferred a statutory entitlement to:

- an educational assessment for all children with special educational needs

- consequent development of a statutory individual educational plan (IEP)
- the delivery of detailed educational services on foot of this plan
- an independent appeals process.

The NCSE estimated, in its Plan for the Implementation of the EPSEN Act Report, which was published in 2006, that additional investment over a period of years of up to €235 m per annum, across the education and health sectors, would be required to fully implement the EPSEN Act.

The view of the Department of Education and Skills was that the level of investment required could be significantly greater than that envisaged in the NCSE report. Legal advice provided to that Department also indicated that the EPSEN Act, as it is currently constituted, may not be implemented on a phased, or age cohort, basis.

The level of additional expenditure required would have to take into account annual demographic growth and service developments in the area of special educational needs, pricing adjustments and salary cost differentials on an ongoing basis. Estimates would also have to be made as to the number of pupils who might currently qualify for the statutory service provisions envisaged by the EPSEN Act.

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

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

- SNAs by 42%, from 10,575 in 2011 to over 15,000 at present.
- Special classes by 160% to over 1,450 at present, compared to 548 special classes in 2011.
- Special education teachers by 37%, from 9,740 in 2011, to over 13,400 at present.

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

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

Further consultations took place with education partners and stakeholders in the context of the undertaking of a comprehensive review of the SNA scheme and will continue in relation to the implementation of recommendations contained in this report.

Consultations also took place in relation to providing power to the National Council for Special Educational need to designate a school place for a person with special educational needs, which is now provided for in the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

I can also advise that, whereas there is not currently a statutory requirement to provide individual education plans for children with special needs, at present, all schools are encouraged to use Education Plans. The Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate's advice is that the majority of schools are now using some form of individual education planning for children with special needs. The Guidelines for schools on implementing the new special education teacher allocation model advise schools as to the importance of ensuring that student support plans or

educational plans are in place.

It is therefore intended to bring into effect many of the good ideas contained in the EPSEN Act, on a non-statutory basis initially, through policy developments across a range of areas, in conjunction with NCSE policy advice. Full consultation will also take place with stakeholders before adjustments are made.

I can assure you that this Government will continue to prioritise investment in the area of special education support and I am confident that ongoing investment and reform will continue to see improvements made in this area.

### **Brexit Preparations**

219. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which the recognition of mutual qualifications on an all-island basis would be impacted in a no-deal Brexit; if plans have been agreed to ensure the continuation of recognition of qualifications in all Brexit scenarios; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26699/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Should the UK Leave on the basis of the Withdrawal Agreement, including a transition period, the current EU Directives will continue to apply to the UK during that time. The EU and the UK indicated in the Political Declaration setting out the framework of the Future Relationship between the EU and the UK that during negotiations on the Future Relations they will seek to develop appropriate arrangements on those professional qualifications which are necessary to the pursuit of regulated professions and in the Parties' mutual interest.

Should the UK leave the EU on the basis of a No Deal scenario, the EU Directive on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) will no longer apply in the UK. In the No Deal context, working with officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other Departments with responsibility for the regulation of professions, my Department is leading work to ensure, in as far as possible, the provision of arrangements with the UK to recognise professional qualifications. As part of this process, my Department is co-ordinating action by each Department with responsibility in the area of professional qualifications to ensure engagement and dialogue between regulatory bodies in Ireland and the UK and to put in place arrangements for the continued recognition of qualifications.

Relevant Departments have indicated that the engagement between their Regulatory Authorities and their UK counterparts is underway to achieve these objectives.

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

220. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of efforts to secure sites in Buncrana, County Donegal, for new schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26718/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the provision of new accommodation for the schools in question is included in my Department's capital programme. The project to provide this school accommodation requires the acquisition of a suitable site and this has proved to be extremely challenging to date, despite the best efforts of my Department and of officials in Donegal County Council who are assisting under the Memorandum of Understanding.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department is doing its utmost to deliver a solution for the schools at the earliest possible date and officials in both my Department and Donegal County Council are actively engaged in this process.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

221. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made in progressing plans for the new school buildings at a college (details supplied) in County Donegal since the public meeting there in May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26719/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that this project has been devolved to Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB) for delivery.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that DETB has appointed a new architect to complete the delivery of the extension project. It will now work with the existing design team to finalise the Stage 2A process prior to lodging planning permission, which is still expected to take place in September/October.

I can also inform the Deputy that, in the meantime, approval has been given by my Department to carry out a series of works that will take place over this coming Summer. These works will include surveys of the existing main building to investigate issues with it, refurbishment works on the existing temporary accommodation on site, and works to address disabled access issues.

### **Third Level Staff**

222. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full-year cost for each one point reduction in the academic staff-to-student ratio in universities. [26751/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that in accordance with the methodology used in the published institutional profiles, the current academic staff: student ratio in Universities is recorded at 20:1.

This is calculated based on the 2017/18 enrolment figures for full time equivalent (FTE) students (full and part time) to all academic staff as at 31 Dec 2017.

A one point reduction would require an estimated additional 288 academic staff and an estimated cost €17 m per annum. It should be noted that this figure includes Department funded staff. The estimated annual cost for a one point reduction in Department funded academic staff, is calculated at 200 staff at an annual cost of €12 m.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

223. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has met his UK counterpart formally since the beginning of 2019. [26752/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I have not met with the Secretary of State for Education since the beginning of 2019. However, I took the opportunity to

meet with Nick Gibbs, Minister of State at the Department for Education in the UK, when I attended the Education Council meeting in Brussels in May 2018. We had the opportunity to discuss the issue of Brexit and its potential education impact specifically in Northern Ireland, along with a number of other issues of shared priority.

I intend to meet with Secretary Hinds in the coming weeks.

### **Emergency Works Scheme Applications**

224. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an emergency works application will be granted for a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26782/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school to which the Deputy refers submitted an application for funding under my Department's Emergency Works Scheme to carry out works to the school's floors. The application was refused as the works were deemed to be outside the scope of the scheme.

My Department is currently considering an appeal which has recently been received from the school authority in this respect. A final decision will issue directly to the school authority as soon as that appeal process has concluded.

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

225. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a young child (details supplied) will be allocated a full-time special needs assistant in a school in September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26787/19]

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

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

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additional support 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.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school

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

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

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

226. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has not received SNA support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26793/19]

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

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

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The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support because the requirements outlined in Circular 0030/2014 were not complied with. Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2019/20, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The closing date for receipt of appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday 27th September 2019.

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

### **Insurance Costs**

227. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that special needs schools are facing uncertain futures as a result of rising insurance costs; if his attention has further been drawn to the fact that some patron bodies in the health sector that previously included special schools under their patronage in their insurance policies are now being instructed by the Department of Health that they can no longer do so; the arrangements he is making to ensure that capitation grants are increased to allow these schools to pay their insurance premiums; the other measures being undertaken to ensure that such schools remain open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26830/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Securing and maintaining adequate and appropriate insurance cover is a matter for the managerial authority of each school.

My Department is aware of issues relating to very significant increases in insurance costs in some special schools, through correspondence received from some special schools, through discussions with the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) and media reports.

These increases appear due, in some instances, to an annual increase in insurance costs generally and, in some cases, an increase in claims against special schools.

Separately, a number of special schools under the patronage of organisations that are funded by the HSE to provide health and personal social services on behalf of the HSE under Section 38 of the Health Act, experienced increased insurance quotes, when the funded bodies were delegated to the General Indemnity Scheme (GIS) under the State Claims Agency. The effect of the delegation was that the special schools under their patronage needed to seek separate insurance cover.

The mechanism for funding schools, including special schools, is through the provision of capitation for running costs including insurance. There is no scope to provide additional funding to schools outside this mechanism.

Additional funding has been made available to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post-primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year.

While some special schools under the patronage of organisations funded by the HSE under Section 38 and 39 of the Health Act are among special schools that are experiencing increases in insurance costs in recent years, since the funded bodies were delegated to the General Indemnity Scheme (GIS) under the State Claims Agency, over 50% of special schools that are not under this patronage, have always had separate insurance cover funded from their capitation grants and have not had the benefit of being included as part of a larger body's insurance cover.

My Department is working as a matter of urgency with NABMSE and relevant Government departments, including the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the State Claims Agency, to seek a resolution to the issue of increased insurance costs in special schools.

A number of options have been identified to address the issue. These include the development of a group insurance scheme for special schools, which, at this stage, appears to be the

most viable.

My Department has been working with NABMSE in recent weeks to explore options for establishing a group insurance scheme. NABMSE has agreed to facilitate the establishment of a group insurance scheme on behalf of special schools.

As a first step, NABMSE met with boards and patrons on 6th June to discuss the matter and options available. An official from my Department attended this meeting. The importance of all special schools signing up for such a scheme was emphasised at the recent meeting and all school representatives who were in attendance, were in favour of exploring the Group Scheme option.

Special Schools have until the 28th June to return a letter authorising NABMSE to represent the schools on all matters pertaining to the proposed special school insurance 'Group Scheme'. NABMSE hope to publish a request for tender for a brokerage service on receipt of letters of authorization from schools and have a broker in place before the end of July.

15 special schools have contacted my Department directly, who are experiencing difficulty in paying insurance premiums currently, some of which were facing closure as a result. These schools report increases in insurance of between 30% to over 700% in recent years.

My Department has agreed to provide advanced school capitation payments on an exceptional basis to a number of special schools and is currently engaging with the schools involved in this regard. An advance in capitation has been provided to 2 special schools to date.

In making the decision to issue advanced capitation, my Department has had regard to a number of factors which have combined to create an insurmountable and unforeseeable financial challenge for the special school.

Taking into account the amount of capitation due to the special schools for 2019/20, the impact a full recoupment might have on the schools next year and their ability to meet other costs, methods of recoupment will be explored with each school individually.

It is not sustainable however for my Department to continue to advance capitation payments as a way of meeting vastly increased insurance premiums.

I know that this is a cause of concern to schools as well and it is my hope that a speedy and cost effective resolution can be secured for impacted special schools.

### **Schools Building Projects Data**

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and location of second level schools in north County Kildare scheduled for improvement or replacement and in respect of which submissions have been made by the various school authorities; the extent to which progress is being achieved or otherwise in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26894/19]

229. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and location of primary schools in north County Kildare scheduled for improvement or replacement and in respect of which submissions have been made by the various school authorities; the extent to which progress is being achieved or otherwise in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26895/19]

230. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number

of school replacements, extensions or upgrades submitted by the various school authorities throughout north County Kildare at primary and second level in respect of which construction progress is in hand, is planned for an early date or is awaiting attention; when it is expected that each of the projects will be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26896/19]

232. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the school building programme continues in line with expectation and projections with particular reference to the country in general and County Kildare in particular; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26898/19]

235. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary and secondary schools in north County Kildare in respect of which proposals have been received for the upgrading or provision of new facilities; the extent to which he expects to respond positively to respective requests in 2019, in view of the urgency of the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26901/19]

237. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary and second level school construction or upgrading requirements are being met in Naas, County Kildare; if the projects are progressing in line with expectations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26903/19]

238. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary and second-level school construction or upgrading requirements are being met in Maynooth, County Kildare; if ongoing projects are progressing in line with expectations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26904/19]

239. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary and second level school construction or upgrading requirements are being met in Celbridge, County Kildare; if the programme remains adequate to meet the demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26905/19]

240. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary and second level school construction or upgrading requirements are being met in Kilcock, County Kildare; if the programme remains adequate to meet the demand in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26906/19]

242. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the up-to-date position in regard to the proposed extension, upgrading or replacement of facilities at primary and post-primary level in Clane, County Kildare; the precise stage of development in each case with a view to identifying the extent to which the needs can be met in the medium to short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26908/19]

247. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to a proposed extension, upgrading or replacement of facilities at primary and post-primary level in Sallins, County Kildare; the stage of the development in each case with a view to identifying the extent to which the needs can be met in the medium to short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26913/19]

248. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in regard to the proposed extension, upgrading or replacement of facilities at primary and post-primary level in Prosperous, County Kildare; the precise stage of development in each case with a view to identifying the extent to which the needs can be met in the medium to short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26914/19]

249. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills position in

regard to the proposed extension, upgrading or replacement of facilities at primary level in Derinturn, Carbury, County Kildare; the precise stage of the development in each case with a view to identifying the extent to which the needs can be met in the medium to short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26915/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 228 to 230, inclusive, 232, 235, 237 to 240, inclusive, 242 and 247 to 249, inclusive, together.

Under Project Ireland 2040, the Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector nationally, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

In 2019, capital allocation for the school sector amounts to €622m which is an increase of €80m on the allocation for 2018.

It is anticipated that construction activity in 2018 and 2019 will deliver approx. 40,000 additional and replacement school places. This will facilitate the replacement of over 600 prefabs which is a key element of our prefab replacement programme. It will also facilitate the provision/modernisation of the sports facilities and science laboratories in these schools.

In April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement followed 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 new 16 classroom primary school (to be established in September 2019) in Ashbourne and a new special school in Dublin 15 were also announced in 2019 bringing the overall total to 44.

As the Deputy is aware, I announced details of the structural remediation programme last week which has now commenced.

My Department regularly updates the current position on all projects on the school building programme and this information is available in county format on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **Education and Training Boards**

231. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in the advancement of a Gaelcholáiste in north County Kildare, with particular reference to the need to meet the second level requirements of the students emerging from schools (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26897/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In relation to the planned new Gaelcholáiste to which the Deputy refers, my Department has recently received correspondence from the school patron, Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board, which sets out that for operational reasons the ETB has decided it is in the best interest of the school communities in the Maynooth and surrounding areas to defer the opening of this new school from September 2019 to September 2020.

The Gaelcholáiste will be located on the current Maynooth Post Primary School/Maynooth Community College grounds which will be coming available as these schools move to the Maynooth Education Campus.

The ETB has indicated that a high number of expressions of interest for September 2020 have already been received and that enrolment will commence in Autumn 2019 for September 2020.

As the Deputy will be aware, Maynooth Community College opened in 2014 with an Irish-medium Aonad. It is open to students to apply to the Aonad at Maynooth Community College in the 2019/20 school year, ahead of the opening of the Gaelcholáiste in 2020.

*Question No. 232 answered with Question No. 228.*

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

233. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to continue to ensure the availability of adequate special needs places in all primary and secondary schools in County Kildare and nationally in the short to medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26899/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

This includes the establishment of special class and special school placements in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

There are currently 4 special schools and 75 special classes attached to mainstream schools in Co. Kildare. The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish 167 new special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year of which approximately 156 will be new ASD special classes. This includes 2 new primary ASD classes and 1 post-primary ASD class in Co. Kildare.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) wrote to me on 18th April last formally informing me of their view that there is insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15, and special class capacity in County Kildare for September.

This letter is the formal activation of section 37A of the Education Act 1998 (as inserted by section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018). This contains a procedure through which the capacity of schools in an area can be tested and through which ultimately a Ministerial direction can be made requiring a school to make additional special education provision available.

While progress has been made, some further issues remain to be addressed in the Kildare area.

A working group chaired by the NCSE and involving relevant sections of my Department has been convened to put in place a protocol to ensure that there is effective pro-active planning of specialist educational places for students in special classes and special schools.

The resulting protocol will clarify roles and responsibilities, provide for the exchange of data and information, identify timeframes and cover the short, medium and longer term.

The protocol will support the operation of Section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 which empowers the Minister to direct a school to make additional provision for children with special educational needs. A protocol has been drafted and is expected to be finalised shortly.

The NCSE is currently undertaking Policy Advice on Education Provision in Special Classes and Special Schools to examine whether placement in specialist settings brings about improved educational outcomes and experiences, relative to their ability, for students with special educational needs. This Policy Advice is to be completed and a report submitted to the Minister no later than June 2020.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to improve pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes in all primary schools in County Kildare and nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26900/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. 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 2018/19 school year saw an increase of over 6000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

The Statistics Section of my Department's website contains extensive data in relation to our schools including pupil teacher ratios and teacher numbers. 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.

Any additional improvement in the pupil teacher ratio would have to be considered as part of the annual budgetary process, alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

*Question No. 235 answered with Question No. 228.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

236. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in the provision of an extension at a school (details supplied); when plans are likely to progress further; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26902/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department approved funding for the provision of 2 additional classrooms at the school in question together with a contribution towards the conversion of existing accommodation to a multi-purpose room.

The project has recently been approved to proceed to tender stage. As it has been devolved for delivery to the school authority, it is a matter for the Board of Management of the school to advance this project.

*Questions Nos. 237 to 240, inclusive, answered with Question No. 228.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

241. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in the extension and upgrading of the primary level school facilities at Johnstownbridge, County Kildare; when it is expected that new and upgraded facilities are likely to be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26907/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that grant was provided to the school in question in 2015 under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to construct a mainstream classroom, three resource rooms and a WC for assisted users. The project went to construction in 2017 and was completed in 2018. The full grant has been paid to the school.

*Question No. 242 answered with Question No. 228.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

243. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the Maynooth educational campus development is likely to be completed; the full extent and scale of the facilities to be provided; the extent to which the temporary accommodation sought by schools (details supplied) is likely to be provided in the interim; if a target date has been set for the completion of all works and the opening of the two schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26909/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that the delivery of Maynooth Educational Campus consisting of two 1,000 pupil schools and a shared Sports Facility has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB).

The assessment of tenders received for the completion of the remaining works for the project in question has recently been completed. It is expected that a tender report will be issued to the Department shortly for approval and that the successful contractor will recommence work on site in early Q3 2019.

The completion date for the two school buildings is June 2020. The completion date for the sports facility is July 2020.

My Department has approved temporary accommodation to the patron and it is understood that KWETB is making arrangements for the installation of this accommodation.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

244. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in respect of a proposal to replace the primary school at Newtown, Enfield, County Kildare,

with particular reference to the need to address demographic challenges in the area; if a timescale for delivery has been agreed in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26910/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The School to which the Deputy refers was awarded devolved funding under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2018 to provide four new classrooms and ancillary facilities. The School Authority has recently been given permission to proceed with an application for planning permission for the project. As it has been devolved for delivery to the school authority, it is now a matter for the Board of Management of the school to advance this project.

### Summer Works Scheme

245. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which required works at a school (details supplied) are progressing in accordance with the requirements as set out by the school authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26911/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that a mechanical works project approved under my Department's Summer Works Scheme was recently completed at the school in question. In addition, works to the school's emergency lighting and fire alarm system were also completed.

### Schools Building Projects Status

246. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in regard to upgrading and replacement of a school (details supplied); the extent to which the demographic changes in the area are being catered for in accordance with the case set out by the school authorities arising from the demographics of the area; when the project will move to the next stage; if this can be done as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26912/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included on the Department's school building programme to be delivered as part of the National Development Plan.

The accommodation brief for the project is being finalised at present and my Department will be in contact with the school authorities as soon as this process has been completed.

*Questions Nos. 247 to 249, inclusive, answered with Question No. 228.*

### Technological Universities Status

250. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if confirmation has been received from Dundalk Institute of Technology of plans to pursue technological university status; if the process has been formally commenced; his views on whether an application for technological university status would be of benefit the institute and the north east region; if his attention has been drawn to the high levels of staff support at the institute for technological university status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26916/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Government policy as set out in the Programme for Government is to support the creation of TUs as higher education institutes (HEIs) of sufficient size, capacity and critical mass to have a significant impact at regional, national and international level. These regional HEIs will have greater links to industry and will have an enormous impact on the capacity to create and retain jobs in regions. As such, Government will prioritise those institutions which have clear ambitions and plans for the furthering of industry-relevant technological research and education.

The Government has provided the enabling legislation in the Technological Universities Act 2018 for two or more IoTs to come together to seek TU status. The Technological Universities Act 2018 which was signed into law on 19 March 2018 provides the legal framework underpinning the process for establishment by two or more IoTs as a TU subject to a decision-making process contingent on the meeting of specified eligibility criteria and including assessment by an international advisory panel. The 2018 Act also sets out the functions and governance requirements for these new HEIs. Section 29 of the 2018 Act provides for the application jointly by two or more institutes to the Minister of Education and Skills for an order seeking designation as a TU. Section 38 of the Act provides that an institution and an established TU may also apply to the Minister for such an order.

Government also continues to support those consortia of IoTs seeking to achieve TU status under the legislation in terms of significant Exchequer co-funding. Submissions from HEIs seeking funding under the 2019 call for proposals in respect of TU development and other higher education landscape restructuring projects, for which a total of €14 million in Exchequer funding is being made available, are currently being evaluated by the Higher Education Authority before the Authority makes recommendations for funding allocations to the Minister for Education and Skills.

The potential benefits of becoming a successful TU are significant in terms of increased reach, international recognition, research capacity building, FDI attraction, skills retention and creation, regional development, enhanced staff and student experience and opportunities and socio-economic progression. The merging of institutes of technology will create institutions of sufficient size, capacity and critical mass to maximise those benefits and attract greater investment.

My Department is not aware of any proposals by DkIT to pursue TU status under the 2018 legislation currently and it is understood that at this time DkIT has not either joined or formed a consortium seeking to develop TU proposals.

### **School Transport Applications**

251. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for school transport by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26920/19]

**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.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

I am pleased to advise that the child referred to by the Deputy is eligible for school transport

and my Department has sanctioned a school transport service; Bus Éireann are currently liaising with the school authorities and the family in relation to the establishment of this service.

In the meantime, the parents may avail of a ‘Special Transport Grant’ towards the cost of making private transport arrangements until the commencement of the service.

### **Brexit Preparations**

252. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the provisions that have been made to protect in as much as feasibly possible all-island legal services in a no-deal Brexit scenario; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26697/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As will be appreciated, the jurisdictions immediately concerned, while different, have had a very close relationship for historical and political reasons including within a shared common law heritage. The Law Society and the Bar of Ireland are, therefore, liaising with their Northern Ireland counterparts to maintain the current cross-border arrangements post-Brexit where this is feasible and legally permissible in accordance with EU and national law. However, it remains to be seen what form Brexit will ultimately take so that the relevant arrangements can be finalised.

Secondary legislation has been prepared by my Department under the relevant provisions of the Solicitors’ Acts and in conjunction with the Council of the Law Society to ensure that the recognition of UK solicitors on a reciprocal basis in this jurisdiction can continue post-Brexit, including under a no deal scenario. Separately, the Bar of Ireland, whose bilateral recognition framework outside the current EU framework is non-statutory, is making similar arrangements for the reciprocal recognition of UK barristers under the relevant Codes and Rules. Under these efforts, forty-four Northern Ireland Barristers were called to the Irish Bar in March 2019 as part of a reciprocal call. Upwards of 2,772 solicitors from England and Wales have registered in this jurisdiction with the Law Society between January of 2016 and May of this year with applications continuing to be processed.

In addition, the Government on 3 January 2019, welcomed the Bar of Ireland and Law Society initiative “Promoting Ireland as a Leading Centre Globally for International Legal Services” as a further component of the Government’s Brexit Strategy. The joint initiative specifically recognises that there are substantial cross border opportunities for the ‘all island’ market in legal services, particularly in the scenario where separate Brexit arrangements are contemplated for Northern Ireland.

The Government also agreed that this joint sectoral initiative be taken into consideration, as may be appropriate, for support under those measures being taken by the Government as part of its response to Brexit. At the same time it was agreed that, as Minister for Justice and Equality, I would facilitate the establishment of an appropriate Implementation Group to be chaired by a person of appropriate standing with the participation of all key stakeholders including Government Departments and IDA Ireland to support the effective realisation of the initiative. Steps are being taken in active consultation with the Bar Council and the Law Society for the appointment of a Chair and the resourcing and launch of the Implementation Group along these lines. These ongoing actions by the legal professional bodies and the Government are an inherent recognition of the strategic importance of maintaining the smooth conduct of legal services and legal proceedings with Northern Ireland and those other jurisdictions directly affected by Brexit for the continued benefit of both private citizens and enterprise.

**Garda Youth Diversion Projects**

253. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 121 of 12 June 2019, the locations covered by each Garda diversion programme in Cork city and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26080/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I have attached a table setting out the Garda Districts in Cork that currently have a Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP) located in them.

All of North Cork Garda Division is covered by three projects, based in Cobh, Mallow and Youghal, and by a mobile service with dedicated staff that covers the remainder of the Division. Cork city Garda Division has 8 projects which take referrals from the entire of the Cork City Division. In the Cork West Division, the Bandon project covers both Bandon and Kinsale towns and their immediate hinterland.

GARDA DIVISION	PROJECT	GARDA DISTRICT	CBO
	BAP	Gurranabraher	Foróige
	Douglas West	Togher	Foróige
	FAYRE	Mayfield/Gurranabraher	Foróige
	GAP	Mayfield	Foróige
	HERON	Togher	Foróige
	Knocknaheeney/Hollyhill	Gurranabraher	Foróige
	MAY	Anglesea St	Foróige
CORK CITY	TACT	Togher	Foróige
	Feabhas	Cobh	Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service (YWI)
	Mallow	Mallow	Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service (YWI)
CORK NORTH	Youghal	Midleton	Foróige
	Mobile service	Rest of Division	Cloyne Diocesan Youth Service (YWI)
CORK WEST	Bandon	Bandon	Foróige

**International Protection**

254. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applicants for international protection who have applied for, been granted or refused the right to work since June 2018 under regulation 11 of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26165/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 which I signed into effect from 30 June, 2018, includes access to the labour market for eligible international protection applicants. The Regulations provide a wide access to both employment and self-employment in almost all sectors

and categories of employment.

I am advised by Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that, since the introduction of the Regulations, a total of 3,920 international protection applicants have applied for a permission to access the labour market. Of those, 2,665 were granted a permission and 1,139 were refused as ineligible.

Status	No.
Granted	2,665
Ineligible	1,139
Pending*	116
Total	3,920

\* Pending figure includes applications which have not reached 9 months, and those awaiting the return of requested supporting documents. The majority of cases pending are ultimately granted.

### International Protection

255. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of occasions he has withdrawn the right to work of an international protection applicant under regulation 12 of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26166/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Regulation 12 of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 allows for the withdrawal of a labour market access permission if certain conditions are not adhered to by the permission holder, for example, where the permission holder has entered into a business partnership or employed another individual.

I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service of my Department (INIS) that since the introduction of the 2018 Regulations on 30 June, 2018, a total of 2,665 international protection applicants have been granted a labour market access permission. To date, no permission to access the labour market has been withdrawn under the Regulations.

### International Protection

256. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who made an application for international protection or requested reception that have not been placed in a reception or accommodation centre; the way in which reception conditions for such applicants and recipients are being met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26167/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Reception and Integration Agency of my Department has been encountering significant upward pressure on its accommodation portfolio. Coupled with an increase in the number of people applying for protection in recent years is the large number of people with an international protection status or a permission to remain who continue to live in RIA accommodation. RIA has approximately the same number of persons with status living in its centres as it has applicants housed in emergency accommodation. People with status or permission to remain have the same access to mainstream housing supports and services as nationals. RIA is working

intensively with the Peter McVerry Trust, Depaul and the PATHS project to assist these people to transition to mainstream housing services.

As of 9th June 2019 there were 777 residents accommodated in 27 emergency accommodation locations.

RIA endeavours to accommodate all international protection applicants who require accommodation initially at Baleskin Reception Centre. They will then be dispersed to a RIA accommodation centre or an emergency accommodation location.

The duration of stay in the emergency accommodation is intended to be for as short a time as possible prior to being transferred to a contracted RIA accommodation centre when places become available. Family composition, ages of children and medical needs are factors which are taken into account in determining the sequence of persons transferred to centres from emergency accommodation.

Persons accommodated in emergency accommodation are provided with full board accommodation. SafetyNet, on behalf of the HSE, offers medical screening to those applicants who do not receive screening at Baleskin Reception Centre. Additionally, the RIA is liaising with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to assist in the process of linking residents with local Community Welfare Services. Staff from RIA are meeting with the residents in these locations to discuss any issues that may arise. In addition, RIA is seeking to contract a Visiting Support and Cultural Liaison Service from the NGO community by the end of this month to assist those residents during their time in the emergency accommodation.

Premises proposed for use as emergency accommodation facilities are inspected by RIA staff prior to opening, and their suitability is assessed, taking all necessary regulatory and legislative requirements into account.

### **Direct Provision Data**

257. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision accommodation centres between the end of October 2018 and the end of May 2019, by month, age and gender in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26168/19]

258. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average and median duration of stay within direct provision reception and accommodation centres for international protection applicants from January 2018 to date, by month in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26169/19]

259. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Reception and Integration Agency has not published monthly reports since October 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26170/19]

260. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Reception and Integration Agency has not produced information on the duration of stay for persons within direct provision accommodation centres since January 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26171/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 257 to 260, inclusive, together.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) website is currently undergoing extensive improvements. All monthly statistics from October 2018 to date are currently being collated and will be available in the coming weeks.

The total duration of stay statistical data the Deputy requires is not available for 2018 on a monthly basis as it is not usually collated on a monthly basis. The report is run at a particular point in time as the information does not vary hugely from month to month. The median and average data is available for 2019 and is contained in the tabular statements below, these figures were produced at the end of each month, using data from the Department of Justice and Equality's AISIP system.

Median and Average Duration of Stay - Accommodation and Reception centres 2019.

Month	Median (in months)	Average (in months)
January	17	24
February	18	24
March	18	25
April	19	24
May	19	25

The data relating to the number of people by age and gender in accommodation and reception centres from October 2018 to May 2019 is contained in the tabular statements below.

Number of people in accommodation centres October 2018 - May 2019 by age and gender.

**October**

Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	328	323	101	268	713	453	119	47	22	2,374
Male	355	349	125	491	1,060	689	211	43	16	3,339
Total	683	672	226	759	1,773	1,142	330	90	38	5,713

**November**

Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	324	330	101	268	702	454	118	47	21	2365
Male	347	346	127	481	1061	688	210	44	16	3320
Total	671	676	228	749	1763	1142	328	91	37	5685
December										
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	327	339	114	250	722	468	119	48	23	2410
Male	345	353	131	496	1064	694	224	45	21	3373
Total	672	692	245	746	1786	1162	343	93	44	5783
January										

Questions - Written Answers

Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	332	347	119	265	729	480	117	50	22	2461
Male	355	372	121	516	1062	710	231	45	18	3430
Total	687	719	240	781	1791	1190	348	95	40	5891
February										
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	331	347	117	265	723	487	116	52	22	2460
Male	353	373	121	524	1071	718	229	45	18	3452
Total	684	720	238	789	1794	1205	345	97	40	5912
March										
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	278	366	151	430	1043	784	269	53	18	3392
Male	287	463	100	230	676	551	138	59	24	2528
Total	565	829	251	660	1719	1335	407	112	42	5920
April										
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	325	359	123	272	721	495	116	52	22	2485
Male	351	372	128	532	1063	726	236	44	17	3469
Total	676	731	251	804	1784	1221	352	96	39	5954
May										
Age Range	0-4	5-12	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	Total
Female	326	367	126	271	722	507	115	53	22	2509
Male	346	385	135	536	1068	730	242	45	18	3505
Total	672	752	261	807	1790	1237	357	98	40	6014

### International Terrorism

261. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional security measures taken by An Garda Síochána in respect of mosques and synagogues in Dublin in response to the recent attacks in New Zealand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26268/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Protecting the State and the people from terrorism and supporting international peace and security are among the highest priorities for the Government. Ireland, like many other open and democratic states, faces a threat from international terrorism.

The expert assessment of the terrorist threat to Ireland is that, while an attack is possible, it is not considered likely. The authorities here remain nonetheless very vigilant and the level of threat is kept under constant and active review by An Garda Síochána. The Garda Authorities supported by the Defence Forces have in place robust response and prevention capabilities and

the authorities here work continually with their international counterparts to identify and manage threats.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational need.

While it would not be appropriate to comment on the detail of the security arrangements in place, the Deputy can be assured that all measures necessary and consistent with the law will be taken to protect the State and the people from harm. Additionally, the Deputy should also be aware that community Gardaí liaise proactively with minority groups from across all communities within the State, with a view to building trust and enhancing quality of life. Indeed their swift response to reassure minorities following the Christchurch attacks was widely welcomed by the entire community.

### Legislative Measures

262. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to revise legislation on the duty of care or negligence in the context of the ongoing insurance crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26270/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The matter raised by the Deputy generally arises in relation to section 3 of the Occupiers' Liability Act 1995 which provides that an occupier of a premises owes a duty ("the common duty of care") towards a visitor. Under the terms of that section, the common duty of care means a duty to take such care as is reasonable in all the circumstances (having regard to the care which a visitor may reasonably be expected to take for his or her own safety and, if the visitor is on the premises in the company of another person, the extent of the supervision and control the latter person may reasonably be expected to exercise over the visitor's activities) to ensure that a visitor to the premises does not suffer injury or damage by reason of any danger existing thereon.

The issue of occupiers' liability was considered by the Cost of Insurance Working Group as reflected in Chapter 6 of its Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance published in 2018. The Report notes that the Occupiers' Liability Act 1995 draws a distinction between three categories of entrants, namely visitors, recreational users and trespassers. Visitors are owed the greatest duty of care. Visitors were the most relevant category of entrants for the purposes of the Working Group's Report as those present in a business premises tend to be customers of the occupier or to be other persons present at the occupier's invitation or by virtue of a contract.

The Report notes that the Working Group, in considering this matter, reviewed relevant case law and found that there are many examples of cases which are dismissed on liability grounds as no evidence of negligence is put forward to substantiate the claim. Accordingly, the Working Group, whose Legal Sub-Group also considered these matters, decided that it could not make a recommendation on the issue. At the same time, the Working Group considered that the insurance industry needs to give greater recognition to improvements made in health and safety practice by businesses by way of lower premiums where warranted.

The duty of care imposed by section 3 of the Occupiers' Liability Act is also a matter for the courts and was, for example, recently considered by the Court of Appeal (*Byrne v Ardenheath Company Ltd.*) The Court of Appeal highlighted the need for the courts to bring ordinary common sense to bear on their assessment of what should amount to reasonable care and outlined various factors which may be considered by a trial judge when analysing whether an occupier

may be said to have complied with his or her obligation to provide reasonable care for a visitor to its premises, including the probability of an accident occurring, the likely gravity of the injury that might result or the cost of eliminating the risk.

The court stated that section 3(2) of the Occupiers Liability Act makes clear that the occupier is entitled, when deciding what steps it should take to comply with its obligation, to assume that its visitors will take all reasonable care for their own safety and the occupier is entitled to take into account that an adult normally can look after his or her welfare.

Clearly, these are matters that deserve, and are being given, careful consideration and expression by way of balancing those rights conferred by law and protected under the Constitution, including as appropriate to the interests of the parties concerned and any duty of care that may arise. As such, they have been given detailed and balanced consideration by the Cost of Insurance Working Group and its Legal Sub-Group. They are also matters that are, as I have outlined, being taken into independent consideration by the judiciary in relevant proceedings before the courts.

In addition, a range of actions are now being taken by the Government on foot of the work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group to more effectively prevent and penalise insurance fraud so as to provide additional protections for those who may owe a duty of care under the terms of the Occupiers Liability Act 1995. There are no proposals, therefore, being considered by the Government at present to change the existing legislation in this area.

### **Court Accommodation Provision**

263. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for Tralee courthouse, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26280/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made. I have been advised by the Courts Service that one of the objectives of its provincial capital building programme is to provide improved court accommodation in Tralee. This is one of a number of provincial city/county town venues nationwide still requiring new or upgraded courthouse accommodation. Collectively, these venues will be the next priority for investment in courthouse facilities outside the capital.

The Courts Service has advised that it envisages a courthouse comprising four courtrooms and related facilities to include consultation rooms, custody facilities, facilities for juries and vulnerable witnesses, and legal practitioner's suites designed to meet current and future needs in Tralee. This will require a building significantly larger than the existing courthouse on Ashe Street where the scope for refurbishing and development is extremely limited due to the nature of the building and the constrained nature of the site.

A number of options for Tralee Courthouse are currently being considered including the level of extension and refurbishment achievable within the confines of the existing courthouse site; whether it would be feasible to acquire an adjacent town centre site, and the degree of extension and refurbishment this would allow. Previous efforts to acquire adjacent sites on Ashe Street have not been successful as the purchase prices sought for relevant sites were such that they could not represent value for money for the taxpayer.

A further option is to build a new modern courthouse on a greenfield/brownfield site, and I understand a number of potential sites are being considered.

The Courts Service has also advised that discussions with Kerry County Council are ongoing regarding the future provision of court facilities in Tralee. However, no decision has been made and all options are under review.

### **Courts Service Data**

264. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of judgments sought in each year since 2011 by unregulated loan owners, retail credit firms and banks with regard to farm related debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26309/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that courts statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the information sought by the Deputy. The Courts Service has advised that it is not in a position to identify the proceedings referred to by the Deputy without the manual examination of all individual court files which would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources.

### **Immigration Status**

265. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); when a decision is likely to issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26318/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that it received an application for permission to reside in this State from the person concerned under the Special Scheme for Students 2005 to 2010 on 23 October 2018. The Deputy will appreciate that applications are dealt with in chronological order. I understand that INIS will be in contact with the person concerned in early July.

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.

### **Direct Provision System**

266. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the safety measures

in place to protect former residents of direct provision centres who have gained employment but whose employment has since expired (details supplied). [26382/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) provide material reception conditions (accommodation and related services) to people in the international protection process that do not have sufficient means to do so. This is done in line with the European (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018.

Although RIA is currently experiencing significant increased demand for services, the State offers accommodation to all of those who have arrived in Ireland to seek protection while in the protection process. This also includes people who may have left accommodation or have never previously sought assistance with accommodation as they may have originally decided to stay with family or friends in the community. There is no obligation on anyone to accept the offer of accommodation and there is no restriction on the freedom of movement of applicants throughout the State.

People in the international protection process can choose to re-enter RIA accommodation by contacting RIA directly on their dedicated phone line (01-4183200) or email address (*ria\_inbox@justice.ie*). While they will be accommodated, there is no guarantee that they will return to the accommodation that they originally resided in due to the lack of capacity within centres.

This lack of capacity is due to an increase in the number of people applying for protection in recent years and the large number of people with an international protection status or a permission to remain who continue to live in RIA accommodation.

### **Immigrant Investor Programme Applications**

267. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26383/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person in question made an application under the Immigrant Investor Application on 24th May 2019 and is in the initial processing stage.

Successful applicants under the Immigrant Investment Programme and their nominated family members may be granted a residence permission in Ireland under Stamp 4 conditions. Stamp 4 conditions permit non-EEA nationals to work, study or start their own businesses in Ireland. Therefore, given the significant immigration benefits accruing and to ensure the highest degree of transparency and accountability for the programme, it is essential that all applications are subject to enhanced levels of due diligence processes in respect of both personal and financial checks to protect the State's interests.

The INIS expects that, in 2019, processing times for applications will be between 6-9 months. I am advised that timeframe compares very favourably to international peers, some of whom operate a decision-making framework of between 12 and 24 months.

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.

### Freedom of Information Requests

268. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26396/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can inform the Deputy that my Department received 827 Freedom of Information requests in 2018. The table below indicates the number of requests granted, part-granted, refused, transferred to another public body, withdrawn or handled outside the ambit of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

In addition to the breakdown provided to the Deputy, I have included columns to reflect numbers carried forward from 2017.

Cases carried forward from 2017	Cases Rec'd 2018	Granted	Part - granted	Refused	Transferred	Withdrawn	Withdrawn & Handled outside the Act	Live Cases carried forward to 2019
125	827	235	302	201	4	48	63	99

### Parental Leave

269. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the extension of parental leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26407/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Deputy will be aware that as part of Budget 2019, the Government announced the introduction of a new social insurance-based paid parental benefit scheme. This new scheme will support parents during the first year of the child's life by providing two weeks of paid leave to both parents, and will allow parents more flexibility in achieving and managing a work life balance.

It is envisaged that the scheme will commence in late 2019 and will be available to parents in respect all children born on or after the date of its implementation.

The conditions of eligibility for the scheme will be provided for in legislation which is currently being developed by my Department, in cooperation with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

I can advise the Deputy that work is well advanced on drafting the legislation which will be brought to Government for approval shortly.

### International Protection

270. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to make contact with a person (details supplied) who has recently been declared a refugee following a tribunal held by the International Protection Appeals Tribunal. [26415/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** An applicant for international protection is awarded international protection, whether refugee status or subsidiary protection status, upon a declaration of status being issued from the Ministerial Decisions Unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). This is done on foot of a grant recommendation from the International Protection Office (IPO) or a decision of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) to set aside a refusal recommendation of the IPO. The Ministerial Decisions Unit processes recommendations received from the International Protection Office and decisions of the International Protection Appeals Tribunal in chronological order based on the date the file is received in that Unit. Once the necessary due diligence has been carried out by the Ministerial Decisions Unit, a declaration of status will issue as soon as possible.

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

### **Garda Recruitment**

271. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an exemption from the second language requirement can be provided to Garda applicants who are dyslexic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26420/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware competitions for recruitment to An Garda Síochána are governed by An Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013. Under these Regulations, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for recruitment to An Garda Síochána, and I, as Minister have no direct role in the matter.

The Regulations provide that all applicants must have a proven proficiency in two languages; one of which must be Irish or English. This requirement applies without discrimination to all candidates. Such competency may be proven by achieving the relevant grades in an Irish Leaving Certificate or for English or Irish through such assessments as set out by the Public Appointments Service. While two languages are required, applicants who do not possess proficiency in Irish but have a second language will be deemed eligible under the Regulations.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS), on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial recruitment stages for selection of Garda Trainees and I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter. I have, however, been informed that PAS, which conducts tests as part of the competitive selection process, carefully considers all requests for reasonable accommodations. In considering such requests, PAS is conscious of the rights of people with disabilities and of the obligations on it to observe those rights and to act in accordance with the provisions of the relevant equality legislation.

As a public body established under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004, PAS is also obliged under section 34(1)(b) of that Act to ensure that "standards of probity, merit, equity and fairness" apply to all of its recruitment and selection work. These binding standards are set out in the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions where the Garda Commissioner has Statutory Responsibility, as published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments.

I am further advised that in considering requests for reasonable accommodations, PAS has a fundamental duty to ensure it is being fair to all candidates who have entered a particular competition and that the key principle of appointment on merit is being observed. To assist PAS in considering a request for accommodations in a fair and balanced way, its policy is to ask candidates to indicate on their application if they require special accommodations and to submit evidence in support of their request. PAS will consider letters or reports from relevant professionals which clearly indicate the nature of the disability and the type of accommodation(s) that may be relevant to the person. PAS has given additional time to people with dyslexia where they have supporting evidence. However, having made reasonable accommodations, candidates must reach the required standard in order to be considered for further progression in a competition.

In December 2018 the Government endorsed the key recommendations contained within the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland and published 'A Policing Service for the Future' – the implementation plan for the Commission's report, this includes the recommendations in relation to the reform of recruitment into An Garda Síochána in order to increase the diversity of the organisation.

The Deputy will agree that it is vital that the Commissioner continues to recruit candidates with the appropriate qualifications to An Garda Síochána, and that best practice continues to be followed with regard to any such recruitment. I welcome and support the Commissioner's commitment to increasing the diversity of the members and staff of An Garda Síochána to reflect the twenty first century Ireland it serves. This will ensure that An Garda Síochána maintains its strong bond with the diverse communities it serves. The recommendations of the Commission will take time to implement, and any proposal to amend the Recruitment and Admission regulations, including the language requirement will require consideration and consultation with a number of interested parties.

### **Work Permits Applications**

272. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on recent changes made to the work permit regime by which a locum doctor can work 90 days in the State but must then leave the jurisdiction for 30 days before being permitted to apply for a new work permit after that; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that it takes up to 30 working days to process a new work permit application resulting in a situation in which a locum doctor ends up working much reduced days annually which puts pressure on general practitioner services generally; his plans to make changes to the work permit regime in view of these circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26470/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Atypical immigration permissions are specifically designed to cover short term employments in the State and there are alternative options available for longer term employment through the work permit regime of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Accordingly, it is not intended that a person with an Atypical permission would roll over their permission thus circumventing the work permit regime and for this reason the person concerned is required to leave the State at the end of their permission.

The policy responsibility relating to the use of locum doctors in the Primary Care Sector is primarily a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE). The role of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department is to provide immigration mechanisms by which non-EEA medical personnel may be recruited to fill temporary vacancies in the health sector as and when required. I am advised that there have been no amendments made to these

terms since they were first published on the INIS website, in July 2015.

Under the terms of the current arrangements doctors undertaking locum work may be granted a 'block' 90-day permission for the duration of their 90-day contract. Exit from and re-entry into the State is not permitted during this 90-day period. The terms of the Scheme also state that at least one month must elapse from the expiry date of the 90 day permission before a new application may be made.

All applicants for the Atypical Working Scheme are advised that they must allow a minimum of 20 working days for the processing of their application from date of receipt. The average processing time for all applications made under the Atypical Working Scheme are processed in accordance with this 20 working day commitment. In cases where an application is submitted containing incomplete, inaccurate or insufficient information, or when clarification of matters raised is required, delays to this processing time are inevitable while awaiting a response from an applicant.

### **Garda Strength**

273. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the size of the Garda traffic corps and An Garda Síochána for the past ten years; if gardaí from the general force are used in the traffic corps; the number deployed for this purpose in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26476/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing An Garda Síochána including personnel matters. Garda management keeps this distribution under review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure optimum use is made of the resources.

In 2017 the Commissioner established the Garda National Roads Policing Bureau (GNRPB) to ensure a consistent approach to road safety and enforcement of road traffic legislation across the country. This is achieved through coordination of enforcement and development of policy based on research and analysis of statistics and by engaging in campaigns in partnership with other State Agencies.

Furthermore, the Divisional Garda Traffic Corps have been re-named Garda Road Policing Units, to reflect the role the Units will play in denying criminals the use of the roads network. In addition to the Roads Policing Units focusing on the lifesaver offences of speeding, seatbelts, mobile phones and driving under the influence, they will also focus on crime prevention and crime detection. Divisional Roads Policing Units will work closely with other Divisional units to target known criminals and to disrupt their activities through strict enforcement of road traffic legislation.

The allocation and transfer of Garda Personnel is determined by a number of factors, including crime and non-crime workload, minimum establishment, population, area, policing arrangements, operational strategies and transfers applications, including welfare issues. When allocations are taking place, comprehensive consultation is carried out with Local Management during which all factors are taken into consideration. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly.

The strength of the Roads Policing Units by Division, in each of the years 2009 to 31 April 2019 is available on my Department's website through the link below.

[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/004\\_Roads\\_Policing\\_Unit\\_2009\\_to\\_April\\_2019.xlsx](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/004_Roads_Policing_Unit_2009_to_April_2019.xlsx)

25 June 2019

*Files/004\_Roads\_Policing\_Unit\_2009\_to\_April\_2019.xlsx*

The overall workforce strength of An Garda Síochána is available on my Department's website through the link below.

*[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/001\\_Garda\\_Workforce\\_Strength\\_2006\\_to\\_April\\_2019.xlsx/Files/001\\_Garda\\_Workforce\\_Strength\\_2006\\_to\\_April\\_2019.xlsx](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/001_Garda_Workforce_Strength_2006_to_April_2019.xlsx/Files/001_Garda_Workforce_Strength_2006_to_April_2019.xlsx)*

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the link below

*[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An\\_Garda\\_Siochana\\_facts\\_and\\_figures](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures)*

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

274. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter relating to the advertisements for the No Excuses campaign (details supplied). [26481/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy has indicated in the details supplied, the age of consent for certain sexual acts is 17 years of age in Ireland. This includes sexual intercourse, buggery, and other penetrative acts set out in section 4 of the Criminal Law (Rape) Amendment Act 1990. For other sexual activity, section 14 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935 applies. Under this section, it is not a defence to sexual assault on a person under 15 years of age that the person consented to the activity.

In addition, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 introduced a 'proximity of age' defence to the offence of engaging in a sexual act with a child under 17. This applies where the parties are over 15, there is less than 2 years between them, and the act was consensual and non-exploitative.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the scene referred to in the details supplied, within the advertisement for the 'No Excuses' awareness campaign on sexual harassment and sexual violence, was produced by the advertising agency awarded the contract for the campaign, following a rigorous planning period which included consultation on the campaign with my Department, campaign experts and non-Governmental organisations working in this area. The aim of this particular element of the advertisement is to portray a scene of sexual harassment, and possible sexual violence, in the context of a couple in a long term relationship.

I am also advised that the intention was to indicate that the couple were in a committed long term relationship using language referenced in everyday conversation. It was not intended to comment on the legality of any activity they may have engaged in when they were sixteen.

### **Domestic Violence Incidence**

275. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of domestic abuse-related offences reported to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26579/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have requested this information from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy directly when the information is to hand.

### Domestic Violence

276. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of convictions for domestic abuse-related offences recorded by An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26580/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has provided a report on the number of offences and the number of persons convicted for domestic violence by Court area between 1 January 2010 and 31 May 2019 (see attached).

The Courts Service has advised that data can only be provided where standard offence codes are used by prosecutors on Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS).

The Courts Service has further advised that there may be cases that could have been prosecuted as assault which may have arisen out of domestic abuse incidents. However, such prosecutions cannot be identified by the Courts Service for the purpose of this report.

[[Table](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25_pq276-25-06-19_en.xlsx)]

### Domestic Homicide

277. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of domestic homicides reported in each of the years 1996 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26581/19]

278. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures put in place to improve the recording of domestic homicides by the Garda PULSE system in response to concerns raised at the 7 March 2018 meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26582/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 277 and 278 together.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities on the specific information sought by the Deputy. I have also sought their views on measures to improve the recording of domestic homicides on the PULSE system and I will contact the Deputy again when the response is to hand.

The Deputy will be aware that the Domestic Violence Act 2018 is a landmark piece of legislation which significantly enhanced the legal protections available to victims of this appalling form of violence. I was pleased to commence all of the provisions of the Act on 1 January last, including the innovative provision which created a new offence of coercive control which recognises the psychological abuse aspect of domestic violence.

On 14 May I announced that my Department was commissioning an independent specialist

in-depth research study focussing on two distinct pillars:

1. the provision of supports to families who are victims of familicide;
2. international best practice in the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

I am very pleased that Ms. Norah Gibbons agreed to lead the study. Ms. Gibbons will be joined by a small team of experts and with administrative support provided by my Department. The study, on which initial work has started, will involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including State agencies, family members of victims and non-governmental organisations.

A public advertisement was placed in the national newspapers last week calling for submissions to the study and I would call on all interested parties, who can assist the work of this study, to make a submission to the study team at [info@fsdhr.ie](mailto:info@fsdhr.ie). Interested parties can also request a meeting with the team by way of the same e-mail address.

### **Domestic Homicide**

279. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to implement multi-agency domestic homicide reviews in order to better protect victims of domestic abuse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26583/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, last month I commissioned an independent, specialist in-depth research study on familicide and domestic homicide. The study will entail two distinct pillars:

1. the provision of supports to families who are victims of familicide;
2. international best practice in the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

Ms. Norah Gibbons has been appointed to lead this independent study and is now been joined by practising Senior Counsel Grainne McMorro and internationally recognised Forensic Criminologist Dr Jane Moncton Smith. Their work will involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including State agencies, family members of victims and non-governmental organisations. A public advertisement was placed in the national newspapers recently calling for interested parties to make submissions to the study by 31 July. I encourage all interested parties who can assist the work of this study to make a submission which can be done by e-mail to [info@fsdhr.ie](mailto:info@fsdhr.ie).

The second pillar of the study will address the issue of domestic homicide reviews. Domestic Homicide Reviews have taken place for a number of years in other jurisdictions. The study will draw on peer related research and consult family members of victims, experts, NGOs and state agencies. It will also consult other agencies/organisations with experience of domestic homicide reviews in comparable foreign jurisdictions. International best practice will be identified and recommendations made in relation to their application to this jurisdiction.

Moreover I have been advised by the Garda Commissioner that, in the context of the categorisation and recording of homicides, An Garda Síochána is currently conducting a review of the investigation of certain homicides which includes a number of domestic homicides. I have also been informed that, separately to this, that An Garda Síochána is developing policies and procedures to inform the overall policing approach to domestic homicides. This includes a Domestic Homicide Review Team in the Garda National Protective Services Bureau examining

a small number of domestic homicides of relevance for review. The purpose of such reviews is to serve as a lessons learned review to facilitate better practice in the approach to domestic abuse. This practice will assist An Garda Síochána in seeking to continuously improve their approach to domestic abuse.

Finally, I would also like to advise the Deputy that significant reforms have and continue to be advanced over the last number of years by the Government in making the criminal justice system a more victim responsive one. This includes the introduction of a wide range of victim oriented legislation including the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 and the Domestic Violence Act 2018 and organisational reforms taken across the respective criminal justice agencies aimed at better supporting victims of crime.

### **Garda Training**

280. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí who undertook the method of entry course in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; the duration of the course; the frequency with which the courses are held; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26600/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing An Garda Síochána, including the training of its members and civilian staff and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the number of gardaí who undertook the method of entry course is as set out in the following table.

Year	No. of Gardaí
2017	27
2018	143
2019 to-date	108

The Method of Entry Course is of four days' duration. Method of Entry Courses are scheduled throughout the year to meet operational demands and requirements.

### **Direct Provision System**

281. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of residents living in the Baleskin reception centre; the contracted capacity of same; the number of the residents of the Hatch Hall reception centre being transferred to Baleskin; if additional arrangements have been made for them there; if Hatch Hall residents are being moved to different reception centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26608/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Regretfully, due to circumstances outside the control of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), Hatch Hall accommodation centre will close on 15 July 2019.

RIA is proactively engaging with residents to discuss their options in order to minimise disruption. This includes seeking to re-accommodate those still in the protection process within RIA's accommodation portfolio and providing residents with status/permission to remain with

support from DePaul Ireland to move on from RIA accommodation and into mainstream housing.

The capacity of Hatch Hall is 220 residents and the current occupancy, as of 9th June, is 213 persons. 140 of these residents have been offered temporary accommodation in Baleskin Reception Centre. In addition, 38 residents with status/permission to remain are receiving assistance from DePaul Ireland, who are contracted by the Department, to find accommodation in the community.

Baleskin reception centre currently has a contracted capacity of 350. Its occupancy, as of 9 June 2019, was 294 persons. A new residential block is under construction in this reception centre and when construction has been completed in mid-July, the capacity of the centre will increase to 487. The additional capacity is necessary to respond to the increased number of persons claiming international protection.

A new, purpose-built health facility will open in the reception centre in the coming weeks and will be to the standard of all new HSE primary care facilities. The facility provides much-needed additional space and will accommodate a primary care team that includes nurses, doctors and psychologists. The facility will allow the health care team to address health issues while also accommodating infection control measures in an efficient manner. In addition, the facility will allow the HSE and others to provide group interventions. Visiting outside clinicians can also be facilitated in the new health facility.

### **Travel Documents**

282. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of travel documents for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26644/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a person who has been granted permission to remain in the State, and who does not possess or cannot obtain a national passport, may submit an application for a travel document, which will be examined on its merits. Unlike a refugee, a person with non-protection permission to remain does not have an entitlement to be issued with a travel document, and such a document would be issued solely on a discretionary basis. Applications are examined on a case by case basis.

It appears that information has been proffered to the Deputy which was not made available to INIS at the time this person's application for a discretionary document was being considered. The deputy may wish to note that the refusal issued on this application extends to that application only. The applicant is free to apply for a travel document again, and any future application will be examined on its merits. In any future application, the person would be advised to submit information on the rescinding of his or her refugee status by the relevant authorities, and provide any relevant residence permission letters issued by this Department, as required by the travel document application form.

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

### **Garda Transport Data**

283. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unmarked cars and vans attached to the Garda National Immigration Bureau in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26709/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that 19 unmarked cars and 5 unmarked vans were attached to the Garda National Immigration Bureau in 2018. I am further informed that as of 20 June 2019, there are 20 unmarked cars and 5 unmarked vans attached to the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a total of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019. I understand from the Garda authorities that this allocation will be used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles for operational use this year.

### **Garda Transport Data**

284. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked cars, Jeeps and motorcycles attached to the DMR roads policing escort unit in 2018 and to date in 2019. [26710/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no

role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that there is no escort unit in the terms referred to. However I am informed that the following table sets out the number of marked vehicles attached to roads policing duties across the DMR in 2018 and as of 20 June 2019.

Year	Marked Cars	Marked Motor Bikes	Marked 4x4	* Other marked vehicles
2019 (as of 20/06/2019)	21	48	7	8
2018	21	40	7	4

\*The category 'others' refers to MPV, SUV, Minibus or Prisoner Conveyance Vehicles

The Deputy may wish to be aware that in addition to these marked vehicles, I am informed a further 8 unmarked vehicles are attached to roads policing duties in the DMR as of 20 June 2019.

Finally, the Deputy may be interested to be aware that a total of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019. I understand from the Garda authorities that this allocation will be used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles for operational use this year.

### **Garda Resources**

285. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the report from the Garda Commissioner regarding the issuing of body-worn cameras to front-line gardaí will be received. [26711/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021. The Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of these resources and decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of equipment and resources, including ICT resources, are for the Commissioner in light of identified operational demands.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland included a recommendation that An Garda Síochána develop a plan to deploy body worn cameras. The Implementation Plan for that report - A Policing Service for the Future - includes a related action in relation to legislative preparation for deployment of body worn cameras. Government today approved the drafting of a general scheme of a Bill on this and related matters. It is intended that the general scheme will be developed in 2019 and the Bill will be published in 2020.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a business case is being prepared in An Garda Síochána in relation to the introduction of body worn cameras for operational members. Any such business case will be submitted to my Department after approval by the Commissioner.

### **Criminal Assets Bureau**

286. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated amount it would cost to recruit five additional forensic digital specialists for the Criminal Assets Bureau. [26712/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised that the estimated yearly cost of recruiting 5 Financial Crime Analysts at the entry point of the payscale is €338,214 (including employer's PRSI).

### Irish Prison Service

287. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital budget allocation for the Irish Prison Service in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26747/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Total Capital Budget Allocation for the Irish Prison Service for each of the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 is set out in the following table.

Year	Allocation - € million
2017	22.33
2018	24.33
2019	32.3

### Garda Transport Data

288. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda public order vans attached to the Cork city division as of 1 June 2017, 1 June 2018 and 17 June 2019, in tabular form. [26748/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a total of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019. I understand from the Garda authorities that this allocation will be used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles for operational use this year.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that 1 Garda Public Order van was attached to the

25 June 2019

Cork City Division on 31 December 2017 and that 2 vans were attached to the Cork City Division on 31 December 2018. I am further informed that as of 20 June 2019, there are 2 Garda Public Order vans attached to the Cork City Division.

### **Proposed Legislation**

289. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to update the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001. [26749/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There are currently two Bills being prepared within my Department which will amend the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001.

The first is the proposed Criminal Justice Bill 2019, the General Scheme for which was approved by the Government in October 2018, which is expected to be approved for publication in the coming weeks. This Bill transposes Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2017 on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law. Although the provisions of the Directive are already largely transposed into national law under existing legislation, the 2019 Bill will update Part 6 of the 2001 Act through updated definitions of offences, officials who are subject to the Act and the "intentional" aspect of the Directive's requirements. It also addresses the liability of legal persons in the context of relevant offences.

The second Bill that will amend the 2001 Act is the proposed Criminal Justice (Counterfeiting) Bill 2019, the General Scheme for which will be brought to Government in the coming weeks, and will be made publically available thereafter on my Department's website. This Bill will transpose Directive (EU) 2014/62 and give effect to three EU technical instruments for the improved monitoring and detection of counterfeit euros. The 2014 Directive establishes minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the area of counterfeiting of the euro and other currencies. The Directive requires the creation of criminal offences of making, uttering, importing counterfeit currency and possessing instruments and security features for making counterfeits. It is considered that the provisions on counterfeiting in Part 5 of the 2001 Act meet most of the requirements of the 2014 Directive. However, it is necessary to make a number of amendments to Part 5 of the 2001 Act to fully transpose the 2014 Directive and the associated technical instruments.

In addition to the above amendments to the 2001 Act, the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Bill 2019 contains a minor amendment to section 52 of the 2001 Act which will allow An Garda Síochána to request records in an electronic (or any other) format where necessary. The General Scheme of this Bill is available from my Department's website, having been approved by the Government in January this year. It is expected to be brought before the Houses in the Autumn.

Finally, officials within my Department are currently considering the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission's 2018 Report on Regulatory Powers and Corporate Offences insofar as the recommendations of that report pertain to the 2001 Act.

### **Domestic Homicide**

290. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2019 will be supported to allow for domestic homicide reviews to

be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26922/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As agreed by Dáil Éireann in its consideration of the second stage of this Private Members' Bill, the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2019 will be deemed to be read a second time nine months from 21 May of this year. This 9 month period is to allow for the progress of the independent specialist in-depth research study on familicide and domestic homicide reviews, led by Ms Norah Gibbons. This study will examine provisions and supports in respect to familicide and the introduction of domestic homicide reviews. The study will also examine in a comprehensive and independent way the experience of such reviews operating elsewhere. Based on its findings it will then be able to make recommendations in relation to how we can effectively introduce such measures in Ireland.

### **Asylum Seeker Accommodation**

291. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for a hotel (details supplied) to remain serving as a refugee centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26923/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** My Department, through the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), has commenced a national procurement programme for accommodation centres for persons entering the state and seeking international protection. This will comprise a series of regional competitions through the Government's procurement website [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie).

The Department ran a tender competition for premises within 40km of Newbridge, Co. Kildare for accommodation and ancillary services. Successful bidders were required to undertake mobilisation works to provide for cooking facilities for residents, a foodhall (where residents can procure ingredients and food items as well as toiletries and household items through a points system) and provide designated living space for families outside of the bedrooms. There is a 12 week provision for the completion of the required mobilisation works. No contract will be in effect until the mobilisation works are completed and subsequently inspected and verified as complete by RIA.

The provider who is currently providing accommodation and ancillary services at the Hazel Hotel in Monasterevin, Co. Kildare was successful in being placed on the framework. The 12 week mobilisation period commenced on the 11th April 2019 which requires all works to be complete by the 4th July 2019.

The contract is for an initial 2 year period and can be extended twice on a mutually agreeable basis for a year each time. The agreed capacity is for 143 persons and the centre will be used to accommodate a mix of families and single persons.

### **Workplace Relations Commission**

292. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason a decision has not been given on a case (details supplied) that was heard by the Workplace Relations Commission for adjudication in January 2019; if same can be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26833/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy**

**Pat Breen):** The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is an independent statutory office under the aegis of my Department. The WRC's core services include the provision of early resolution, mediation, conciliation, facilitation and advisory services, adjudication on employment and equality complaints, the monitoring of employment conditions to ensure the compliance and enforcement of employment rights legislation, the provision of information, and the processing of employment agency and protection of young persons (employment) licences.

The WRC is independent in the exercise of its quasi-judicial functions and I have no direct involvement in its day to day operations. However, I understand from the WRC that this decision has recently issued to the parties.

### **Work Permits Eligibility**

293. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the healthcare assistant role will be removed from the ineligible categories of employment for permits on a controlled basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27117/19]

297. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to add home care workers to the eligible list of categories for work permits for workers from outside the EU and EEA in view of the critical shortage of home care workers here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26548/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 293 and 297 together.

The State's general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within the workforce of the State and other EEA states. Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State and EEA, the employment permits system offers a conduit into the Irish labour market for non-EEA nationals with in-demand skills and is operated as a vacancy led system.

The system is managed through the operation of the Critical Skills Occupations List and the Ineligible Occupations List for the purposes of granting an employment permit. The Lists are subject to twice-yearly review which is predicated on a formalised and evidence-based process and involves consideration of the research undertaken by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (Solas), the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), the National Skills Council, and input by relevant Government Departments in addition to the public consultation phase. Submissions to the review process are also considered by the Economic Migration Policy Interdepartmental Group chaired by DBEI and which includes the Department of Health.

Healthcare assistants and Homecare workers are currently on the Ineligible Occupations List and in order to have an occupation removed from the ineligible list, there would need to be a clear demonstration that recruitment difficulties are solely due to shortages across the EEA and not to other factors such as salary and/or employment conditions. Organisations in the sector would need to provide the necessary evidence to substantiate their claims.

Following completion of the most recent review, the roles of Healthcare Assistant and Homecare workers were not proposed for amendment at this time. The views of the lead policy Government Department for the sector, in this case, the Department of Health, are an important part of the decision-making process. Officials of that Department have advised the sector of the need for further evidence, demonstrating genuine efforts to recruit across the EEA. In particular the sector needs to engage with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social protection who have responsibility for EURES the (European Employment Services), and who are well positioned to help sectors to recruit from within the EEA.

The mid-year Review of the Occupational Lists has now commenced, and a public consultation is underway, with a closing date of 12th July. Interested parties are invited to make submissions relating to the skills and labour supply in their sector of interest, using the submission form posted for this purpose on my Department's website.

### **Horizon 2020 Strategy Funding**

294. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the drawdown by Ireland of Horizon 2020 funding; the status of same in relation to nationally set targets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26104/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** Horizon 2020 is the EU's programme for research and innovation with a budget of just under €80 billion and covering the period 2014 to 2020.

Horizon 2020 is a core part of Europe 2020, the Innovation Union and the European Research Area. Awards under Horizon 2020 assist investment in future jobs and growth, address people's concerns about their livelihoods, safety and environment and strengthen the EU's global position in research, innovation and technology.

As of May 2019, Irish researchers and companies continue to perform strongly in competing for this funding, and have been successful in winning €709.6m in funding. This secured funding is broadly in line with achievement of our national target of €1.25 billion.

Ireland's €709.6m of secured funding equates to €11.3m per month or €2.5m per week - compared to €1m per week in the early stages of FP7. It accounts for 1.73% of the total allocated Horizon 2020 budget; the national target in this framework programme was 1.56% (juste retour: 1.2%).

As of May 2019, Irish Higher Education Institutions have secured a total funding of €390.5m. Private companies have secured funding of €237.4m of which SMEs have secured €147.1m.

### **IDA Ireland Portfolio**

295. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 387 of 11 June 2019, the reason planning permission was allowed to lapse on the site; if IDA Ireland is engaged in a process to reapply for planning permission on the site; if so, the timeline for the process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26190/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As the Deputy will appreciate, IDA Ireland has to make decisions on developing lands based on a number of factors, including likely demand and available funding. It is my understanding that, despite planning permission having been secured, there was limited interest from Agency clients for the site in question. Coupled with budgetary demands elsewhere, this resulted in the physical development being paused, although the lands continued to be marketed by the IDA to potential investors.

Having said that, I am informed that the IDA has now commissioned an updated assessment of this land bank with respect to its investment potential. A revised planning application is currently being considered as part of this assessment.

It is positive that planning permission was previously secured on this site and it is helpful to the Agency in their ongoing efforts to showcase its potential to investors. The IDA continues to actively market this site, together with the wider area, to clients that may be interested in expanding or locating in County Mayo.

The pipeline for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Mayo remains positive. In 2018 there was a 7.5% increase in employment by IDA client companies with 344 net new jobs added. The IDA has also recently secured a tenant for an Advanced Technology Building (ATB) that was constructed in Castlebar as part of the Agency's Regional Property Programme. The decision by the firm in question to locate in that ATB, and thereby create 150 jobs in Castlebar, demonstrates the area's potential and its attractiveness to overseas investors.

### Freedom of Information Data

296. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26385/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of the total number of Freedom of Information requests granted, part-granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information by my Department and its offices in 2018 are outlined in the following table.

#### Total Number of FOI Requests Received in Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and its Offices in 2018

Total FOI Requests Granted in 2018	Total FOI Requests Part-Granted in 2018	Total FOI Requests Refused in 2018	Total FOI Requests Transferred in 2018	Total FOI Requests Withdrawn in 2018	Total FOI Requests Handled outside of FOI in 2018
53	91	31	4	69	44

*Question No. 297 answered with Question No. 293.*

### Brexit Supports

298. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the uptake and expenditure on all Brexit supports under the remit of her Department, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26702/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** While the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland. That is why my Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Brexit is my top priority at this time and was central to my decision-making on the allocation of the additional €14.2m Current and €65m Capital funding I secured as part of Budget

2019.

For example, I provided an additional €5m to the network of Local Enterprise Offices, €3m to Enterprise Ireland, €2m to IDA Ireland and €1m to InterTradeIreland to help businesses prepare for Brexit, together with funding for the longer-term Future Growth Loan Scheme and the IDA Regional Property Programme. I also provided extra staff for regulatory bodies of my Department to ensure they are properly resourced to address the additional demands that Brexit will create.

Local Enterprise Office (LEO) funding has been increased by 22% in 2019, and this increase is being used to assist micro-enterprises in becoming more competitive and better able to cope with the changing environment in which they are operating. The LEOs, which have a presence in every county, are working with the broad range of small and micro indigenous enterprises across sectors to ensure that they are informed about Brexit and have plans in place to manage the new trading relationships on the island and with the UK more generally. This includes a new customs training programme for all businesses, exporters and importers, rolled out in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland.

I was also pleased to announce an additional capital allocation of €2.75m to Enterprise Ireland to start developing regional innovation and technology clusters with Institutes of Technology right across the country, positioning them as drivers of world-class start-ups and growth enterprises and helping businesses adjust to market changes, including Brexit.

Through Enterprise Ireland, I also doubled funding for the Online Retail Pilot Scheme to €1.25m in 2019, which will support SMEs in the retail sector to have a stronger online presence and find new markets. This new Scheme follows through on my commitment to increase the scale and internationalisation of indigenous enterprise; increase productivity in high-employment sectors; and encourage Brexit readiness. I announced the first 11 successful applicants on Friday 01 March last and a second call of the scheme opened on 19 June. Enterprise Ireland invested €74 million in Brexit impacted businesses in 2018.

Funding to InterTradeIreland has been increased by 18% and they, along with the LEOs, are offering a range of Brexit-focused supports to companies, including those engaged in cross-border trade with Northern Ireland. ITI offers a Brexit Planning Voucher worth up to €2,250, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan and prepare for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services. In March, it launched a Brexit Implementation Voucher, which provides financial support up to €5,625 with InterTradeIreland paying 50% of total expenditure. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

The Brexit Loan Scheme, using a combination of Irish Exchequer and EU guarantees, leveraged up to €300 million of lending at a maximum interest rate 4% at a cost to the Exchequer of €23 million - €14 million provided by my Department and €9 million provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme opened for applications through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland in April of this year. The scheme provides a longer-term facility, 8 to 10 years, of up to €300m to support strategic capital investment for a post-Brexit environment by business at competitive rates. This scheme is jointly funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (€37.2 million) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (€24.8 million) at a total cost to the Exchequer of €62 million.

The first table sets out the uptake of the different Brexit-related supports available through

the Department and its agencies as at 14 June 2019.

The second table out the respective exchequer increases in allocations to ITI, EI, IDA and the LEOs between 2018 and 2019 and the cost/expenditure of the supports available. Whilst these increases are not all due to Brexit, they are mainly provided to assist the enterprise agencies in their responses to the challenges posed by Brexit.

**Table 1**

Scheme	Uptake (14 June 2019)
Brexit Loan Scheme	656 applications received, 596 approved by SBCI, 141 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €31.73 million. (Uptake as of 21 June)
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	5,313 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 1085 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	199 Be Prepared Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	167 projects have been approved under this initiative <sup>1</sup>
Enterprise Ireland Prepare to Export Scorecard	3,716 Prepare to Export Scorecards have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Customs Insights Online Course	1,258 Customs Insights Course participants
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	52 Agile Innovation projects have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	16 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with over 1,200 in attendance
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	258 “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	1,071 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	602 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant <sup>2</sup>
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	340 LEO clients have participated in the programme
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	641 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit

Scheme	Uptake (14 June 2019)
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/ Events	4,639 Participants at the Brexit Information events
Customs Training Participants	468 Participants attended Customs Training
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	3,045 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2019. This is in addition to the 4,175 engagements in 2018.
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 1,587 applications, with 1,391 approved and 12 still pending assessment.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	11 retailers were awarded funding in March 2019. A second call of the Scheme will open on 19 June and will close 31 July 2019.

1 The Market Discovery Fund figure listed is lower than that of the end of February document figure of 251. The updated figure refers to the number of businesses approved, while the earlier number of 251 referred to the number of projects approved. This is now how it is reported to the Board, where projects was used previously.

2 The figure of 651 provided on 08 May was incorrect and should have indicated uptake of 551. This was due to human error.

**Table 2**

IDA total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €33.7 million when compared with 2018. Enterprise Ireland total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €6.8 million when compared with 2018. LEOs total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €5 million when compared with 2018. ITI total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €1 million when compared with 2018.	
Scheme	Expenditure/Cost
Brexit Loan Scheme	The scheme will cost the Exchequer €23 million (€14 million provide by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and €9 million provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine).
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	€304,553 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	€443,786 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	€736,105 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	€265,341 to 16/05/2019
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	€480,000 to 16/05/2019

Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	€1,373,218 to 16/05/2019
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	2018 Expenditure€560,2751 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€124,607
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	2018 Expenditure€951,1291 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€127,121
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	There isn't a specific budget allocation for LEO Brexit mentoring. It is included in the LEOs overall Measure 2 allocation.
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/ Events	2018 Expenditure€128,6011 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€33,181
The Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post Brexit world.	2018 Expendituren/a1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€24,600
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	InterTradeIreland offer two Brexit Vouchers – a planning voucher which provides 100% financial support towards professional advice to help Businesses identify Brexit exposures and to plan. The second “implementation” voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625, which allows businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship post-Brexit. InterTradeIreland pay 50% of the cost of this voucher. Expenditure to date in 2019: £860,000.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	Eleven retailers were awarded funding in March 2019 as part of the new €1.25m fund, with €625,000 available under the first competitive call to support retail businesses to strengthen their online offering. There will be a second competitive call in 2019 with a fund of €625,000.

### Regional Development Initiatives

299. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the IDA Ireland strategy for Cork city and county; the way in which this relates to the Project Ireland 2040 plan for Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26812/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Cork

has traditionally been a strong performer in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI). This trend is continuing, with a steady and positive increase in employment numbers in IDA Ireland client companies in the County over the past number of years. There are currently 169 IDA client companies in Cork, employing approximately 39,000 people.

Under its current 'Winning' Strategy, the IDA is seeking to increase FDI in Cork and the South West region by 30% to 40% over the period 2015-2019. This approach has been delivering results and between 2017 and 2018 alone, employment in IDA client companies in Cork increased by over 5% with 2,087 net new foreign direct investment-supported jobs added in the County. There have also been a number of recent significant recent job announcements by IDA clients including 400 jobs at VoxPro, 200 positions at Deutsche Borse Group and 100 new jobs at Forcepoint.

The IDA is currently in the process of formulating a new five-year strategy covering the period 2020-2024 which will take account of the National Planning Framework under Project Ireland 2040, as well as the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy and Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans.

It is clear, not least from the County's recent performance over the last number of years, that Cork has a robust enterprise base and remains a highly attractive destination for overseas companies. Work will nevertheless continue, by both the enterprise agencies and the Government, to help ensure it continues to attract further investment.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

300. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of adventure therapy as part of the CAMHS (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26479/19]

**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.

### **Motorised Transport Grant Closure**

301. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health when the motorised transport grant will be reintroduced or an equivalent scheme put in place. [26810/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in 2013.

The Motorised Transport Grant scheme operated as a means-tested grant to assist persons with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. The maximum grant payable once to an individual in any three year period, was €5,020. Previous recipients of the grant who wished to be considered for a further grant, had to re-apply for consideration. The grant did not roll-over on an automatic basis.

Prior to the closure of the Motorised Transport Grant scheme in February 2013, approximately 300 persons per annum qualified for a grant, at an estimated cost of €1.3 million per annum. No further grants have been paid under this scheme since its closure in 2013.

With regard to the proposals for a new Health (Transport Support) Bill, the Deputy may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Health and I, brought a Memorandum to Government on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet Agenda at that time. I intend to revert to Government in due course with revised proposals to reflect the discussions at that Cabinet meeting and further discussions between myself and Minister Harris on the best way to progress the Transport Scheme.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

302. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in County Wexford awaiting medical equipment (details supplied); the number waiting more than six, 12 and 18 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26847/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

303. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults in County Wexford awaiting medical equipment (details supplied); the number waiting more than six, 12 and 18 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26848/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

304. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not been called to have a procedure carried out; if same will now be addressed without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26054/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

305. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health when an allocation will be made by a group for a wheelchair for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26055/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

306. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have a CAMHS assessment carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26059/19]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

307. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have an outpatient appointment with a consultant paediatrician at Cork University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26061/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

308. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if additional home help hours will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26062/19]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

309. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [26063/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

310. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if a child (details supplied) can have an appointment with a paediatrician before March 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26064/19]

**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.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

311. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when respite services will resume for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26066/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will

empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

312. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on the reimbursement of ocrelizumab for persons with multiple sclerosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26067/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

On 29 August 2018, the NCPE completed a health technology assessment for Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS). They recommended that Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) not be considered for reimbursement unless cost-effectiveness can be improved relative to existing treatments.

On 4 October 2018 the NCPE completed their assessment for Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) indicated for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS). They did not recommend that Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) be reimbursed for this indication.

The HSE is the statutory decision-making body for medicine reimbursement. It will make the final decision on whether Ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) will be reimbursed for each of these indications, taking into consideration the statutory criteria contained in the 2013 Health Act.

I am advised by the HSE that there has been considerable engagement between the HSE and the manufacturer over the past number of months and that commercial discussions are ongoing.

### **Hospital Services**

313. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when the podiatry clinic in University Hospital Kerry will reopen (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26073/19]

**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.

### **Hospitals Data**

314. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of surgical procedures cancelled at University Hospital Waterford on 14 June 2019; the reason for the cancellations; the number of cancellations by specialty or procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26077/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals. I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled, particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

While every effort is made to avoid cancellation or postponement of planned procedures, the HSE advise that planned procedures and operations can be postponed or cancelled for a variety of reasons including capacity issues due to increased scheduled and unscheduled care demand, medical reasons, and patient choice.

The HSE has advised my Department that four scheduled surgeries were cancelled at University Hospital Waterford (UHW) on the 14 of June 2019. The HSE further advise that as of 7am on Friday 14 of June last, there were 31 admitted patients in the Emergency Department and 8 extra patients on trolleys at ward level at the hospital. As the demand for critical care beds already exceeded what was available on that day there was no critical care capacity available or likely to be available for patients that would require post-operative specialist critical care that day.

As a result, and in line with the hospital's escalation policy, the HSE has advised that four scheduled surgeries were cancelled. The HSE has further advised that the patients will be contacted urgently to reschedule their appointments.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware that increasing capacity across our hospitals is a priority for Government. An additional 241 acute hospital beds opened under the Winter Initiative 2017/2018, including 18 additional acute beds in Waterford University Hospital. Furthermore, the National Service Plan for 2019 provides for a comprehensive capacity programme and as part of that programme, an additional 6 acute beds have opened this year in UHW under the 2018/2019 Winter Plan.

The 2019 capacity programme also provides for 202 additional beds, including 24 beds in UHW during 2019 with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in Q1 of 2020.

In relation to the specific procedures that were cancelled by the hospital, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

315. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied); and when an appointment for orthodontic treatment under the HSE can be expected. [26079/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

316. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when a position (details sup-

plied) will be advertised following a retirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26083/19]

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

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

317. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the employment procedure when an administrative position is vacated through retirement; the length of time the position is advertised for; if personnel from transfer panels are invited to interview; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that positions are not being advertised and resources are being pulled from other locations to fill the job; if his attention has been further drawn to the impact this is having on staff waiting on a transfer list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26084/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

318. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on inpatient and outpatient waiting lists in University Hospital Limerick; the action he is taking to reduce the numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26100/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. Last year saw considerable improvement in the number of patients waiting for procedures. As a result of increased activity and the ongoing collaboration between the HSE and the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), the number of patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case procedure fell to 70,204 in December 2018, from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017. This represents a reduction of over 18% in the overall number of patients waiting for a procedure. The number of patients waiting more than 3 months fell by more than 17,700, or 31% in the same period from July 2017 to the end of December 2018.

The impact is particularly notable when one considers the improvements to the Waiting Lists for those particular specialties which were the focus of the Inpatient/Daycase Action Plan in 2018. These include the numbers waiting over 3 months for a Cataract procedure which fell by 55% from July 2017 to the end of December 2018; the numbers waiting 3 months for a tonsillectomy fell by 65% in the same period; and angiograms fell by 50%.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the NTPF increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March.

Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019. The Scheduled Care Access Plan includes:

- Detailed plans from the NTPF to fund 25,000 IPDC treatments; 5,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes and 40,000 first outpatient appointments.

- Projections by year end to reduce the overall number of patients on the Inpatient/Day Case waiting list (excluding GI scopes) from just over 70,200 in Dec 2018 to under 60,000;

- Within this overall reduction the number of patients waiting longer than 3 months will reduce from 40,200 at the end of 2018 to 31,000;

- It is also projected that for ten identified high volume procedures, all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 6 months will be offered treatment in 2019. These 10 procedures account for over a third of the active inpatient day case waiting list and represent 60% of NTPF planned activity in 2019.

A key element of the Scheduled Access Plan is the stabilisation of the Outpatient Waiting List. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which approximately 1 million will be first appointments.

The plan also includes a target that the number of patients waiting for a first Outpatient appointment will fall from over 516,000 at the end of 2018 to under 509,000 by the end of 2019. This target takes into account the more than 800,000 new patients who will be added to the Outpatient waiting list in 2019; a figure that is based on trends for the previous two years.

While the meeting of short-term targets is always welcome, more can be achieved and, in this regard, the HSE, Department of Health and NTPF, under the Access Plan, will work together with the objective of developing medium-long term improvement initiatives for patient access to hospital procedures. This will include moving care to more appropriate settings and providing care at the lowest level of complexity such as providing ophthalmology in the community; maximising the use of Advanced Nurse Practitioner led clinics; and physiotherapists to manage orthopaedic clinics.

The IPDC & Outpatient data requested by the Deputy is contained in the following tables. In relation to the specific question of the steps being taken to reduce the waiting lists at University Hospital Limerick, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

#### University Hospital Limerick IPDC Waiting List

0-3 mths	3-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12-15 mths	15-18 mths	18-24 mths	24-36 mths	36-48 mths	Total
865	388	292	155	103	75	72	59	2	2011

#### University Hospital Limerick Outpatient Waiting List

0-3 mths	3-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12-15 mths	15-18 mths	18-21 mths	21-24 mths	24-36 mths	36-48 mths	48+	Total
8696	4958	4614	3584	2826	1779	1730	1567	3899	881	154	34688

### Psychological Services Waiting Lists

319. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on waiting lists for psychology services for children in County Limerick; the number waiting for the school age and the early intervention service by the number of months spent on the waiting list in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26101/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the servic-

es they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Psychological Services**

320. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of child psychologists employed in County Limerick to date in 2019; the number of vacant posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26102/19]

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

### **Medicinal Products**

321. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he has managed the risks associated with the use of valproate in pregnancy; the actions taken to minimise risk from 1990 when studies concluded clear evidence of risk of congenital abnormalities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26107/19]

335. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the status of a proposed inquiry into foetal valproate syndrome; and the status of the work of the HSE valproate response team on the matter. [26160/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 321 and 335 together.

I have been aware of the issues surrounding sodium valproate use in pregnancy since early 2017, when the European Medicines Agency (EMA) initiated its most recent review of the use of valproate-containing medicines in the treatment of women who are pregnant or of childbearing age. The risk reduction measures recommended by the EMA on foot of its previous review in 2014 were fully implemented in Ireland; prior to this, there were no specific restrictions over and above those listed in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) leaflet for healthcare professionals and the patient information leaflet. As with any medicine, these documents were regularly updated as new data emerged about the medicine and its potential side effects.

The HSE's Valproate Response Project is expected to be completed within the coming weeks, and a final report will be submitted to my Department upon completion of the project. Once that report is received and reviewed in the Department, I will give further consideration as to whether an inquiry is appropriate.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

322. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Meath in each of the years 2008 to

2018, in tabular form. [26108/19]

323. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Meath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26109/19]

324. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Meath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26110/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 322 to 324, inclusive, 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.

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.

#### **Disability Services Data**

325. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Meath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26111/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

#### **Disability Services Data**

326. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Meath in tabular form. [26112/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and

plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

327. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Westmeath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26113/19]

328. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Westmeath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26114/19]

329. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Westmeath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26115/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 327 to 329, inclusive, 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.

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.

### **Disability Services Data**

330. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Westmeath in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26116/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be

referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

331. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Westmeath in tabular form. [26117/19]

**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 Accommodation Provision**

332. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason a unit (details supplied) in a hospital is being closed; the measures being taken to accommodate the services and patients at the unit in a new location; the impact of the closure on staff in the unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26152/19]

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

### **Health Services Staff**

333. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when new contracts will be offered to community employees (details supplied) in CHO 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26158/19]

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

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

334. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of equipment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26159/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 335 answered with Question No. 321.*

## **Traveller Community**

336. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if each CHO has Traveller coordinators in place regarding the provision of mental health services for Travellers. [26186/19]

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

## **Health Services**

337. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26187/19]

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

## **Health Services Provision**

338. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if assistance will be provided to a person (details supplied). [26188/19]

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

## **Respite Care Services Data**

339. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Mayo in each of the years from 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26197/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

## **Respite Care Services Data**

340. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Mayo in each of the years from 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26198/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

341. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Mayo in each of the years from 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26199/19]

**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.

### **Disability Services Data**

342. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Mayo in each of the years from 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26200/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

343. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Mayo. [26201/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disabilities Assessments**

344. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of applications of assessments of needs under the Disability Act 2005 commenced within three and six months, respectively, of a completed application being received as per the timeframes set out in SI No. 263 of 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26212/19]

345. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of complaints officer's recommendations under section 15 of the Disability Act 2005 that are completed within the timeframe provided by the complaints officer in the officer's report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26213/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 344 and 345 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.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services**

346. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the lack of respite facilities and opportunities for persons with disabilities nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26214/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Respite Care Services Data**

347. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he has access to the information collated at local area level for parents of children and adults requesting respite; if there is information on requests granted and refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26215/19]

**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

### **Ministerial Correspondence**

348. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he has received correspondence from disability service providers about their concerns regarding providing respite for adults with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26216/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** While I routinely receive correspondence from members of the Oireachtas, members of the public and disability service providers, I am not aware of any recent correspondence from service providers regarding respite provision.

As part of its ongoing service provision, this year, the HSE will provide over 182,500 respite nights and 32,662 day respite sessions to families in need right across the country. An additional €10m provided last year, has funded twelve new respite houses. That's one in each HSE CHO area, plus an additional three houses in the Greater Dublin area to respond to the very high demand for respite from this area. These twelve additional houses are providing additional respite for families that need it. This year, the HSE will also fund a number of alternative respite services. These are practical and important solutions, such as summer camps, evening and Saturday clubs, benefitting hundreds of adults and children.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

349. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite weeks

provided in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26217/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services**

350. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the criteria used for respite care for persons with disabilities; if the age of the carer is taken into consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26218/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

351. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the number of persons with disabilities aged between 30 and 40 years of age and still being cared for by their parents; his plans for respite for such persons in view of the fact that their carers are much older now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26219/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide

more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

352. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the lack of respite hours being provided and the impact that is having on families of persons with disabilities, in particular older parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26220/19]

**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

### **Philanthropy Initiatives**

353. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he or his officials have been in contact with or been contacted by philanthropic organisations to become involved in providing services for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26221/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Service Reform Fund is an initiative of Atlantic Philanthropies, the Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the HSE and Genio. The Fund supports reforms in homelessness, disability and mental health.

These reforms will focus on ensuring that person-centred and recovery-oriented services and supports are embedded, in line with government policy.

Governance of the Fund is by means of an Oversight Group, chaired by the Department and includes representation from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the HSE and Genio and up to last year The Atlantic Philanthropies.

### **Respite Care Services Funding**

354. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocation for providing respite care in 2019; the amount drawn down to date in 2019; if all funding will be utilised for providing respite care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26222/19]

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

ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

355. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he has met the Minister of State with special responsibility for disability issues to discuss the impact of the lack of home help hours being allocated and its impact on persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26223/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The HSE provides a range of assisted living services including Personal Assistant (PA) and Home Support services to support individuals with disabilities to maximise their capacity to live full and independent lives. These are related but separate services and each is funded separately. While the resources for the provision of assisted living services available are substantial they are finite.

PA and Home Support Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers. The majority of specialised disability provision (80%) is delivered through non-statutory sector service providers.

The HSE is committed to protecting the level of Home Support services available to persons with disabilities. In the 2019 Service Plan, the HSE's priority is to provide 3.08 million home support hours to 8,094 people with a disability, representing an increase of 150,000 hours over the 2018 target of 2.93 million hours.

I can assure the Deputy that both the Minister for Health and myself are fully aware of the situation and are fully committed to the level of supports provided to people with disabilities.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

356. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Cork in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26233/19]

**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.

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The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

357. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Cork each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26234/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

358. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Cork in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26235/19]

**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.

### **Disability Services Data**

359. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Cork in each

of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26236/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

360. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Cork. [26237/19]

**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 Accommodation Provision**

361. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if measures will be put in place to prevent the increase of instances of mixed gender wards in University Hospital Kerry in breach of hospital policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26240/19]

**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 Procedures**

362. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a date for surgery; the length of the waiting list for such procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26248/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the NTPF increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March.

Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will deliver 1.155 million

elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019. The Scheduled Care Access Plan includes:

- detailed plans from the NTPF to fund 25,000 IPDC treatments; 5,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes; and 40,000 outpatient first appointments.

- Projections by year end to reduce the overall number of patients on the waiting list (excluding GI scopes) from just over 70,200 in Dec 2018 to under 60,000;

- Within this overall reduction the number of patients waiting longer than 3 months will reduce from 40,200 at the end of 2018 to 31,000;

- It is also projected that for ten identified high volume procedures, including hip and knee replacements, all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 6 months will be offered treatment in 2019. These 10 procedures account for over a third of the active inpatient day case waiting list and represent 60% of NTPF planned activity in 2019.

Regarding the data on hip replacements requested by the deputy, please note that Merlin Park Hospital does not have an active waiting list as those patients are captured under the Galway University Hospital (GUH) waiting list. The GUH Hip Replacement Waiting List is contained in the document attached.

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 date of surgery for the patient concerned, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Attached Table:

#### **Hip Replacements Waiting List at Galway University Hospitals**

Row Labels	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	18+ Months	Grand Total
Galway University Hospitals	33	16	18	10	7	2	7	93
Grand Total	33	16	18	10	7	2	7	93

#### **Hospital Appointments Status**

363. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26252/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

364. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26253/19]

**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 Consultant Remuneration**

365. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address pay rates among consultants appointed after October 2012; his further plans to address issues with the recruitment and retention of consultants within hospital groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26258/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The number of consultants working in the public health service continues to grow year on year. It increased by 125 whole time equivalents to 3,121 in the year to the end of May 2019.

The public health service in Ireland operates in a global market for medical specialists where there is a world-wide shortage of specialists. Notwithstanding this shortage, progress continues to be made in attracting and retaining consultants and in addressing improvements in the training, working environment and career pathways for Non Consultant Hospital Doctors in

Ireland to encourage the supply of future consultant candidates.

The issue of new entrant pay is being addressed in general terms under the terms of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020. The issue has also been examined by the Public Sector Pay Commission in relation to consultants. The Commission found that evidence of recruitment campaigns with very low levels of applications was indicative of on-going difficulties in regard to recruitment of consultants. The Commission also acknowledged that the difference in pay between the pre-existing and new entrant consultants is greater than for other categories of public servants. It did not view the measures announced last September for new entrant public servants generally, as being sufficient to address the degree of pay differential which exists for Consultants.

Given its analysis, the Commission proposed that the Parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement jointly consider what further measures could be taken, over time, to address the pay differential. The proposal of the Commission does need to be addressed. The next step is to engage with the representative organisations of consultants. However, brokering an affordable solution will be a significant challenge, in particular within the context of budgetary pressures and broader public sector policy.

### **Vaccination Programme**

366. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out vaccinations for meningitis B to children born prior to 1 October 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26260/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) is an independent committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland which is comprised of experts from several specialties, including infectious diseases, paediatrics, and public health, which makes recommendations to my Department on vaccination policy in Ireland. Its recommendations are based on the prevalence of the relevant disease in Ireland and international best practice in relation to immunisation. NIAC continues to revise recommendations to allow for the introduction of new vaccines in Ireland and to keep abreast of changes in the patterns of disease.

On foot of a recommendation by NIAC, the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule was amended in 2016 to include the introduction of the Meningitis B vaccine for all babies born on or after 1 October 2016. This change to the immunisation schedule took effect from 1 December 2016. The first dose of the vaccine is administered to children when they reach two months of age; a second dose is administered at four months and a third and final dose at twelve months.

Meningitis B disease is most common in babies under the age of 1 year old and the scheduling of the administration of the Men B vaccine under the immunisation programme takes account of this given that there are no plans to introduce a catch-up programme for older children.

All vaccines administered through the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule are provided free of charge. Ireland is the second country in Europe to make the Men B vaccine available free of charge as part of its national immunisation programme. Those who have a medical card are eligible to have the vaccine administered by their GP free of charge. However, the purchase of the vaccine itself is not covered by the medical card scheme.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

367. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Tipperary in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26261/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

368. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Tipperary in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26262/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

369. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Tipperary in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26263/19]

**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.

### **Disability Services Data**

370. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Tipperary in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26264/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

371. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26265/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

372. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when the FreeStyle Libre device will be made available on the long-term illness scheme for type 1 diabetics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26266/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and

direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

373. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26271/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

374. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26272/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

375. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26273/19]

381. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26285/19]

382. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26286/19]

393. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Wicklow in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26334/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 375, 381, 382 and 393 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.

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.

### **Health Services**

376. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the capacity for bariatric surgery and earlier and more systematic activity in primary care to enable earlier and accurate diagnosis and lifestyle coaching directed at obesogenic persons or families through increasing the number of general practitioners and practice nurses in the health service. [26274/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the question refers to service matters, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospitals Data**

377. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of hospitals in which bariatric surgery is available; the number of surgeries per million per capita delivered here; and the way in which this compares with other European countries [26275/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the question refers to service matters, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Staff Data**

378. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners and practice nurses he is making provision for on a three-year timeframe (details supplied). [26276/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** GPs play a crucial role in the provision of primary care services. The number of GPs on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,723 as of 01 January 2019 and the number of GPs with a GMS contract has also risen from 2,098 in 2008 to 2,504 as at 01 June 2019.

The Government is committed to increasing GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future. Efforts undertaken in recent years to increase the number of practising GPs include changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible/shared GMS/GP contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, allowing GPs to hold GMS contracts until their 72nd birthday, as well as the introduction of enhanced supports for rural GP practices.

In addition there has been a huge expansion in the number of training places on GP training programmes in recent years, up from 120 training places in 2009 to 183 places offered in 2019.

The Deputy will be aware of the recently concluded Agreement with GPs on contractual reform. In return for cooperation with a wide range of service developments and reforms, the Government will increase investment in general practice by approximately 40% (or €210 million) over the next 4 years.

This will see significant increases in capitation fees for GPs who participate in the reform programme and the introduction of new fees and subsidies for additional services such as the chronic disease management programme. There will also be increased support for GPs working in rural practices and for those in disadvantaged urban areas. Improvements in the maternity and paternity leave arrangements have also been agreed, in recognition of the need to ensure that general practice is compatible with doctors' family friendly commitments. The Agreement also provides for additional Practice Nurse hours equating to 247 WTE Practice Nurses to facilitate the roll-out of the chronic disease programme.

I am confident that these new measures will benefit patients and help make general practice more sustainable and a more attractive career option for doctors.

### **Long-Term Illness Scheme**

379. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the supports and provisions available for persons with spina bifida and their families in the Saggart, Citywest and Rathcoole areas. [26278/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I wish to advise the Deputy that spina bifida is one of the conditions which is covered under the Long Term Illness Scheme. Under the scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

In relation to other supports and services which are available to persons with spina bifida and their families in a particular area, I have arranged for the HSE to reply to you directly on these matters.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

380. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of the FreeStyle Libre device to persons living with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26279/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and

direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 381 answered with Question No. 375.*

*Question No. 382 answered with Question No. 375.*

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

383. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment to see a consultant rheumatologist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26290/19]

**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.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

384. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will make the Free-Style Libre device available to all persons with type 1 diabetes as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26294/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Staff Remuneration**

385. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the estimated first and full-year cost of implementing support staff job evaluation in the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26298/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Health Screening Programmes**

386. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce expanded newborn screening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26303/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Currently all newborn babies (between 3 and 5 days old) are offered newborn bloodspot screening (known as the ‘heel prick’) through their parents/guardians for eight very rare conditions that are treatable if detected early in life. These include:

- cystic fibrosis
- congenital hypothyroidism
- phenylketonuria
- classical galactosaemia
- MCADD (medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency)
- Homocystinuria
- maple syrup urine disease
- glutaric aciduria type 1

The most recent expansion of the programme occurred on 3 December 2018 when screening for Medium Chain Acyl-CoA Dehydrogenase Deficiency (MCADD) and Glutaric Aciduria Type 1 (GA1) commenced.

As per recommendation 5, contained within the Scally Review (2018), a National Screening Committee will be established and become operational before the end of 2019. This is to strengthen the governance, transparency and oversight of any proposed new programmes or changes to existing programmes. Similar to the UK National Screening Committee, the Committee’s role will be to undertake an independent assessment of the evidence for screening for a particular condition against internationally accepted criteria and make recommendations accordingly.

- Interviews for the role of Chairperson took place on 10 June 2019 and I expect to receive a recommendation for appointment this week

- The remaining positions on the NSC will be filled by Expressions of Interest throughout June - August 2019.

Any future potential changes to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme will be incorporated as part of the Committee’s immediate work programme. Ireland, very much like the UK has always evaluated the case for commencing a national screening programme against the international accepted criteria – collectively known as the Wilson Junger criteria. The evidence bar for commencing a screening programme should and must remain high. This ensures that we can be confident that the programme is effective, quality assured and operating as safe as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

387. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a knee operation in Merlin Park hospital, Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26305/19]

**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 Facilities**

388. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his views on the reported cramped working conditions at the infusion unit of a hospital (details supplied); the measures he will take to improve the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26320/19]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Provision**

389. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have speech and language services restored and be assessed for a communications device; and the reason they were removed from the waiting list for these services. [26321/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

390. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health if he will make the flash glucose monitoring technology available for all persons with type 1 diabetes; and if he has reviewed the survey results from an organisation (details supplied) on current users of the FreeStyle Libre device and the positive impact it has had on their daily lives. [26326/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of

Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

391. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that survey findings by an organisation (details supplied) and the views of persons self-funding its use are considered as part of the HSE review when making his final decision on the issue of the FreeStyle Libre device being made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26328/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Expenditure**

392. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when the multi-annual capital plan for the HSE will be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26329/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is continuing to work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Health Service Executive in a process to finalise as soon as possible a multi-annual Capital Plan for the HSE, which will include capital projects to be funded in 2019 and beyond, having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway and the cashflow requirements attaching to each project.

Projects that are currently in construction and are contractually committed will not be affected.

Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

*Question No. 393 answered with Question No. 375.*

### **General Practitioner Data**

394. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners registered and operational in County Louth; and the number of such practices operational in County Louth. [26338/19]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Data**

395. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitio-

ners due to retire in County Louth within the next three years. [26339/19]

**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.

#### **General Practitioner Data**

396. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners who retired from practice in County Louth in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and the number of these vacancies filled for each year, respectively. [26340/19]

**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.

#### **General Practitioner Data**

397. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of new general practitioner practices opened in County Louth in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [26341/19]

**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.

#### **General Practitioner Data**

398. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of newly qualified general practitioners who took up work in County Louth in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [26342/19]

**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.

#### **General Practitioner Data**

399. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the average number of patients per general practitioner in County Louth; if there is a cap on the number of patients each general practitioner can treat; and the number of general practitioner services that exceed this average. [26343/19]

**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.

#### **General Practitioner Data**

400. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card patients, general practitioner-only card patients and private patients registered with a general practitioner service in County Louth. [26344/19]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Data**

401. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card patients, general practitioner-only card patients and private patients waiting to secure a place with a registered general practitioner service in County Louth. [26345/19]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Data**

402. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the estimated number of general practitioners who will be required in County Louth over the next five years to keep pace with the expected rise in demand based on the best information available; and his plans in place to address same. [26346/19]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

403. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that general practitioner surgeries in County Louth are at capacity and unable to accept new patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26347/19]

**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.

### **General Practitioner Data**

404. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have presented to date in 2019 to out of hours services (details supplied) in County Louth who are not registered with a general practitioner in the county. [26348/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Staff Data**

405. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of specialties affected by the failure to fill the 500 consultant posts. [26351/19]

406. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals affected by a shortage of consultants; and the specialties involved. [26352/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 405 and 406 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on these matters.

### **Hospitals Data**

407. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of theatres closed or that are working at less than full capacity due to the recruitment freeze and consultant shortages. [26353/19]

**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**

408. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of hospitals using rolling theatre closures to manage staff shortages. [26354/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Consultant Recruitment**

409. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the crisis in consultant recruitment further to information in recent media reports. [26355/19]

410. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he has been provided with the HSE report into the employment of medical consultants cited in recent media reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26356/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 409 and 410 together.

I have received the Report referred to by the Deputy. It was submitted by the HSE to my Department on 13 May 2019 and is currently receiving consideration. The Report was prepared in response to requests I and my Department made to the HSE asking that it address the issues raised in the Judgement of Justice Kelly mentioned in the media reports and broader issues relating to medical recruitment.

While the number of consultants has increased by 109 in the 12 months to the end of April 2019 and by 509 in the past five years, the Government is aware that there are significant difficulties in filling certain consultant posts, particularly in smaller hospitals, though not exclusively, and in a number of specialties, as identified by the Public Sector Pay Commission. The Commission in its Report published on 4 September 2018 identified difficulties in attracting consultant applications for many posts at present and acknowledged that the pay rates for new entrants had been highlighted as a factor in this.

Given its analysis, the Commission proposed that the Parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement jointly consider what further measures could be taken, over time, to address the pay differential. The proposal of the Commission does need to be addressed. The next step is to

engage with the representative organisations of consultants. However, brokering an affordable solution will be a significant challenge, in particular within the context of budgetary pressures and broader public sector policy.

### **Hospital Consultant Recruitment**

411. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the locations in which the reported 500 vacant consultant posts exist by CHO area in tabular form. [26357/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Hospital Consultant Recruitment**

412. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant consultant posts that exist at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, and Louth County Hospital; the length of time these posts remained vacant; and his plans to fill these vacancies. [26358/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

413. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the average wait time for an adult hearing aid test in County Kerry for persons with medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26365/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

414. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an audiology appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26367/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

415. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is on the routine or urgent waiting list to attend Crumlin hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26368/19]

416. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can be considered for an earlier appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26369/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 415 and 416 together.

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.

### **Audiology Services Data**

417. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the average wait time for audiology services for persons under 18 years of age in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26370/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Audiology Services Data**

418. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the average wait time for adult audiology services in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26371/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

419. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the review of the cost effectiveness of making flash glucose monitoring technology available for all persons with type 1 diabetes; if he has received a survey conducted by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26372/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Staff Data**

420. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of podiatrists attached to a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26375/19]

**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 reply to the Deputy directly.

### Freedom of Information Data

421. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26394/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested by Deputy O'Brien is contained in the following table.

	Granted	Part-Granted	Refused	Transferred	Withdrawn	Administrative Access
2018	117	152	125	4	57	11

### Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

422. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre flash glucose monitoring technology will be made available for all persons with type 1 diabetes; his plans to ensure survey findings by an organisation (details supplied) are considered as part of a HSE review in view of the quality of life improvement for the individual and cost savings resulting from the reduction in blood glucose strip usage by users of the device; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26401/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Beds Closures

423. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels at the Cottage Hospital, Drogheda, further to recent local media reports; and the demand for services from the local acute hospital. [26402/19]

424. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of the beds temporarily closed at the Cottage Hospital, Drogheda in April 2019 that have since been reopened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26403/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 423 and 424 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## Hospital Waiting Lists Data

425. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting outpatient treatment across all specialities in CHO area 8; and the number of children waiting for periods (details supplied) in tabular form [26404/19]

426. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting inpatient treatment across all specialities in CHO area 8; and the number of children waiting for periods (details supplied) in tabular form. [26405/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 425 and 426 together.

Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. Last year saw considerable improvement in the number of patients waiting for procedures. As a result of increased activity and the ongoing collaboration between the HSE and the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), the number of patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case procedure fell to 70,204 in December 2018, from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017. This represents a reduction of over 18% in the overall number of patients waiting for a procedure. The number of patients waiting more than 3 months fell by more than 17,700, or 31% in the same period from July 2017 to the end of December 2018.

The impact is particularly notable when one considers the improvements to the Waiting Lists for those particular specialties which were the focus of the Inpatient/Daycase Action Plan in 2018. These include the numbers waiting over 3 months for a tonsillectomy procedure which fell by 65% from July 2017 to the end of December 2018.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the NTPF increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March.

Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019. The Scheduled Care Access Plan includes:

- detailed plans from the NTPF to fund 25,000 IPDC treatments; 5,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes and 40,000 first outpatient appointments.

- Projections by year end to reduce the overall number of patients on the Inpatient/Day Case waiting list (excluding GI scopes) from just over 70,200 in Dec 2018 to under 60,000;

- Within this overall reduction the number of patients waiting longer than 3 months will reduce from 40,200 at the end of 2018 to 31,000;

- It is also projected that for ten identified high volume procedures, all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 6 months will be offered treatment in 2019. These 10 procedures account for over a third of the active inpatient day case waiting list and represent 60% of NTPF planned activity in 2019.

A key element of the Scheduled Access Plan is the stabilisation of the Outpatient Waiting List. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which approximately 1 million will be first appointments.

The plan also includes a target that the number of patients waiting for a first Outpatient ap-

pointment will fall from over 516,000 at the end of 2018 to under 509,000 by the end of 2019. This target takes into account the more than 800,000 new patients who will be added to the Outpatient waiting list in 2019; a figure that is based on trends for the previous two years.

While the meeting of short-term targets is always welcome, more can be achieved and, in this regard, the HSE, Department of Health and NTPF, under the Access Plan, will work together with the objective of developing medium-long term improvement initiatives for patient access to hospital procedures. This will include moving care to more appropriate settings and providing care at the lowest level of complexity such as providing ophthalmology in the community; maximising the use of Advanced Nurse Practitioner led clinics; and physiotherapists to manage orthopaedic clinics.

The data requested by deputy on the number of children on IPDC & Outpatient waiting lists in CHO Area 8 is outlined in the following document.

IPDC Total Children Waiting in CHO Area 8 by Time Band as at 30/05/2019

Area of Residence	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-18 Months	18 Months +	Grand Total
Laois	31	20	23	9	8	14	105
Longford	12	11	8	6	8	7	52
Louth	44	29	28	13	12	11	137
Meath	86	35	33	16	19	13	202
Offaly	36	20	20	12	18	12	118
Westmeath	49	30	30	14	18	9	150
Grand Total	258	145	142	70	83	66	764

OP Total Child Waiters in CHO Area 8 by Wait Time Band as at 30/05/2019

Area of Residence	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-18 Months	18 Months +	Grand Total
Laois	520	393	233	139	187	448	1920
Longford	253	162	99	39	98	213	864
Louth	730	529	360	180	279	446	2524
Meath	1126	722	451	328	490	786	3903
Offaly	557	369	189	133	205	488	1941
Westmeath	523	320	222	145	195	451	1856
Grand Total	3709	2495	1554	964	1454	2832	13008

**Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

427. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting an initial assessment for treatment across all specialities in CHO area 8; and the number of children waiting for periods (details supplied) in tabular form [26406/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

## Departmental Funding

428. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26408/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I can confirm that the application referred to in the question has been received by the relevant unit in my Department, and that this application will be examined under the same criteria as all the qualifying applications using the scoring mechanism detailed in the application form.

## Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

429. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health his views on the report submitted to his Department by an organisation (details supplied); his plans to ensure the survey findings are considered as part of the HSE review into the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26409/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## Eating Disorders

430. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the national eating disorder plan and its key actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26410/19]

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

## Hospital Beds Data

431. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the location of three hospital beds dedicated to eating disorders here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26411/19]

**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.

## Eating Disorders

432. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if a location (details supplied) is regarded as a specialist facility for eating disorders; the location of a more specialised service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26412/19]

**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**

433. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his plans to appoint a cross-direct route national working group for alcohol-related brain injury as recommended by a meeting of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health in early 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26414/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** While I note there were a number of issues discussed at the Joint Committee on Health of 8th May last, I am not aware of any correspondence from the Committee or proposal to consider regarding the issue raised by the Deputy. In relation to health needs, HSE Disability Services provide personal and social supports based on the needs of the individual, rather than the provision of services based on a specific diagnosis or condition.

The Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to publish a plan for advancing neuro-rehabilitation services in the community.

The Health Service Executive recently published its implementation framework in respect of the recommendations of the National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015. This was the culmination of the work of the National Steering Group established in 2017, which included representation from stakeholder groups including the Neurological Alliance of Ireland.

The focus of the Neuro-Rehabilitation Strategy is on achieving best outcomes for people, by providing safe, high quality, person-centred care at the lowest appropriate level of complexity. This must be integrated across the care pathway and provided as close to home as possible or in specialist centres, where necessary.

The framework will guide the reconfiguration and development of neuro-rehabilitation structures and services at national and local level, through a 10-step Framework. It proposes the formation of Managed Clinical Rehabilitation Networks (MCRNs), with the set-up of one demonstration MCRN suggested as the first step. The ultimate goal of this approach is to put in place a national framework of acute, inpatient and specialist community services.

The Managed Clinical Rehabilitation Network (MCRN) model acknowledges that different service users need different input and different levels of expertise and specialisation at different stages in their rehabilitation journey.

The critical point of this model is that, although service users may need to access different services as they progress, the transition between services should be facilitated by appropriate communication and sharing of information between services so that they progress in a seamless continuum of care through the different stages:

- Acute hospital;
- Complex specialist rehabilitation services;
- Post-acute specialist inpatient rehabilitation services;
- Community based specialist rehabilitation services;

- Primary care; and
- Voluntary organisations.

This National Implementation Framework is evidence-based and informed by population needs. It addresses the continuum of care for those in need of neurological rehabilitation services. It describes the requirement for a whole system approach and provides the blueprint for how we should deliver care and services for those who suffer from neurological conditions who require individualised, goal focused rehabilitation. The implementation framework covers an initial period from 2019 into 2021. However, it is recognised that continued investment in and development of neuro-rehabilitation services will need to be prioritised beyond the three-year implementation period of this Implementation Framework.

### **Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

434. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when the €250,000 funding committed to support community action on alcohol will be allocated to support the implementation of community action and within the local drugs and alcohol task forces; the way in which the funding will be spent; if additional funding over and above that committed will be provided to support the implementation of community action on alcohol strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26416/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** The national drugs, strategy, Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery, contains a commitment to deliver an integrated public health approach to drugs and alcohol as a key priority by promoting the use of evidence-based approaches to mobilising community action on alcohol.

My Department will develop two new schemes this year to deliver an integrated public health approach to drugs and alcohol, as set out in the National Drugs Strategy. One of the schemes will support evidence-based approaches to mobilising community action on alcohol. Both schemes will have a fund of €250,000 on a multi-annual basis.

It is intended that both schemes will be developed in the second half of 2019.

On 6th March 2019, I announced additional funding of €1 million for the implementation of the national drugs strategy. This funding, which will be provided on a recurring, multi-annual basis, will address the priorities set down in the strategy including early harm reduction responses to emerging trends in substance misuse, and improving access to services for people with complex needs.

Following consideration of the outcome of a consultation process with task forces and community healthcare organisations, I approved a three-strand funding model for this additional funding. Task forces were notified of this funding model on 17 May. A series of regional workshops took place in June outlining the details of scheme and the application process for this funding.

I am committed to implementing an integrated public health response to substance misuse, with the twin aims of reducing harm and supporting recovery. Working in partnership with task forces and Community Healthcare Organisations, I am confident that the allocation of additional resources in 2019 will make a significant contribution to achieving this objective.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

435. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the orthodontic waiting lists for all age groups in County Tipperary in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26417/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

436. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a CAMHS appointment will be provided for a person (details supplied); if the case can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26419/19]

**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 Children's Hospital**

437. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the practitioners that will be engaged contractually in respect of the new national children's hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26437/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The majority of consultants, approximately 90%, are employed under Consultant Contract 2008. About 10% remain on the 1997 Contract, though this percentage is declining over time.

There are 4 main types of Contract available under Consultant Contract 2008, Type A - public only, Type B that allows private practice on site, Type B\* that allows on-site and off-site private practice (for those who moved from the 1997 Contract), and Type C, that also allows on-site and off-site private practice for those who have taken up employment since 2008. At the end of 2018, the HSE's DIME system reported, for filled posts, 1,690 Type B clinical contracts, 289 Type B\*s and 156 Type C's.

The volume of private practice allowed for under Consultant Contract 2008 is, typically, limited to 20%. Consultants who moved from the 1997 Contract may be entitled to retain a higher percentage, where such a percentage applied under the 1997 Contract.

It is expected that the majority of consultants who move from existing sites to the new children's hospital will retain their contracts. However there is a facility within the contract under which consultants may apply to switch their contract type.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

438. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Laois in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26439/19]

**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

### **Disability Services Data**

439. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Laois in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26440/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disabilities Assessments**

440. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** 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. [26443/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Respite Care Services Data**

441. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Laois in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26450/19]

**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

### **Emergency Departments**

442. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the status of the independent review taking place in the emergency department, University Hospital Limerick. [26453/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive (HSE) initiated an After-Action Review (AAR) of the Winter Planning Process in 2018/2019 with a view to identifying the specific factors that contributed to performance over the winter period.

Although nationally trolley numbers were lower over the winter period than the previous winter, attendances and admissions were higher. Consequently, the HSE has decided to extend the existing review of Winter 2018/2019 to include a review by an independent expert group. The group will carry out a comparative analysis of unscheduled care performance across the nine hospital sites and the relevant Community Healthcare Organisations that were the subject of specific focused support through Winter 2018/2019. This will include University Hospital Limerick as one of the nine focus sites.

The independent expert group includes external clinical and management expertise from NHS Scotland, and domain knowledge and data analysis and expertise from the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland. The HSE will provide facilitation and support to the review team.

The terms of reference and membership of the group have been agreed and preliminary performance data collection has been undertaken and shared with the independent members to enable early analysis in advance of potential site visits. The HSE advise that two meetings of the review group members have taken place to agree the overall requirements and work plan, with the next meeting planned for early July.

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

443. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the recruitment of an audiologist for County Westmeath (details supplied). [26461/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

444. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Laois in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26466/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

445. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Laois in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26467/19]

**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

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

446. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he can ensure that the HSE consider survey findings submitted by an organisation (details supplied) in the context of clinical effectiveness and quality of life data as they pertain to the review being carried out with respect to the use of the FreeStyle Libre device; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26469/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services Data**

447. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in counties Cavan and Monaghan in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26471/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Respite Care Services Data**

448. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in counties Cavan and Monaghan in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26472/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Respite Care Services Data**

449. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in counties Cavan and Monaghan in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26473/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Disability Services Data**

450. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in counties Cavan and Monaghan in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26474/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Data**

451. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in counties Cavan and Monaghan in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form. [26475/19]

**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.

### **Ministerial Communications**

452. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he replied to a group (details supplied) that the area was not his responsibility; if he spoke with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26485/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My office wrote to the group referred to on 11 June. It advised that this matter does not fall within the remit of my Department and is more appropriate to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; it was suggested that the correspondence be directed to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

I have not spoken to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment about this matter.

### **Illicit Trade in Fuel and Tobacco Products**

453. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health his views on high-sulphur coal being smuggled across the Border region; if he has spoken to other Ministers regarding same; if actions are being taken to prevent this smuggling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26489/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I wish to advise the Deputy that I have no remit in the matter of cross border smuggling and have not spoken to any other Minister regarding this issue.

### **Medical Negligence Claims**

454. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the compensation paid by the HSE in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, for negligence claims at each hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26517/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The State Claims Agency (SCA) has a statutory remit to manage personal injury claims, including claims in respect of clinical negligence, on behalf of Delegated State Authorities (DSA's) including the Health Service Executive.

The specific details relating to the Deputy's question have been provided to me by the State Claims Agency and are set out in the attached report. I have been informed by the State Claims Agency that the information contained in this report has been extracted from the National Incident Management System (NIMS). It contains clinical and general claims relating to both statutory and voluntary hospitals within the acute hospital group. The claims relate to patient/service user, staff members, member of public and property damage. The payments reflect damages only and exclude legal fees and other expert costs.

[[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\\_pq454-25-06-2019\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25_pq454-25-06-2019_en.pdf)] Compensation Paid

### **Legislative Process**

455. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delays in respect of the drafting of legislation to update the Mental Health Act 2001. [26531/19]

456. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health when draft legislation to update the Mental Health Act 2001 will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26532/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 455 and 456 together.

The Expert Group Review of the Mental Health Act 2001, which was published in 2015, made 165 recommendations, approximately 70% of which relate to amendments to the 2001 Act. The Deputy will be aware that Government approved plans to proceed with the general

scheme of a bill and officials are working on the heads of this comprehensive amending bill which will legislate for the recommendations of the Review.

Draft heads of Bill are currently being finalised and will be submitted to the Mental Health Commission within the next two weeks for their detailed review. It is essential that the Mental Health Commission, which has a very significant and important role in overseeing the safeguards provided in the Act, has full input into the framing of the many amendments to be included in revised mental health legislation.

The Deputy may also wish to note that since the Expert Group Review was published three mental health amendment acts have been enacted.

The first was the Mental Health (Amendment) Act 2015 which updated the provisions of the 2001 Act regarding treatment, in particular ECT.

The second was the more recent enactment of the Mental Health (Amendment) Act 2018 which makes changes to the 2001 Act regarding the definition of voluntary patient and which introduces guiding principles for adults replacing the principle of best interests. The Act also introduces guiding principles for children and refers to capacity within the meaning of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015. It is important to point out, however, that the provisions of the 2018 amending act cannot be commenced until further legislative changes are made and the Decision Support Service, established under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act is operational. The changes in these two acts are based on a number of different recommendations of the Expert Group Review.

The third amending act is the Mental Health (Renewal Orders) Act 2018, which amended Section 15 of the 2001 Act following on from a Court of Appeal finding of unconstitutionality.

In addition, changes to, or that have an effect on, the 2001 Act will be introduced as part of the new Deprivation of Liberty provisions currently being developed by my Department and also through changes proposed for the Child Care Act 1991. Finally, there are four Private Member's Bills published which seek to make changes to or that have an effect on the 2001 Act. As these bills are moved in the Oireachtas, my Department is required to prioritise these over other legislative work such as the review of the Act.

Many of the changes proposed in the various private members bills replicate recommendations of the Expert Group Review.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

457. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health when he expects to bring legislative changes in respect of the fair deal scheme before Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26533/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The proposed policy change to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), to cap contributions based on farm and business assets at 3 years where a family successor commits to working the productive asset, has been approved by Government. My Department developed draft Heads of Bill while considering a number of complex ancillary policy and operational matters which may need to be addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is intended that this proposed policy change, the 3 year cap, will be extended to eligible existing participants in long term residential care so that they are not disadvantaged, but that

there would be no retrospective recoupment of contributions for those who have paid contributions over and above the 3 year period. The cost of applying the change to existing residents who will qualify from the coming into effect of the provisions has been factored into the overall cost of this proposed legislative change.

The General Scheme of Bill for the NHSS was approved by Government at Cabinet on the 11th June 2019. The changes to the Scheme will come into effect as soon as the legislative process is successfully complete. I intend to progress this as quickly as possible, however, the timeline for completion of the legislation will also depend on how it passes through the Houses.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

458. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for urgent surgery will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [26536/19]

**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.

### **Hospitals Building Programme**

459. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to allocate funding of €23.7 million to the building of a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26537/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

460. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding transport for a child (details supplied). [26540/19]

**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.

Officials from my Department sought clarification on the details of this Parliamentary Question, and I am informed that the Deputy's office confirmed that it relates to transport to and from a day service, Praxis Care in Mullingar. The HSE have been advised of this accordingly.

### **Hospitals Building Programme**

461. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of the 60-bed modular unit at University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26570/19]

**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 Aids and Appliances Provision**

462. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if concerns raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied) relating to the availability of the FreeStyle Libre device for adults will receive a response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26571/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

463. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [26574/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Departmental Budgets**

464. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 163 of 18 June 2019, the way in which he and the HSE will deal with the concerns relating to health expenditure in 2019; if there will be a review of the 2019 service plan to deal with these concerns; if a revised service plan will be published for 2019; the areas causing concern in this regard; the way in which these concerns will be addressed within the health expenditure ceiling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26575/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have emphasised to the Health Service Executive the need to address health spending urgently including by means of the following measures;

- Steps to ensure compliance with the staffing limits for 2019. Pending receipt of finalised financial plans which will manage the staffing levels back to affordable numbers, on 29 March the Health Service Executive put in place measures and controls regarding recruitment.

- A reporting and monitoring structure around agreed savings targets in the National Service Plan, with responsible managers providing a monthly report commencing in respect of Quarter 1.

- A mid-year review of the Health Service Executives performance on savings and staffing limits with further interventions to follow, if necessary.

- The establishment of a new HSE Board governance structure, with strong competencies across key areas, will further contribute to strengthening the oversight and performance of the HSE pending its further reorganisation. The recent appointment of a CEO to the Health Service Executive will also strengthen the HSE's leadership and focus on performance. In fact, the development and implementation of an effective performance management and accountability system in the HSE has been identified by me as one of the priority issues for the new Board.

The National Service Plan requires the HSE to protect and promote the health and well-being of the population, having regard to the resources available to it, and making the most efficient and effective use of those resources. Implementation of the Service Plan is ongoing and my Department understands that the position of the HSE is that protection of front line service delivery is its priority. The legislation (Health Act 2004, as amended) does provide for me to direct the HSE to submit an amended service plan if necessary.

My Department is engaging in ongoing dialogue with both the HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the financial performance of the Health Service Executive year to date, including consideration of the projected outturn for the year.

These discussions are ongoing and until they are concluded it would not be appropriate for me to anticipate the outcome.

### **Primary Care Centres Staff**

465. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant posts in the primary care centre in Coolock, Dublin 5; when the posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26605/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

466. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will request a report by an organisation (details supplied) be included as part of the HSE one-year review to extend the FreeStyle Libre device to all persons with type 1 diabetes; his views of the report findings; if clinical effectiveness and quality of life impact data on patients will be considered as part of

the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26607/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Staff Recruitment**

467. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the reason there has been a delay in appointing a new sonographer in St. Michael's Hospital, Dún Laoghaire, that has led to the development of another waiting list after the scheduled retirement of the previous sonographer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26632/19]

**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 Recruitment**

468. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for children seeking access to a speech and language therapist by CHO in tabular form; the number of additional speech and language therapists required to eliminate waiting lists for same; and the estimated cost of employing such therapists in line with the Disability Act 2005. [26637/19]

469. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for children seeking access to an occupational therapist by CHO in tabular form; the number of additional occupational therapists required to eliminate waiting lists for occupational therapy; and the estimated costs of employing such therapists in line with the Disability Act 2005. [26638/19]

470. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for children seeking access to physiotherapy by CHO in tabular form; the number of additional physiotherapists required to eliminate waiting lists for same; and the estimated costs of employing such therapists in line with the Disability Act 2005. [26639/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 468 to 470, inclusive, 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.

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.

### **Psychological Services Waiting Lists**

471. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for

children seeking access to psychologists by CHO in tabular form; the number of additional psychologists required to eliminate waiting lists for psychology treatments; and the estimated costs of employing such psychologists in line with the Disability Act 2005. [26640/19]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists**

472. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the waiting list for non-urgent referrals to the speech and language therapist in the mid-Kildare network disability team; and if the waiting list time will improve as vacant posts are filled. [26645/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

473. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied); and when the person can expect an appointment with a consultant at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, in view of the fact an appointment has been cancelled on three occasions. [26646/19]

**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.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Expenditure**

474. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health the grants or rebate schemes available to help persons diagnosed with COPD with the cost of running oxygen machines and other electrical appliances required as part of their treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26649/19]

**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.

### **Tender Process**

475. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of the tendering process with regard to a service (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26650/19]

**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**

476. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of out-of-hours mental health specialist nurses available in each CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26651/19]

**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.

### **Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists**

477. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the waiting list for paediatric occupational therapy in view of the two-year wait to access this service in the Cork and Kerry region. [26662/19]

**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.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

478. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre device will

be extended to the general population of persons with diabetes; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26690/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

479. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied). [26692/19]

**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.

### **Hospitals Capital Programme**

480. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if the extension and expansion of a hospital (details supplied) will be achieved before the end of the current health capital programme as originally planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26693/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is continuing to work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Health Service Executive in a process to finalise as soon as possible a multi-annual Capital Plan for the HSE, which will include capital projects to be funded in 2019 and beyond, having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway and the cashflow requirements attaching to each project.

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 the current position on the capital developments at Boyne View House, St Mary’s Hospital, Drogheda Co. Louth.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

481. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26695/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

482. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health if the survey findings of an organisation (details supplied) are being considered as part of the HSE review of the FreeStyle Libre device to be made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; his views on the survey findings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26696/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Autism Support Services**

483. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will be allocating more financial assistance in 2019 to an organisation (details supplied) in County Donegal and is working towards signing off on a service-level agreement with the organisation. [26720/19]

**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.

### **Hospitals Data**

484. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for orthopaedic operations in counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Cork and Waterford; the length of time have been waiting by age range; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26721/19]

485. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for cataract operations in counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Cork and Waterford; the length of time have been waiting by age range; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26722/19]

487. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for ENT services in counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Cork and Waterford; the length of time they have been waiting by age range; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26725/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 484, 485 and 487 together.

Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. Last year saw considerable improvement in the number of patients waiting for procedures. As a result of increased activity and the ongoing collaboration between the HSE and the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), the number of patients waiting for an Inpatient or Day case procedure fell to 70,204 in December 2018, from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017. This represents a reduction of over 18% in the overall number of patients waiting for a procedure. The number of patients waiting more than 3 months fell by more than 17,700, or 31% in the same period from July 2017 to the end of December 2018.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling

waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019.

As a result of continued investment and the work undertaken as part of the Scheduled Care Access Plan, the number of patients waiting for cataract procedures has fallen by 44% from a high of 10,024 in July 2017 to 5,655 at the end of May 2019. For the same period the number of patients waiting more than 9 months has fallen by 89% from 4,371 to 481. The numbers waiting for hip and knee replacements has also reduced by 18%, while the number of patients waiting longer than 9 months has fallen by 69% from 1,019 in July 2019, to 319 at the end of May 2019.

While the meeting of short-term targets is always welcome, more can be achieved and, in this regard, the HSE, Department of Health and NTPF, under the Access Plan, will work together with the objective of developing medium-long term improvement initiatives for patient access to hospital procedures. This will include moving care to more appropriate settings and providing care at the lowest level of complexity such as providing ophthalmology in the community; maximising the use of Advanced Nurse Practitioner led clinics; and physiotherapists to manage orthopaedic clinics.

The specific data requested by the deputy is outlined in the attached documents.

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq484-25-06-19\_en.xlsx">ENT</a>]

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq484-25-6-19\_en.xlsx">Orthopaedics</a>]

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq484-25-06-2019\_en.xlsx">Cataracts</a>]

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

486. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a refund under the cross-Border initiative will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [26723/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

*Question No. 487 answered with Question No. 484.*

### **Disability Services Funding**

488. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the status of a centre (details supplied); if the capital plan of the HSE will provide funding for a new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26726/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department and the Health Service Executive are currently engaged in a process to finalise the HSE Capital Plan for 2019.

As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the healthcare property estate and the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to the Cleary Centre in Donegal town.

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

489. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he will give consideration to making the drug Spinraza available for adults; the research available on its effectiveness for adults; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26727/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria to be applied in the making of reimbursement decisions which include the clinical and cost effectiveness of the product, the opportunity cost and the impact on resources that are available to the HSE.

As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines.

However, I can advise the Deputy that on 11 June 2019, the HSE Leadership Team approved access to the drug Nusinersen (Spinraza) for children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) Type I, II or III on an exceptional and individualised basis.

The HSE decision process in relation to Spinraza involved a full Health Technology Assessment followed by detailed consideration by the HSE expert groups on new drug therapies, including the Technology Review Group for Rare Diseases and the Drugs Committee. Evidence of the clinical effectiveness of this new drug therapy was also reviewed.

The recommendation is to approve access for children with genetically confirmed SMA Type I, II or III, in accordance with the controlled access criteria recommended by the Rare Diseases Technology Review Committee. The rare diseases committee recommendation was clearly targeted at the youngest and most severely affected SMA patients, and this group is the clear priority for the HSE. The actual patient assessment and approval process will be the means for determining access on an individual case by case basis.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

490. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for a hip operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26728/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals

are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

491. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for a procedure; the reason for the delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26729/19]

**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.

### **Rare Diseases**

492. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the full range of State supports provided to persons with Friedreich's ataxia; the annual resource support provided to an organisation (details supplied); the supports or level of involvement by Ireland in research towards identifying a treatment or cure for the disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26730/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this PQ refers to service issues, I have referred it to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Expenditure**

493. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE capital plan for 2019 has been approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26733/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is continuing to work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Health Service Executive in a process to finalise as soon as possible a multi-annual Capital Plan for the HSE, which will include capital projects to be funded in 2019 and beyond, having regard to the available capital funding and the number of large national capital projects currently underway.

The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond

having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway, the cashflow requirements attaching to each project and the relevant priority.

Projects that are currently in construction and are contractually committed will not be affected.

Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

494. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a surgery appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26739/19]

**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.

### **Medical Card Applications**

495. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was not granted a medical card; and the way in which the person's application can be reviewed without going through the application process again in view of the circumstances. [26741/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

496. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the services available for a person (details supplied). [26742/19]

**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.

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

497. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if a replacement speech and language therapist is being provided to cover maternity leave at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26761/19]

503. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in County Waterford aged six to 18 years of age awaiting ASD diagnostic assessments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26777/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 497 and 503 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.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

498. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the status of a primary care centre (details supplied); if a site has been secured; if so, the list of services that will be provided on site; the reason for the delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26767/19]

499. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the status of a primary care centre (details supplied); if a site has been secured; if so, the list of services that will be provided on site; the reason for the delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26768/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 498 and 499 together.

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.

### **Hospitals Data**

500. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals with the highest rates of neonatal brain injury; and the number of same in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by hospital in tabular form. [26769/19]

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

### **Hospitals Car Park Charges**

501. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to tackle hospital parking charges; if he has received the recommendations of the HSE review group on same; the next steps that will be taken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26770/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have made it clear that I want to see progress made in this area and am working with my Department and the HSE in this regard. In March 2018, I requested the HSE to conduct a review of hospital car parking charges with a view to establishing clear national guidelines in the area. The HSE is currently liaising with Hospital Groups nationally to develop an implementation plan, which will be submitted in July, to accompany the review report. My Department will then consider the implementation plan in collaboration with the HSE as part of the annual service planning process.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

502. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when the FreeStyle Libre device will be made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; if consideration will be given to the issues raised in correspondence from a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26774/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 503 answered with Question No. 497.*

### **HSE Staff Data**

504. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE paediatric physiotherapists employed in County Mayo; if they are employed full time; the locations in which they are based; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26783/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

505. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a mechanism by which a family can have home care provided by way of a grant to purchase hours in cases in which the hours needed fall outside the normal working hours for a home care provider but could be purchased directly from the home care worker; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26784/19]

**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.

### **Assisted Human Reproduction Legislation**

506. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the assisted human reproduction Bill is due to be published. [26785/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In October 2017, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research, based on the published General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill. As the Deputy will be aware, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of last year. The Joint Committee intends to report thereon before the summer recess and the recommendations in its report will be considered during the ongoing process of drafting this Bill in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General. 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.

### **HSE Data**

507. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of STI clinics nationally; the staffing numbers at each; the vacancy numbers at each; the length of time the vacancies have existed; and the active recruitment campaigns for the vacancies in tabular form. [26786/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

508. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be facilitated with a medical procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26788/19]

**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.

## Medical Card Applications

509. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that persons given a cancer diagnosis receive a medical card without delay; if his attention has been drawn to the long waiting times that cancer patients are waiting for a card and the high medical expenses they incur as a result of these waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26801/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy is aware, the HSE's Expert Group on Medical Need and Medical Card Eligibility examined the issue of awarding medical cards on the basis of illness and concluded that it was not feasible, desirable, nor ethically justifiable to list medical conditions in priority order for medical card eligibility. The Expert Group also concluded that a person's means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card. This position remains unchanged.

However, it is undoubtedly important that the medical card application system is responsive and sensitive to people's needs, especially arrangements relating to the issuing of medical cards on a discretionary basis. To that end, the HSE has sought to implement revised processes to provide a more compassionate and more efficient process in the assessment of medical card applications. Such measures include the development of a Burden of Illness Questionnaire which is now being rolled out in selective circumstances where the assessing doctor in the HSE's National Medical Card Unit requires a more comprehensive assessment of an applicant's medical and social circumstances and any resulting undue financial hardship.

In addition, in January 2018 a new streamlined online medical card application system was launched. This enables applicants to find out immediately if they are eligible for a medical card and brings considerable benefits for people in terms of turnaround times, convenience and security. This measure aids the HSE's National Medical Card Unit to provide an enhanced service to applicants ensuring that the application process is as efficient and timely as possible.

With regard to persons suffering from cancer and other serious medical conditions the HSE also has a system in place for the provision of medical cards in response to emergency situations i.e. in circumstances where persons are in need of urgent or on-going medical care that they cannot afford and also for persons in palliative care who are terminally ill. These medical cards are issued within 24 hours of receipt of the required patient details and a letter which confirms the medical condition from a doctor or consultant. With the exception of terminally ill patients, all medical cards, granted on an emergency basis, are followed up with a full application within a number of weeks.

I would also like to note that since 1 July 2015, the HSE adopted the position that all children under 18 years of age with a diagnosis of cancer are awarded a medical card. This card is valid for a period of 5 years.

While it is none the less important to note that eligibility for a medical card remains primarily on the basis of financial assessment, I do recognise that patients require a responsive and efficient health system to meet their medical needs, which may often be required urgently. The processes in place by the HSE in granting an emergency medical card, the online application system and the Burden of Illness Questionnaire are aiding the National Medical Card Unit to provide an enhanced service to applicants ensuring that the application process is as efficient and timely as possible.

## Home Care Packages Data

510. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of home care support services outsourced to private companies in 2018, by CHO, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26815/19]

**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**

511. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if the requirement for travel time payments to home care support staff will have to be covered from the existing 2019 budget for home care hours; if this will contribute to a reduction in hours available for persons in need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26816/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

512. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether home care support packages provided by the Health Service Executive offer the best value to support persons who need care at home; and his plans to fill the vacancies in the sector. [26817/19]

**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 Health Service Executive. 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.

Many more of our older people with complex care needs are now being maintained at home, leading to increased demand for additional levels of service, and for services outside of core hours of Monday to Friday. It is crucial that we develop homecare services and we are working to provide a more viable alternative to nursing home care for a greater number of people. The Department is currently developing plans for a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home support services. The Scheme will improve access to the service on an affordable and sustainable basis while also introducing a system of regulation that will ensure public confidence. This approach is fully aligned with Sláintecare, Ireland's vision for healthcare reform over the next 10 years which, at its core, recognises the importance of shifting care to the community to provide care closer to home and allow people to remain living in their communities for as long as possible. The Scheme is a key deliverable under the Department's Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and has a target date of 2021.

Work is also currently being progressed in relation to a review of the management, operation and funding of current homecare services in Ireland. This review is a commitment under the Programme for Partnership Government and will provide a baseline for the design of an effective, sustainable service as part of the development of a statutory homecare scheme. The review will look at various matters relating to the management and operation of the service, including the proportion of the funding allocated to direct service-provision by the HSE and the methodology for the allocation of funding to service-providers through the HSE's tendering

processes, and how this relates to the funding of direct service-provision by the HSE.

Given the nature of the role of the Home Care Support Assistant, (formerly known as a “Home Help”), these have always been very locally recruited, with a Home Help Manager matching and coordinating staff with clients, dependent on the number of hours and level of support both available from the worker and required by the client. The HSE keeps under review the position regarding the number of HCSEA staff employed having regard to the hours available and the hours worked by existing staff in the local area.

### **Home Care Packages Administration**

513. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the procedures being put in place to provide the relevant information technology programme to facilitate the new rota requirements for home care support staff that are now rostered five over seven days as per the recent agreement or contract. [26819/19]

**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**

514. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of intensive dementia home care packages in place from January 2019 to date. [26820/19]

**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 Dementia Strategy**

515. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to develop a new dementia strategy in view of the fact the current one has expired; his plans to provide more dementia advisers for the 55,000 persons currently suffering with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26821/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As a response to the challenges facing people with dementia and their families and carers, the National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014. The Strategy contains 35 priority and additional actions and its implementation is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE. Progress made to date and future plans, are recorded in the mid-term review of the Strategy’s implementation, which was published in May 2018.

The strategy’s implementation was boosted at the time of its launch through a joint programme of investment by the HSE and the Atlantic Philanthropies. This €27.5 million investment allowed for a number of key actions within the strategy to be resourced and implemented. It funded the PREPARED programme, which offers education and clinical resources for GPs and primary care teams; intensive homecare packages for people with dementia; the Understand Together awareness campaign; and the establishment of the National Dementia Office, which has an important role in implementing the strategy. The office has made substantial prog-

ress towards developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia. Additional projects have been funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund.

A large scale external evaluation of the strategy is nearing completion, and will be published in the coming months.

The Department is committed to the full implementation of the National Dementia Strategy, and will continue to work with the National Dementia Office and stakeholders to progress the actions contained in the strategy. Until satisfactory work has been completed on actions contained in the current strategy, and because the external evaluation of the strategy has not concluded, it would not be appropriate to begin work on a new strategy.

The National Dementia Strategy calls for the HSE to consider the provision of dementia advisers, based on the experience of demonstrator sites. An evaluation of the Dementia Adviser Service was published last September. It recommends the continuation and expansion of the service to ensure equity of access countrywide. Earlier this year, the HSE confirmed that it would continue to fund the Dementia Adviser service at existing levels in future years.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

516. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if extending the FreeStyle Libre device to adults with type 1 diabetes will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26822/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Primary Care Centres**

517. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the services available in the primary care unit in Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary; the number of staff employed; his plans to enhance services in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26823/19]

**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.

### **Suicide Incidence**

518. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the recent number of young persons who have committed suicide in the south County Tipperary area; his plans to enhance mental health services in this area; his plans to provide counselling services for families affected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26824/19]

**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.

### **Treatment Abroad Scheme**

519. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons employed in the treatment abroad scheme office; the length of time it takes to process an application once all the paperwork is in order; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26825/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Treatment Abroad Scheme**

520. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that availed of the treatment abroad scheme in 2018, by county in tabular form; the cost involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26826/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **HSE Planning**

521. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when the Health Service Executive capital plan for 2019 will be published; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26827/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is continuing to work with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Health Service Executive in a process to finalise as soon as possible a multi-annual Capital Plan for the HSE, which will include capital projects to be funded in 2019 and beyond, having regard to the available capital funding and the number of large national capital projects currently underway.

The HSE Capital Plan will determine the projects that can progress in 2019 and beyond having regard to the available capital funding, the number of large national capital projects currently underway, the cashflow requirements attaching to each project and the relevant priority.

Projects that are currently in construction and are contractually committed will not be affected.

Once the HSE has finalised its Capital Plan for 2019, it will then be submitted to me for consideration.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

522. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health if transport will be provided for a young person (details supplied) who will be attending a centre in Mullingar, County Westmeath, from September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26836/19]

**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.

### **State Claims Agency Data**

523. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the private firms indemnified by the State Claims Agency in the State; and the cost of this indemnification in the past five years. [26849/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The State Claims Agency (SCA) has a statutory remit to manage personal injury claims, including claims in respect of clinical negligence, on behalf of Delegated State Authorities (DSA's) including the Health Service Executive.

The specific details relating to the Deputy's question have been provided to me by the State Claims Agency and are set out in the attached report. I have been informed by the State Claims Agency (SCA) that they do not currently provide indemnification to any private firms or enterprises. In the past, indemnification had been provided for obstetric-related claims against Mount Carmel (Dublin) and Bon Secours (Cork) hospitals for an agreed period under the Special Obstetrics Indemnity Scheme (SOIS). This scheme is in the process of wind-down as the two hospitals ceased the provision of obstetrical care and the SCA is currently managing legacy cases only as a result of this indemnification period.

The SCA also provides indemnification for a set of private clinics (e.g. Merrion Fetal Health, Merrion Fertility Clinic, Rotunda IVF-The National Fertility Centre) associated with public hospitals under the Clinical Indemnity Scheme.

The figures supplied in the report are extracted from the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and relate to expenditure on the SOIS over the requested five year period. The total cost over this period includes damages, legal fees and other expert costs.

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq523-25-06-19\_en.pdf">Private Firms</a>]

### **Medical Products Supply**

524. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Health if the family of a person (details supplied) can have a more efficient method of obtaining incontinence pads from their primary healthcare centre in Portmarnock, County Dublin. [26850/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review**

525. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to publish the report on the pricing review of the nursing home fair deal scheme that was to conclude on 1 June 2017. [26884/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The Report of the NHSS Review published in 2015 identified a number of issues for more detailed consideration, including a review of the pricing mechanism used by the NTPF, with a view to:

- Ensuring value for money and economy, with the lowest possible administrative costs for clients and the State and administrative burden for providers;
- Increasing the transparency of the pricing mechanism so that existing and potential investors can make as informed decisions as possible; and
- Ensuring that there is adequate residential capacity for those residents with more complex needs.

A Steering Group was established to oversee and manage the pricing review. The Steering Group is chaired by the NTPF and includes representatives from the Department of Health and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). As part of its work on the review the NTPF sought various inputs including external expertise and stakeholder engagement to inform the review. These inputs are being considered in detail. It is recognised that any change to any part of the Scheme must be considered in terms of the short- and long-term impact on the viability of the Scheme and accessibility of long-term residential care in general. It is therefore important that the relevant issues are considered thoroughly.

The NTPF has now completed its report and the Steering Group has completed its consideration of it. The Report was submitted to the Department in June 2019. It is now being reviewed by my officials and any recommendations included in the report will be considered before publication of the report - I then expect to publish the report shortly.

### **Home Care Packages Administration**

526. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a full-time home care package and the proposal for a centre to buy the person's home as a residential home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26921/19]

**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.

### **Harbours and Piers Maintenance**

527. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application for funding has been received from Mayo County Council for a sea wall replacement project (details supplied); if funding will be allocated to this project; the timeframe for the delivery of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26333/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

The responsibility for the development, and maintenance of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways rests with each Local Authority in the first instance and their parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

However, as part of its annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, my Department has provided limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership.

Between 2011 and 2018, €4.4 million in funding has been granted under the programme to Mayo County Council. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have approved funding of €2.2m for the Local Authority element of my Department's 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Mayo County Council has secured €330,000 of funding for three projects under this year's programme.

A key element in the determination of the projects to be funded is the priority placed on them by the Council, and while an application was received for remedial works to the tidal pool at Belmullet, the three approved projects for this year's programme received a higher prioritisation by the Council. No application was received by my Department in relation to a sea wall at Carne, Belmullet.

Should any application be submitted by Mayo County Council in relation to Belmullet under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Council and available funds.

### **TAMS Appeals**

528. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if consideration will be given to an appeal submitted by a person (details supplied) in view of the health and safety grounds on which the work was carried out with a view to withdrawing the penalty imposed. [26072/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named applied for, received approval and subsequently submitted a payment claim under the

Young Farmer's Capital Investment Scheme of TAMS II. The claim for payment incurred a penalty due to ineligible receipts.

A request for a review of this decision has been lodged by the person named. This review is being undertaken and the outcome will be notified to the person named, in writing, once the review has been completed.

### **Agriculture Scheme Eligibility**

529. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if grants are available for the construction of poultry houses for chicken farmers and growers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26099/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The TAMS II scheme provides grant aid for a number of investments to upgrade the energy efficiency of poultry houses under the Pigs and Poultry Investment Scheme, one of the seven measures available under TAMS II. However, the construction of new poultry housing is not grant aided under this measure.

### **Harbours and Piers Development**

530. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application for funding from Mayo County Council has been received (details supplied); the status of the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26163/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

The responsibility for the development, and maintenance of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways rests with each Local Authority in the first instance and their parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

However, as part of its annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, my Department has provided limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership.

Between 2011 and 2018, €4.4 million in funding has been granted under the programme to Mayo County Council, including €90,000 in funding for repairs to Belderrig Pier in 2014.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have approved funding of €2.2m for the Local Authority element of my Departments 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Mayo County Council has secured €330,000 of funding for three projects under this year's programme.

A key element in the determination of the projects to be funded is the priority placed on them by the Council, and while an application was received for replacing the winch system at

Belderrig Pier, the three approved projects received a higher prioritisation by the Council.

Should any application be submitted by Mayo County Council in relation to Belderrig Pier under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Council and available funds.

### **GLAS Appeals**

531. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an oral hearing will be facilitated in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26164/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The above-named partnership was approved into GLAS 1 on 1 October 2015 and received payments for scheme years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

The GLAS application was subsequently rejected as the above-named partnership failed to submit a BPS application for 2018 as required under the scheme. A request was subsequently received to transfer the GLAS contract to a Herd Number from 2018 as the partnership had been dissolved in December 2017.

Having regard to the governing regulations and the terms and conditions of the scheme, the Department decided that the GLAS contract could not be transferred in this case. The above named partnership was informed of this decision by letter dated 10 April 2019 and were advised of the option of appealing the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office (AAO).

### **TAMS Applications**

532. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a targeted agricultural modernisation scheme, TAMS, grant for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26205/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named has submitted an application under the Animal Welfare Safety and Nutrient Storage Scheme of TAMS II.

This application has passed all the administrative checks and will be subject to the usual ranking and selection process in the coming days, following which the applicant will be informed if the application has been approved.

### **Fish Quotas**

533. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take to increase the mackerel total allowable catch in line with the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, ICES, advice in view of the new ICES revised advice for mackerel of 770,358 tonnes and the fact that there has been no agreement at the coastal state meeting in London recently; the further steps he will take to amend the incorrect recommendations of ICES for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26299/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy

is aware, Ireland cannot unilaterally increase any TAC.

The situation in relation to mackerel is that the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) advised in September 2018 that the 2019 TAC should be 318,403 tonnes - a reduction of 68% compared to 2018. ICES did, however, warn about sensitivity of the assessment to some of the data inputs.

Following five meetings in October/November 2018, the Coastal States party to the 2014 Mackerel Sharing Agreement (European Union, Norway and the Faeroe Islands) decided on a precautionary reduction of 20% and requested ICES to conduct an inter-benchmark review to look at the sensitivities in the data inputs especially tagging data. ICES completed the review in March 2019 and re-evaluated the state of the stock.

New advice was published on the 15th May and this revised the advised catch figure from 318,403 tonnes to 770,358 tonnes – an increase on the current TAC of 18%. For Ireland, if applied, this would equate to an increase in our quota of just under 10,000 tonnes.

Following the publication of the new advice, two further Coastal States meetings were held in London on the 20/21 May and 12/13 June. Ireland, as did other Member States, sought to revise the 2019 mackerel TAC in line with the new advice. Unfortunately, it did not prove possible to achieve agreement between the Coastal States on a revision to the TAC.

New advice for 2020 is expected in late September and the Coastal State consultations will resume in October.

### **European Council Meetings**

534. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the issues discussed at the recent EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council; if he put forward specific proposals on the need to provide adequate assistance to the agrifood sector due to the adverse impacts of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26307/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Minister Doyle attended the most recent EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council which took place in Luxembourg on 18 June 2019. Ministers exchanged views on three key items:-

- A partial general approach was reached by the Council on the Commission proposal for the next European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The fund is worth €6.14 billion and its aim is to invest in the maritime economy and support fishing communities. This item was held in public session. The new EMFF is part of the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027, the new EU long-term budget that enters into force on 1 January 2021.

- The Commission communication on the state of play of the Common Fisheries Policy and consultation on the fishing opportunities for 2020. The discussion is part of the process for reaching agreement on TACs and quotas at the December Council.

- Post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy reform package: progress report. The Council discussed in public session, the Romanian Presidency progress report on the work carried out in the Council and its preparatory bodies on all the Commission proposals of the CAP reform package, which includes regulations on CAP strategic plans, financing, management and monitoring of the CAP, and the common organisation of agricultural products. Under this item, the Spanish Minister informed Council of the outcome of the CAP Green Architecture post-2020 Congress “Digging deeper into Eco-Schemes”, which was held in Spain at the end of May.

In addition, under Any Other Business, the Lithuanian delegation provided an update on the scientific advice recently published by ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) on the state of the cod stock in the Eastern Baltic Sea.

While Brexit was not discussed at Council, I have discussed the impact it will have on our agri-food sector on many occasions with my Ministerial colleagues. Minister Doyle did however, reference, the potential impact a Mercosur trade deal will have on our beef sector, and called on the EU to remain vigilant as the negotiations progress, with a view to protecting the EU agriculture sector as much as possible.

### **Brexit Supports**

535. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has had recent discussions with the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development on the need to minimise the conditions that will be attached to the beef fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26308/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. I have stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agri-food and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

I am also keenly aware that the past few months have been very difficult for beef farmers in particular, following a difficult year for farm incomes in 2018 due to weather conditions. There has been a prolonged and exceptional period of depressed prices since last autumn, with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, among other factors, contributing to this market disturbance.

The recent announcement by Commissioner Hogan of EU exceptional aid for the Irish beef sector is very welcome in this context. I have been making the case for some time for an exceptional aid package from the EU Commission for Irish beef farmers, at EU Council of Agriculture Minister meetings, and in direct consultation with the Commission. The announcement by the Commissioner is another example of the importance of EU solidarity when it comes to facing significant economic challenges.

This exceptional aid provision will be given effect through a Commission Implementing Regulation. While Member States were invited to give an opinion on the draft Regulation through the Commission's Common Market Organisation (CMO) Management Committee, the Regulation is within the Commission's own legal competence, and was not for negotiation with Ireland or indeed other Member States, in terms of its content. The regulation was passed by the CMO committee last week and will now be enacted. Ireland must now notify the Commission, no later than 31 July 2019, of the measures to be taken in accordance with the Regulation.

Further details on the aid package will be announced in due course following the appropriate stakeholder consultation.

### **Central Bank of Ireland Data**

536. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the Central Bank gathers data on farm-related debt; the number and value of farm-related debts

in the economy; the number and value in distress; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26312/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** On a quarterly basis, the Central Bank reports on SME credit statistics, which focuses on credit broken down by NACE code (the European industrial activity classification), including those related to primary agriculture. Detailed statistics are available including amounts of outstanding loans, growth rates, new lending and interest rates on outstanding amounts. The total amount outstanding at the end of 2018 was €3,144 million, down from a recent high of €3,945 million in 2013. This quarterly analysis does not include data on distressed loans. However, a “Financial Stability Note” published last week by the Central Bank entitled “A vulnerability analysis of Irish SME credit exposures” noted that while Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing was the largest lending sector in the SME category (at 21.5%), it had a relatively low vulnerability to default.

The Teagasc National Farm Survey examines issues such as the level of debt on Irish farms, providing valuable information on trends in the sector. Preliminary Results show that overall debt on Irish farms increased by 2% in 2018. It should be noted that almost two-thirds of farms have no farm business related debt at all. Of those with debt, the figure varies considerably by farm type.

#### Average Farm Debt by system 2018

	% Farms with borrowings	Average debt (farms with debt)
Dairy	60%	€118,446
Cattle rearing	30%	€25,735
Cattle other	33%	€37,119
Sheep	21%	€35,924
Tillage	35%	€58,521
All	35%	€61,346

I meet regularly with the CEOs of the main banks on matters related to the agri-food sector. Access to finance for the sector is also an issue identified by the Food Wise 2025 strategy and it is monitored at the High Level Implementation Committee, which I chair.

#### Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Appeals

537. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of areas of natural constraint appeals received; the number of appeals from County Wexford; the number of distinct County Wexford townlands; the number of distinct County Wexford townlands that have seen appeals lodged in relation to their level of constraint; if the independently chaired appeals committee will include members from County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26336/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the current Rural Development Regulation (and subsequent amendments under the Omnibus Regulation), EU Member States were required to change their approach to the designation of land under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Scheme. Previously, my Department had been identifying eligible areas using a range of socio economic indicators such as family farm income, population density, percentage of working population engaged in agriculture, and stocking density. From 2019, eligible areas must instead be designated using a defined list of bio-

physical criteria such as slope, soil texture, soil rooting depth, soil moisture and drainage.

An appeals process is in place for any farmer who wishes to appeal a decision regarding the status of a particular townland in the 2019 ANC scheme. I have appointed an independent Appeals Committee comprising three people chaired by Mr. Padraig Gibbons. The committee has been given the task of handling ANC appeals from all over the country and I am satisfied that it has the relevant technical expertise to carry out this task.

Further to the completion of the redesignation process, my Department wrote to all farmers holding ANC lands advising them of the status of these lands under the 2019 ANC scheme and advising farmers of their right to appeal this position. Where a farmer has notified my Department of their wish to make such an appeal, they have been provided with the relevant information in relation to the data underpinning the status of the townland in order that a full appeal to the Appeals Committee can be based on full information.

My Department has received and replied to Notifications of Appeal in respect of 759 individual townlands, of which 271 were in County Wexford. To date, full appeals in respect of some 281 townlands have been made to the Appeals Committee, of which 69 are in County Wexford.

The Independent Appeal Committee is currently processing the appeals received.

### Freedom of Information Data

538. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26384/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The data requested by the Deputy for 2018 is set out in the following table.

Number of FOI requests	2018
Granted	260
Part granted	120
Refused	61
Transferred	4
Withdrawn	50
Handled outside FOI	40

### Forestry Data

539. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on comments by an organisation (details supplied) regarding the delay in processing forestry applications; the number of applications received in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of applications that remained to be processed and a final decision made by 31 December in each year; the number of applicants waiting in excess of 12 months for a decision from the moment an application was received in each year, in tabular form. [26477/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Depart-

ment is the competent authority for the granting of licences for afforestation, tree felling, forest road works and aerial fertilisation. There are a number of considerations that are taken into account when assessing an application for forestry licences, and I would like to take this opportunity to outline these to you.

### **General Guidelines and Assessments**

All forestry licence applications undergo a comprehensive vetting process to ensure that inter alia the landscape, environment and our archaeological heritage are protected. Every application is treated on its own merits and is examined with regard to its effect, if any, on its surroundings. There are a number of guideline documents, such as Forestry and Water Quality Guidelines; Forestry and the Landscape Guidelines; which are available on my Department's website. Further, the Code of Best Forest Practice is a listing of all forestry operations and the manner in which they should be carried out to ensure the requirements for Sustainable Forest Management in Ireland are maintained.

Since the commencement in May 2017 of the Forestry Act, 2014, applications must be advertised to provide for 30 days public consultation. The public consultation process is assisted by the erection of site notices for all afforestation and forest road works licence applications.

A registered forester must complete an application for all afforestation, forest road works or aerial fertilisation licences. Applications for tree felling licences are accepted from private individuals or registered foresters and other agents. Applications are accepted throughout the year. An application may be commenced but will not be finalised until certain mandatory documents are received and acknowledged. It is at this point that the application is considered complete and advertised on my Department's website. There is an average of 30 days between when an application is started and advertised.

In addition to this, referrals may be made to the local authority, Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and An Taisce depending on the specific characteristics of the site concerned. These can include its proximity to water courses, designated European sites, or sensitive landscapes as defined by the local authority. Where an application wholly or partly falls within a designated site, no decision may be made until an opinion is received from NPWS.

I am aware that the introduction of the independent Forestry Appeals Committee, the associated appeals process and more complex Appropriate Assessment requirements have resulted in increased processing timeframes for forestry licences. In recognition of this and of the complexity involved, training both internally and with registered foresters took place in January and April this year. I anticipate that this training will, among other things, lead to an improvement in the quality of initial applications and lands being put forward for consideration, as this is so important in terms of processing time.

I know there have been delays issuing licences due to archaeological and ecology issues. Additional resources have been provided to undertake the archaeological review with two new archaeologists employed; significant work has been done to clear backlogs arising for this reason. In terms of ecology, the recruitment process for a new ecologist will shortly commence with a view to putting resources in place to meet the increased demand. Furthermore, parallel referral processes have been put in place in order that both the forestry inspector and the specialist archaeologist/ecologist may view a file at the same time; this is expected to lead to more timely communication with applicants where additional information is required.

Refinements have been recently introduced to the Department's mapping tool which may reduce the number of cases referred to archaeology. My officials have also issued a circular to

registered foresters and other stakeholders encouraging the submission of Harvest Plan with tree felling applications; this will form part of the assessment itself, will be taken into account as part of the Appropriate Assessment process and could lead to a speedier assessment process.

### Licence Applications

The following tables show the afforestation and forest road works licence applications received for the years indicated (\*to 31st May 2019). This is the most accurate information available since the Forestry Act, 2014 was commenced in 2017, when the application process changed. Statistics for the period 2015/2016 are not readily available but will be supplied to the Deputy separately, however they are not comparable in that the environmental requirements, among other things, are now different.

#### Afforestation Applications

Year	Received (1)	Received & decided in that year (2)	Not available for decision at 31st December (3)	Available for decision at 31st December (4)
2017	1,409	828	514	67
2018	1,074	796	278	100
2019 *	409	109	N/A	N/A

Note: The table outlines decisions on applications received in the same year only; other decisions for previous periods also issued.

1. The total number of applications received in the year
2. The number of applications received and decided in that year.
3. The number of applications that were commenced in the year and were still with the agent or withdrawn and therefore unavailable for decision at 31st December.
4. The number of applications in available for decision on 31st December

Of the applications received in 2017:

- 72% of those that received a decision were within 100 days.

Similarly, for applications received in 2018:

- 57% of those that received a decision were decided within 100 days.

The Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme is voluntary and applicants who receive approval to afforest are not obliged to plant. The conversion rates show that of the approved applications, less than 60% were actually planted.

#### Forest Road Works

Year	Total received(1)	Received & decided in that year (2)	Not available for decision at 31st December (3)	Available for decision at 31st December (4)
2017	566	319	90	157
2018	728	288	98	342
2019 *	327	79	N/A	N/A

Note: The table outlines decisions on applications received in the same year only.

1. The total number of applications received in the year
2. The number of applications received and decided in that year.
3. The number of applications that were commenced in the year and were still with the agent or withdrawn and therefore unavailable for decision at 31st December.
4. The number of applications in available for decision on 31st December.

Of the applications received in 2017:

- 75% of those that received a decision were within 100 days.

Similarly, for applications received in 2018:

- 71% of those that received a decision were decided within 100 days.

Felling applications

Data on felling applications for 2017 - 2019 is as follows. Statistics for the period 2015/2016 are not readily available but will be supplied to the Deputy separately.

Year	Total received	Decisions Issued
2017	3,301	3,003
2018	5,969	3,603
2019 *	2,404	2,779

Felling licences can be obtained for a duration of up to 10 years. For this reason, applicants are now seeking one licence to cover several felling events scheduled for a number of years in the future. Previously, they would have sought several licences of shorter duration for each individual felling event.

The number of tree felling licence applications received up to the end of May 2019 has increased almost 93% on the same period in 2018 – 1,587 (2019) compared to 823 (2018). In turn, the number of licences issued has increased by 288% in the year to the end of May 2019 – 2,899 (2019); 747 (2018).

### **Afforestation Programme**

540. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions for afforestation for the agricultural sector in the Climate Action Plan 2019; the annual emission reductions via carbon sequestration; the total reduction over the period of the plan; and the annual net cost for each forestry action covered by the plan. [26478/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Climate Action Plan is a comprehensive Government response to the risks associated with climate change and outlines actions and strategies to reduce and manage those risks through a combination of mitigation and adaptation responses. Afforestation has a significant role to play in mitigation particularly, through carbon sequestration. Under current rules agreed as part of the EU Effort Sharing Regulation, forestry can contribute some 2.1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum of carbon towards Ireland's emissions targets under the next climate mitigation period 2021-2030. Planting achieved under successive afforestation programmes will contribute to this emissions reductions figure. The Climate Action Plan now sets a target of an average of

8,000 hectares of new planting per year. In addition, the land use sector will provide a total of 0.58 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum over the period 2021-2030.

While this will mostly yield benefits in the longer term post-2030, it will also contribute to our 2030 target through carbon sequestration. Achieving these levels of afforestation will be challenging, as recent trends have not delivered new planting at this rate. I am, however, committed to meeting this challenge through the continued provision of generous grants and premiums, engagement with a range of stakeholders from farmers to public bodies, a dedicated promotion and communication campaign, and by examining ways in which farm forestry can be better integrated into the new CAP. Knowledge transfer programmes and other initiatives which raise awareness of the economic and eco system benefits of forestry will continue to play an important role in tackling some of the barriers to planting.

An Analysis of Abatement Potential of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Irish Agriculture 2021-2030 by Teagasc demonstrates a range of mitigation options across the agricultural sector and shows that afforestation is a cost efficient land use abatement option. The cost of forestry measures included in the Climate Action Plan will be fully examined as part of the development of the next National Forestry Programme.

### **GLAS Issues**

541. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding GLAS grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26523/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The GLAS scheme is now fully subscribed and there are no plans to reopen the scheme to new applications.

Agri-environment policy is included in the CAP reform negotiations currently under way and any future schemes will be dependent on the outcome of these negotiations.

In this regard, my Department has received a submission from the Federation of Irish Beekeepers Associations (FIBKA) which will be considered in the context of the CAP Post-2020 consultation process.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

542. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the contract for a company (details supplied) to collect the foal levy was put out for tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26524/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for HRI and I have requested my officials to refer the question to them for direct reply.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

543. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for a company (details supplied) being given an €80,000 lump sum when the contract for the collection for the foal levy was being renewed in addition to €24,000 administration costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26525/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for HRI and I have requested my officials to refer the question to them for direct reply.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

544. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason Horse Racing Ireland does not collect the foal levy itself in view of the fact it has a large number of staff and this would save unnecessary costs. [26526/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for HRI and I have requested my officials to refer the question to them for direct reply.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

545. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a stud (details supplied) is permitted to continue the practice of collecting money from breeders in view of another stud making the changes from the advertised fee to the general applicable fee. [26527/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for HRI and I have requested my officials to refer the question to them for direct reply.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

546. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he and Horse Racing Ireland are giving back the money to breeders who have already overpaid the levy in 2019 in addition to repaying the persons who were overcharged the levy in previous years in view of changes at a stud (details supplied). [26528/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing

Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for HRI and I have requested my officials to refer the question to them for direct reply.

### **Horse Racing Industry**

547. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the foal levy should be suspended until there is an investigation and full review of the levy in respect of all the irregularities and the overpayment of the levy and the uncertainty of the legislation to the user. [26530/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial State body established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001, and is responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

The current Foal Levy scheme, which was introduced in 2000 on a statutory basis, applies to all thoroughbred foals registered in Ireland. The Foal Levy is currently calculated with reference to SI 735 of 2011, which is the governing legislation.

HRI's Foal Levy Committee reviews the rates, bands and structures of the levy on an annual basis and has also considered potential alternative methodologies to calculate the levy due. They have concluded that the current banded/tiered approach represents the most equitable and appropriate way of securing the vital funds needed for the breeding sector. I understand that the majority of foals registered fall into the two lower bands of €35 and €50, and that there is a very high compliance rate of circa 98.3%.

The levy generates vital funding for the Irish Equine Centre, Irish Thoroughbred Marketing and the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association. Without the levy funding, these organisations would be unable to provide the services that they do. As such, I have no plans to alter the current arrangements for the levy.

If the Deputy is aware of irregularities relating to the overcharging of the levy, I would be grateful if she would provide evidence to that effect to my Department.

### **GLAS Payments**

548. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26544/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received payments in respect of 2015, 2016, 2017 and the 2018 Advance. The 2018 Balance payment is currently being processed and will issue shortly, once all validation checks have been passed.

### **Land Issues**

549. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when consideration of a request to the lands branch (details supplied) for the release of a burden on a folio in favour of the Land Commission will be completed; the date the request was received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26550/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Following a site visit on 18th June last to establish the position on the ground, officials in the Lands Branch of my Department are now in a position to progress the discharge of the burden concerned. The solicitor representing the registered owner of the folio referenced by the Deputy has been advised of the position.

### **Aquaculture Regulation**

550. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the system operated by his Department for the award of organic status to Irish food production is not fit for purpose in view of the fact that organic status was awarded to a major salmon product that was under investigation by his Department for three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26673/19]

551. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the meaningful assurance that can be given to consumers that salmon from farms under investigation by his Department is actually being produced organically. [26674/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 550 and 551 together.

At the outset, I wish to make very clear that the procedures operated by my Department are designed to ensure that the highest standards apply to all areas of Irish organic production. The award of organic status is secured by a formal certification process delegated by my Department to various Organic Control Bodies in accordance with the relevant EU regulations. The certification process involves regular inspection of all organic operators, production techniques and sampling of organic produce to ensure compliance with all EU requirements.

The inspection process for producers of organic salmon is extremely detailed and includes adherence to a range of core organic principles, as well as stocking levels, feeding practice, caging standards, traceability and fish-welfare & husbandry amongst other things. Organic aquaculture sites are also subject to the standard inspection regime applying to conventional producers by the Marine Institute and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. In addition, all Organic Control Bodies are independently accredited by an external accreditation body.

In 2016, the certification system for organic salmon in Ireland was included in a comprehensive audit by the EU of the controls applied by Ireland in the Organic Sector generally. The EU audit team made some recommendations which have been implemented and which further strengthened our control system across the board.

I am satisfied that the measures outlined above are robust enough to provide meaningful assurance to consumers who purchase salmon from organic farms.

With regard to investigations by my Department, as legal proceedings have been initiated in a certain instance, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications**

552. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether his recent decision to revoke a salmon farm licence for breach of licence conditions demonstrates that the award of organic status for farmed salmon is just a marketing exercise designed to achieve premium prices. [26675/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In light of the fact that legal proceedings have been initiated in respect of the decision referred to, it would be inappropriate for me to make any comment on the matter at this stage.

### **Aquaculture Regulation**

553. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department relies on voluntary reporting by salmon farmers of chemical treatments used for disease control meaning that attention is not being drawn to the type of chemicals being applied to the fish stocks. [26676/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Regulation of the use of veterinarian-prescribed treatment chemicals on salmon farms lies with my Department's veterinary inspectors.

The supply and use of medicines in Ireland is governed by the Animal Remedies Regulations 2005 (SI No 734/2005, superseded by SI No 786/2007). Treatment chemicals registered for use are prescribed by private veterinarians overseeing stock health on salmon farms.

In accordance with paragraph 34 (a) and (b) of this legislation, veterinarians are obliged to maintain records of chemicals purchased, sold and administered for a period of 5 years. Paragraphs 39 and 40 of this legislation further detail the conditions and requirements to be upheld for the administration of an authorised animal remedy.

In addition, salmon farm operators, under conditions outlined in paragraph 42 of this legislation, are required to maintain records of the animal remedies applied. My Department's veterinary inspectors review the animal remedy use outlined in these records and confirm whether operators are operating in accordance with the legislation. These inspections are undertaken by veterinary inspectors at the same time as the Fish Health inspections undertaken on behalf of the Marine Institute.

### **Aquaculture Regulation**

554. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which organic status can be awarded to salmon farms in view of the fact that his attention has not been drawn to the type of chemicals being used by the operators to control disease. [26677/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The organic status of operators in Ireland is certified by rigorous on-going assessment undertaken on behalf of my Department by designated Organic Control Bodies. My Department is the Competent Authority under EU regulations but has delegated the certification function to independent Organic Control Bodies, in accordance with the relevant EU regulations and in common with the practice in many other countries across the EU. The Organic Control Bodies in question act under formal service agreements with my Department and are themselves subject to audit by my Department, by INAB (the Irish National Accreditation Board) and by the various EU audit

authorities.

The Organic Control Bodies implement audit procedures for the certification of organic operators to the regulatory requirements of Council Regulation 834 of 2007 and to the detailed rules in respect of organic aquaculture as set down in Commission Regulation 710/2009. Article 25 of that Regulation provides for the use and control of allopathic treatments which are deemed permissible.

All fish farms are required to have a veterinary health plan in place. This health plan is checked at the annual inspection of each organic operator by their respective Organic Control Body. Furthermore, any veterinary treatments required by fish farms must be approved in advance by the relevant Organic Control Body and a copy of a veterinary prescription must be submitted with each request. Detailed records must be maintained by the organic operator and are verified by the relevant Organic Control Body at inspection stage. All cleaning and disinfection substances are noted at inspection stage by the relevant Organic Control Body who verify that they are in compliance with organic regulations.

### **Aquaculture Licence Data**

555. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the density of fish per cage necessary to qualify for organic status; and the evidence provided that this is complied with by salmon farmers before organic status is granted. [26678/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 lays down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control. The density of fish per cage to qualify for organic status is stipulated in Annex XIIIa of the above regulation and can be found in the attachment provided.

When applying for the award of Organic status and before an organic licence is granted to an Organic Salmon Farmer, a report form must be completed which requires the applicant to record the stocking density per cage. As part of the certification process an inspection is carried out by the Organic Control Body to verify the stocking density per cage which appears on the application. The fish are placed in separate cages based on their age. The stocking density is verified by using the age of the fish and the anticipated weight rate gain and the size of the cage to work out the stocking density. If the inspector is satisfied that the Organic farming practices meet the organic regulatory requirements, a recommendation is made to grant a licence to the operator concerned.

The granting of the licence must be approved by the Certificate Panel in the Organic Control Body. If the inspector has any concerns following the inspection or if any paperwork was not supplied to the Control Body then the licence will not be granted until the Certificate Panel is satisfied. As part of the application process the applicant must provide the planned stocking density for the following year.

An annual inspection is subsequently carried out by the Organic Control Body concerned. Detailed records must be maintained by the applicant which include the details of inputs/output and mortality rate. These records are examined and verified as part of the annual inspection process to ensure that all regulatory requirements including stocking density are adhered to.

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq555-25-06-19\_en.pdf">Annex XIIIa</a>]

## **Aquaculture Licences**

556. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if in view of a recent television programme (details supplied) that showed breaches of licence conditions in some salmon farmers in Scotland, he is satisfied that the situation is different here. [26679/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Aquaculture licensing is administered by my Department in accordance with the provision of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU Legislation.

Salmon farms are inspected on a regular basis by my Department's Marine Engineering Division and breaches of license conditions are examined by my Department in accordance with the applicable legislation.

## **Aquaculture Regulation**

557. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, in view of the complaints in Scotland that the Government there has been too close to the salmon industry, he will cease perceived conflicts of interest in his Department by which responsibility for the development of the industry and its regulation reside with the marine division. [26680/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Department has five distinct Marine Divisions. These are - the Sea Fisheries Administration Division, the Sea Fisheries Policy & Management Division, the Marine Programmes Division, the Marine Engineering Division and the Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division. The marine related policy functions which fall under the aegis of this Department are managed in accordance with relevant applicable legislation and are located within a number of separate Divisions (as specified above) within the Department.

The Marine Agencies Governance Unit, located within the Sea Fisheries Policy & Management Division of my Department, is responsible for corporate governance oversight of the following marine agencies - Marine Institute (MI), Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) and the independent Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB). The oversight role of the Department in this respect is to ensure that each of the marine agencies is and remains compliant with the revised code of practice for the Governance of state bodies (2016).

Aquaculture policy is within the remit of the Marine Programmes Division, a separate Division to the Division that is responsible for corporate governance. Aquaculture licence applications are considered by the Aquaculture and Foreshore Management Division of the Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU legislation. The legislation provides for a period of statutory and general public consultation in respect of every application. Decisions on applications are made following the fullest consideration of all environmental, technical, legislative and public interest aspects of each application.

In addition, it is open to any member of the public to appeal the Minister's decision to the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB), an independent authority for the determination of appeals against decisions of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine on aquaculture licence applications. A person aggrieved by a decision of the Minister on an aquaculture licence application, or by the revocation or amendment of an aquaculture licence, may make an appeal within one month of publication (in the case of a decision) or notification (in the case

of revocation/amendment). The secretariat of the board is located in Kilminchy Court Dublin Road Portlaoise Co. Laois. Email: info@alab.ie

The regulation of aquaculture is managed by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU legislation.

As referred to above, my Department operates five distinct Marine Divisions dealing with the various marine policy functions assigned to it and I am satisfied that the issue of any conflict of interest does not arise.

### **Brexit Preparations**

558. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which the integrated all-island agrifood supply chains could be impacted in a no-deal Brexit; the provisions that have been put in place should this occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26700/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Brexit poses enormous challenges for the integrated all-island agri-food sectors by virtue of their exposure to the UK market. The Government is committed to ensuring no hard border on the island of Ireland in any Brexit scenario.

In advance of the Brexit deadlines of 29 March and 12 April, discussions with the Commission intensified on how we might meet our shared twin objectives of protecting the integrity of the Single Market and Ireland's place in it, and avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland in the case of a no deal Brexit. This engagement is continuing. There are no easy answers here. A no deal Brexit will have severe economic and political implications for Ireland North and South but the backstop can fully protect the Single Market, avoid a hard border and protect the all-island economy.

I am working with my Departmental officials in a whole-of-Government effort to ensure the best possible outcome for the agri-food sector. I wish to assure the Deputy that the Government remains very focused on supporting the agri-food industry through the challenges ahead. We will be firm in arguing that any agreement reached between the EU and the UK must take account of the very serious challenges presented by Brexit for the sector, particularly given the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and the importance of our economic relationship with the UK. And, of course, ultimately Ireland's objective in the negotiations is to have a trading relationship with the UK which is as close as possible to the current arrangements.

### **Brexit Staff**

559. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of additional veterinary and phytosanitary inspectors expected to be in place by 31 October 2019, in tabular form, in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26701/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department continues to participate actively in the Whole-of-Government approach to preparedness and contingency planning for Brexit. The Government sanctioned in the region of €4m for the commencement of a phased process for the recruitment of additional staff to carry out increased

volumes of import controls and export certification arising from Brexit.

These requirements are significant, and arise in relation to the carrying out of documentary, identity and physical checks on imports of animals, plants, and products of animal and plant origin, as set out in EU legislation. The Department had previously carried out an extensive analysis exercise, based on examination of trade and container movement data, to establish the potential volumes of controls that will need to be carried out. This exercise has been used to guide relevant planning in relation to putting in place the staff that will be required.

Regarding staffing requirements in the run up to potential Brexit deadlines in March and April, my Department sought to use a combination of recruitment, redeployment and temporary flexible solutions where appropriate and as necessary. My Department worked with our recruitment partners, the Public Appointments Service to engage Veterinary Inspectors, Portal Inspectors, Plant Health Inspectors and Administrative support staff. Mechanisms to temporarily redeploy experienced people within my Department were also initiated and the engagement of contracted temporary service arrangements was also progressed to address contingencies.

My Department will have up to 230 staff resources available for deployment across a range of disciplines in both front line control, where the majority of resources will be deployed, as well as back up administrative spheres.

Overall, I remain confident that my Department is in a position to deliver the services required in terms of both imports and exports at the appropriate time.

### **GLAS Appeals**

560. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS appeal application by a person (details supplied). [26704/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was rejected from GLAS following the results of an inspection.

A request for a review of the inspection findings was received in the Department on 6 June 2019. The Department will inform the applicant, in writing, of the outcome once the review is completed.

### **Harbours and Piers Development**

561. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which he plans to honour the commitment in Project Ireland 2040 to develop the potential of Greencastle Harbour, County Donegal. [26715/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Greencastle Harbour is owned by Donegal County Council and responsibility for its maintenance and development rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested

Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

As indicated, my legislative remit does not extend to Greencastle Harbour, and given that the ownership of, and overall responsibility for Greencastle Harbour rests with the County Council and their parent Department, it is the Council in conjunction with their parent Department who will decide if they wish to carry out any further development, repair or maintenance of Greencastle Harbour.

When Donegal County Council decide on the exact programme of works they wish to carry out, and the costing and timescale for those works, and notify their full intentions in this respect, the matter can be considered further in the context of Government priorities.

My Department does provide limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Donegal County Council successfully secured funding of €9,000 under the 2018 Programme for development works at Greencastle Harbour.

While Donegal County Council submitted a project application for works at Greencastle under the 2019 programme, the proposal did not meet the criteria of the Local Authority scheme.

Should any application be submitted by Donegal County Council in relation to Greencastle Harbour under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Council and available funds.

### **Maritime Safety**

562. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the decision by Bord Iascaigh Mhara not to proceed with a €1.5 million sea survival training centre for the National Fisheries College in Greencastle, County Donegal; if the financial resources will be provided for the centre to proceed as officially announced in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26716/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** This project is currently under review in the wider context of the provision of existing professional sea survival training facilities within the State and the cost, both construction and operational, of such a facility. The existing professional sea survival training facilities based at the National Maritime College of Ireland, Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, are unique in Ireland and designed both for fundamental safety training and specialised survival training, to increase survival ability in emergency situations. Those purpose built facilities are available for the provision of all necessary and required training for fishermen.

At the present time, there is no provision or plans to proceed with this additional project and funding has not been provided in Bord Iascaigh Mhara's Vote in 2019, for this proposed additional facility within the State.

### **Departmental Investigations**

563. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the investigation into the alleged contraventions of environmental laws at a location

(details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26717/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is currently conducting an investigation under the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations (SI 456/2011) in County Donegal but cannot comment further while matters are under investigation.

### **Aquaculture Licences**

564. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the independent aquaculture licensing review group; if he will report on the recommendations being considered; when the review will be complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26734/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2016, I commissioned the Independent Review of Aquaculture Licensing and the Report of the Group was submitted in May 2017.

The Review Group carried out a detailed examination of the existing aquaculture licensing process, undertook comprehensive stakeholder consultation and looked at comparative national and international consent systems to determine best practice for managing a complex licensing process in a transparent, environmentally appropriate and legally robust manner. The group's report is published and available to view on my Department's website.

Since receiving the report of the review group, my Department has engaged in detailed consideration of the recommendations set out in the report with a view to their implementation, having regard to the legislative, environmental, technical and public interest issues that arise. My Department has also engaged closely with industry representatives and relevant State agencies.

As all industry stakeholders and the EU Commission have, for different reasons, identified the elimination of the licensing backlog as the overriding priority in the reform of the licensing system, my Department's response has focused on this issue while continuing to have regard to the other recommendations in the report. It should also be noted that the elimination of the licensing backlog will have an immediate beneficial effect on every individual aquaculture operator.

### **Fur Farming**

565. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will meet with a person (details supplied) to discuss mink farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26796/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I will be glad to meet with representatives of the mink farming industry at the earliest opportunity.

### **Live Exports**

566. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter concerning animal welfare raised in correspondence by a person (de-

tails supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26803/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Live exports are a very important component of Ireland's livestock industry and provide essential competition in the beef market place.

In view of this fact, and due to the nature of the shipping routes from this island, my Department implements very high standards in respect of the welfare of animals we export. EU Council Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005 on animal transport provides that stricter rules may be applied by member states than those set down at EU level. The Deputy should be aware that my Department has availed of this provision and, therefore, the current Irish legislation, made possible by powers conferred under section 36 of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013, sets higher standards relating to the approval of ships for livestock transport than those which apply generally in the EU. Indeed, our legislation is recognised by the EU Commission as being amongst the most effective and stringent in force as regards transport by sea.

All animals are inspected and must be certified as regards health status and fitness for travel and cattle on board a livestock ship departing from Ireland. In addition, due regard must be taken to weather conditions prior to sailings and these measures contribute to maintaining Ireland's reputation as an exporter of livestock of high health status.

With a view to improving slaughter and transport standards in third countries, my Department, along with our EU partners, works closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health, OIE. The OIE is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for improving animal health and welfare worldwide. Ireland has once again proved its ongoing commitment to animal welfare by recently approving additional OIE multi-annual financial assistance to support its activities to enhance animal welfare worldwide.

The preservation of Ireland's animal health status and the international reputation of veterinary certification services and the existence and application of a regulatory framework ensures that high standards and welfare considerations are taken into account during transport and are components essential to safeguarding the live export trade.

The Deputy can be assured that my Department will continue to promote and maintain an environment in which live exports can continue in both an economic and sustainable manner, with strong emphasis on the welfare of all animals being exported.

### **GLAS Eligibility**

567. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action being taken to open the GLAS scheme to farmers that completed their AEOS contracts in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26834/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) opened in three tranches commencing in 2015 following the closure of the Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS). All AEOS participants were given the option of joining the GLAS scheme should they have wished to do so. The GLAS scheme is now fully subscribed with GLAS 3 participants in their third year of participation in the five year GLAS scheme and the overall RDP budget is on track to be fully spent.

Agri-environment policy is included in the CAP reform negotiations currently under way and any future schemes will be dependent on the outcome of these negotiations.

## **Beef Imports**

568. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the potential impact on the beef sector has been assessed for agreements that may arise from the Mercosur trade talks; the details of impact assessments or research that has been carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26835/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Ireland's position in the EU-Mercosur negotiations has been consistent and well-known. We have strenuously opposed any agreement that would have negative consequences for the Irish and EU agriculture sectors, particularly the beef sector.

The results of the 2011 EU Commission Impact Assessment confirmed that, under all scenarios, there would be significant losses in the agriculture sector, particularly the beef sector in Ireland.

In November 2016, the European Commission carried out an analysis of the potential cumulative impact of twelve current and pending trade deals, including EU-Mercosur. The study showed particular vulnerabilities for the beef sector, which under specific scenarios could see EU beef imports increase very significantly, with a corresponding destabilising impact on the EU beef market.

I will continue to press for a balanced deal that safeguards our beef sector. I will continue to place particular emphasis on the EU's own cumulative impact assessments of trade deals on agriculture and the potential impact of Brexit on an already delicately balanced EU beef market.

I have recently written to Commissioner Hogan expressing my deep concern about the potential impact of any concessions on beef on the sector in Ireland and the Taoiseach and the Minister, Deputy Humphreys, have also written to their counterparts in the Commission.

## **Beef Data and Genomics Programme**

569. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason an average of 21 participants per week have dropped out of the beef data genomics programme during the first four months of 2019 with unclaimed funding rising to €9 million per year; his views on whether the strict conditions are proving prohibitive and unattractive for farmers that are leaving the scheme in such large numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26887/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** BDGP I and BDGP II commenced in 2015 and 2017 respectively, and both will run for six years. They represent a significant commitment for participating farmers over the duration of the programmes, and it is inevitable that some participants will seek to withdraw at some stage for a variety of reasons.

The Deputy should be aware that the number of withdrawal requests received over the first six months of 2019 is 80, which equates to some three participants each week.

A significant proportion of withdrawals each year are due to reasons such as ill health, and in such cases, Force Majeure, as provided for by EU Regulations and in the Terms and Conditions of the Programmes, may be applied with no recoupment of monies paid. However, in a number of cases annually, withdrawals are due to other reasons that will require any monies paid over the course of the programme to be repaid in accordance with the regulations.

Following supplementary payments that were made recently for 2018, payments totalling €42.8M have been made to 23,483 participants which represents 96% of those still active in the BDGP programmes.

### **Beef Imports**

570. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if beef from the United States of America (details supplied) will be hormone free; the terms of the new agreement between Europe and the United States of America; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26917/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2009, the European Union and the United States concluded an agreement, revised in 2014, which provided for an interim solution to their long-standing WTO dispute regarding the use of certain growth-promoting hormones in beef production. Under the agreement, a 45,000-tonnes quota of non-hormone produced beef is open by the EU to qualifying suppliers, which include the United States.

Recently, based on an EU Council mandate, the Commission has reached an agreement in principle with the US and other substantial supplying countries that 35,000t of this quota will be allocated to the US, phased over a seven-year period, with the remaining amount left available for all other exporters.

The European Commission has assured member States that the agreement will not change the overall volume, quality or safety of the beef imported into the EU, which will remain in compliance with EU standards.

### **GLAS Payments**

571. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when 2018 GLAS payments will issue to a person (details supplied). [26919/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received all payments in respect of 2015, 2016 and 2017.

An issue arose in relation to the Farmland Habitat (Private Natura) action which has delayed the 2018 payment. GLAS officials are working on this issue and expect it will be resolved shortly.

Once this application clears the pre-payment validations, the outstanding 2018 payments will be processed.

### **Renewable Energy Incentives**

572. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeline to increase renewable energy generation by contracting through the RESS scheme or another method; and the amount of renewable energy he plans to produce in each year of the NDP. [26087/19]

573. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the basis on which contracting the RESS scheme is expected to create savings in the construction of renewable energy generating infrastructure as opposed to the State building this infrastructure directly; and the projected savings targets in year by year and gross totals in tabular form. [26088/19]

574. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the State will own all or any renewable energy generating capital infrastructure contracted through the RESS scheme. [26089/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 572 to 574, inclusive, together.

Last week I launched the Climate Action Plan which includes a suite of actions to decarbonise the electricity sector and boost the quantity of renewable generation in order to meet our target of 70% of demand from renewable sources by 2030. The plan also creates a clear pathway to meeting our 2050 objectives and is available on my Department's website: [www.dccae.gov.ie](http://www.dccae.gov.ie).

In order to deliver on the ambition set out in the Climate Plan, my Department is developing the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). The RESS will be characterised by a series of renewable electricity auctions, aligned with the ambition set out in the Climate Action Plan and the final National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) which is due to be submitted to the European Commission by the end of 2019. The ultimate auction timetable and volumes to be procured in any given year will be determined by a combination of the analysis carried out as part of the NECP, as well as an assessment of the supply pipeline of eligible projects to ensure competitive outcomes for consumers.

Furthermore, it is my intention that corporate contracting of renewable energy sources (Power Purchase Agreements or PPAs) will provide 15% of the required generation to meet Ireland's 2030 renewable electricity target. Together, the RESS and Corporate PPAs will provide a route to market for the delivery of indicative volumes set out in the Plan of 3.5 GW of offshore renewable generation and up to 1.5 GW of solar and 8.2 GW of onshore wind by 2030.

In Ireland, the electricity generation market is liberalised and open to both state owned and private enterprises to compete in line with the requirements of the EU internal energy market. Similarly, the awarding of support for renewable generation under the RESS will be through a competitive auction based framework where state owned and private enterprises will compete to deliver projects at the lowest cost to consumers. The RESS is subject to EU State Aid approval, with the qualification process for the first auction expected to begin in Q4 2019.

### **Climate Change Policy**

575. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated full cost of implementing the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26316/19]

586. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated full cost of implementing the Climate Action Plan 2019; the cost per year until the end of the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26317/19]

594. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of the Climate Action Plan 2019; the extent to which the

spending plans are already accounted for in other plans such as the National Development Plan 2018-2027; the additional cost arising from the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26462/19]

608. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will report on the Climate Action Plan 2019 which was launched on 17 June 2019. [26558/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 575, 586, 594 and 608 together.

I published the Government's Climate Action Plan on Monday 17 June. The plan sets out, for the first time, how Ireland can reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and also put Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The step-up in ambition in each of the sectors covered by the plan will require investment across the entire economy. Overall, through the mix of technologies and measures identified, the plan sets out the pathway that represents the least-cost burden to the economy as a whole. A significant portion of the technologies and measures set out in the plan will result also in net lifetime cost savings to the economy as a whole.

In terms of costs to the Exchequer and other public funding, the plan will be funded through Project Ireland 2040 which provides €30 billion for low carbon and sustainable mobility investments in the period to 2027.

Many of the actions in the plan do not require public funding. The actions contained in this plan fall broadly into four categories:

- public funding provided in the annual estimates process and in Project Ireland 2040
- measures such as setting a long-term trajectory for the carbon tax, in order to change long-term behaviour and decisions to encourage investment in more sustainable choices
- new regulations to end certain practices (e.g. phasing out oil and gas boilers in homes or introducing low emission zones in cities)
- actions to promote public and community engagement and participation in reducing our emissions.

For the first time, a decarbonisation target has been set for each sector. Each Government Department must now determine the optimum approach to utilising the funding available to it to support the policies necessary to meet the targets proposed for each sector. The exact costs will be determined from the detailed policy design work which will consist of a mix of regulations, taxes, and subsidies which the Government may choose to deploy to achieve the target abatement range in each sector.

It should also be noted that there would also be a very significant cost to the Exchequer for not implementing any policies to achieve compliance with our 2030 targets, which would also lock Ireland into a high carbon trajectory that would be unsustainable in the long-run.

Failure to implement these policies to meet our legally binding EU targets could result in a cost to the Exchequer of up to €1.75 billion over the next decade as well as locking Ireland into a future high carbon trajectory.

576. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 422 of 5 December 2017, the status of the proposed introduction of a waste compensation scheme for persons with high medical needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26724/19]

577. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if consideration will be given to introducing a service for the collection of medical related domestic waste such as incontinence pads particularly in view of increases in domestic waste collection charges [26851/19]

578. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the commitment to provide financial assistance to those that have to dispose of incontinence pads in their domestic waste can be honoured. [26886/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 576 to 578, inclusive, together.

Since mid-2017, a range of charging options have been operated, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, and provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances. Mandatory per kilogramme pay by weight charging was not introduced. A Price Monitoring Group, PMG, was established in mid-2017 to monitor the on-going cost of residential waste collection to homeowners across Ireland as the 'flat-rate structure' was being phased out. While fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend has been relative price stability.

My Department has engaged with relevant stakeholders, including representative organisations and public bodies, in an effort to see how best to provide a financial support to persons with long-term incontinence with respect to the disposal of medical incontinence wear.

Notwithstanding the complex issues at play, which are understandable given the sensitive nature of the medical data in question, I would like assure the Deputies that I continue to be committed to addressing this issue. There are currently no plans to introduce a service for the separate collection of medical related household waste.

### **Waste Disposal**

579. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason Meath County Council has not complied with the waste management landfill regulations or taken sanction against those responsible for an unauthorised landfill (details supplied). [26085/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Issues concerning the enforcement of waste legislation are statutory matters for local authorities or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as appropriate, who both have significant powers under waste regulations to secure compliance by waste operators. The role of my Department is to provide a comprehensive legislative and waste policy framework through which the enforcement authorities operate.

Under section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act 1996, as Minister, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance by the agency or a local authority, in particular circumstances, of a statutory function vested in it.

The primary objective of local authorities in terms of waste enforcement is to achieve regulatory compliance in relation to waste activities in the local authority's functional area. It is a matter for each individual local authority in the first instance to deal with any instances of illegal disposal of waste in their area and to take the appropriate enforcement action. Local authorities have significant powers available to them under the Waste Management Act, to enable them to tackle illegal waste activity. This includes the power to investigate complaints, prosecute offences, apply to the Courts for the imposition of fines, direct a holder of waste to dispose of it in a certain way within a specific timeframe and monitor and inspect waste holding, recovery and disposal facilities.

The Environmental Protection Agency carries out its waste enforcement functions through the Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE). The OEE has a mandate to deliver enhanced environmental compliance through enforcement of EPA licences issued to waste, industrial and other activities. It also exercises a supervisory role in respect of the environmental protection activities of local authorities. In this regard, the OEE acts as a resource to members of the public who have exhausted all other avenues of complaint.

With respect to this particular site, it is my understanding that the OEE has a Public Authority Enforcement file open in respect of waste deposited on these lands and that this file remains under active consideration.

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme Expenditure**

580. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to increase investment in the SEAI in order to achieve almost 30% emissions reduction targets for 2030. [26090/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The government recently approved and published the Climate Action Plan which sets out how we will meet our 2030 emissions targets and put us on the right trajectory to reach net zero emissions by 2050. This includes highly ambitious targets across the public and enterprise sectors as well as the built environment.

The Climate Action Plan sets out the actions which we will need to take in order to deliver on these targets. This includes commitments related to the introduction of new delivery models to minimise the cost of retrofits as well as the further development and optimisation of Government funding and grant schemes to drive demand for retrofits and deliver value for money. The Climate Action Plan will be updated annually.

The SEAI will have a key role to play in many of the measures and initiatives set out in the plan.

The government has significantly increased the level of resources allocated to the SEAI in recent years both in terms of capital allocation to expand the number and scale of supports and schemes available – and, importantly, to expand their human resources. This has enabled the Authority to grow its expertise and add new functions such as the organisation's Behavioural Economics Unit. These developments will make a significant contribution to the achievement of national energy efficiency and carbon reduction goals.

Decisions in relation to any additional resource allocations for the SEAI from 2020 will be made in the context of the ambitious programme of measures set out in the Climate Action Plan, the 2020 Estimates process and the c.€5 billion funding identified in Project Ireland 2040 to support energy efficiency and related measures in the period 2018-2027.

### **Flood Relief Schemes**

581. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary question No. 509 of 21 May 2019, if he is satisfied with the involvement of Inland Fisheries Ireland instream experts in a design capacity in relation to the Bandon flood relief scheme. [26146/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney):** From the perspective of its statutory remit, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) consulted with Byrne Looby Partners, agents for the Office of Public Works (OPW), who have responsibility for the Bandon Flood Relief Scheme.

This consultation was in relation to certain aspects of the Scheme during the design stage and ensured that vital remedial works required to recreate thalwegs, pools and other fisheries features, that would be impacted by the dredging works, were incorporated into the plan.

IFI and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government reviewed and commented on plans for the fish pass at the Weir in Bandon, designed by Fishway Engineering Ltd on behalf of Byrne Looby Partners for the OPW.

I am satisfied that, In accordance with its statutory remit, IFI has fully engaged with all parties concerned throughout the execution of the scheme, ongoing since 2016.

### **Inland Fisheries Ireland**

582. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the level of stakeholder attendance at the recent Inland Fisheries Ireland funding workshops which were held nationally; and the number of expression of interest forms returned. [26147/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney):** I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that following the opening of the funding application system for the National Strategy for Angling Development to Expressions of Interest, funding workshops were held in nine venues around the country to raise awareness of the funds available, how to apply for funding using the application SmartSimple system and the types of projects that were eligible for funding.

The workshops were advertised on Social Media, in print media, on local radio, on the IFI website and through the SmartSimple system. Angling clubs were also contacted by IFI staff to encourage them to attend if they had an idea for a project that could be funded by the IFI.

At these workshops Project Management Office (PMO) and River Basin District (RBD) staff were present to answer questions and to assist potential applicants in registering on the SmartSimple funding system. In total 105 people attended the workshops.

As of 13 June, 193 Expressions of interest have been made for funding for projects with an investment value of €2.5 million.

The Expressions of Interest process remains open.

### **Inland Fisheries Ireland**

583. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a commitment was given by Inland Fisheries Ireland to undertake a review of the deficiency of instream design skillset among the consultant instream panel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26148/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney):** The launch of the National Strategy for Angling Development, along with the ongoing funding available through the Salmon and Sea Trout Conservation Fund and Midland Fisheries Fund and significant ongoing interest in ensuring fisheries habitats are conserved and angling opportunities sustainably developed, has led to increased need to ensure appropriately qualified and experienced professionals are available to undertake increasing levels of work in line with legislative requirements.

Using a Multi Supplier Framework Agreement, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has set up a panel of suitably qualified providers that are available to undertake work across three areas outlined below. This panel has already been reviewed by IFI and is available for use by both IFI as well as stakeholders developing their own fisheries projects, as follows:

#### Panel 1 Environmental Experts

- Developing catchment based restoration plans based on environmental need.
- Undertaking associated screenings/scoping for environmental impact assessments, screenings/scoping for appropriate assessments/Natura impact assessments, appropriate assessments/Natura impact statements and environmental impact statements.
- Undertaking reports and surveys including but not limited to topographical surveys, hydrological reports, geomorphological surveys, architectural heritage reports, archaeological reports etc. as required for each project.

#### Panel 2 Environmental Engineering Specialists

- Developing proposals and securing planning permission for fisheries development projects, including both instream habitat enhancement and angling access works.
- Developing, assessing and recommending design works options based on cost, maintenance, disturbance and other structural and ecological implications.
- Attending relevant public meetings to discuss and present development options to the general public, councils and interested parties as required.
- Overseeing and Monitoring projects during the works stage.
- Project Supervisor for the Design Process Role to the satisfaction of Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- Procure services of third party contractors as required on behalf of Inland Fisheries Ireland.

#### Panel 3 Construction Contractors, with instream and fisheries experience

- Delivering Construction Drawings for fisheries projects.
- QS breakdown of costs associated with development.
- Construction works for fisheries projects, both in stream and on the bank/shore.
- Sign Off on the completion of projects.

IFI does not restrict the use of experts by stakeholders to those within the Consultant Panel. However, non-panel members must have appropriate professional indemnity insurance. All outputs from the various panels or non-panel members are reviewed by IFI and/or an independent expert.

Should the Deputy have any further specific concerns, I would be happy to ask IFI to contact him.

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme**

584. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the review of the better energy warmer homes scheme scheduled for mid-2019, will take place (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26246/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme is funded by my Department and 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. To date over 135,000 homes have received free upgrades under the scheme, leaving the occupants better able to afford to heat their homes to an adequate level.

The aim of the scheme is to deliver a range of energy efficiency measures in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding, focusing eligibility to those in receipt of certain payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, such as the Fuel Allowance, and limiting each home to one visit for an energy efficiency upgrade. Last year, the scheme was expanded. Subject to survey by SEAI and assessment of potential for improved energy performance, the scheme can, in certain circumstances, include internal or external wall insulation. This will permit the upgrade of more property types such as homes with solid walls, and also increase the energy savings and emissions reductions that the scheme can achieve and will also enable future fuel switching.

Demand for the scheme is extremely high, reflecting the shift to deeper measures, and is impacted by longer delivery times associated with these type of works and the delivery capacity of SEAI's contractor panel.

My Department is currently working with the SEAI to determine whether changes to the scheme are required. It is expected that this review will be completed in the coming months.

### **Climate Change Policy**

585. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which marine ecosystems, including the growth and carbon storage capacity of kelp forests, informed the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26315/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As part of the Climate Action Plan, the government will continue to support the development of the blue bio-economy through such projects as the Clean Oceans Initiative, and support the realisation of the value-add from processed marine biological resources. There is also a specific action in the Plan relating to the work of the National Bioeconomy Implementation Group.

It is also important to recall that the Plan will be monitored quarterly and updated annually, with a Climate Action Plan 2020 to be published in 2020. This will ensure that this Plan is a living document, with new actions being added each year to reflect on-going research and technological developments.

I am informed that at present the EPA has no specific research work being undertaken on the role of kelp in carbon sequestration. However, a recent 2018 technical research report by the EPA, *Valuing Ireland's Coastal, Marine and Estuarine Ecosystem Services*, presents the data and methods used to estimate the value of a number of marine, coastal and estuarine ecosystem service benefits.

I understand that similarly, the Marine Institute is not directly involved in research on the role of kelp in carbon sequestration. The institute has seaweed research underway that is focused on the chemical constituents within certain species of seaweed, in particular, to examine arsenic speciation and other metals. They also have proposals under preparation, approved with funding from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, that are intended to examine methodologies of assessing total biomass of seaweed. This latter work should inform the role of seaweed in carbon storage, though it is not the primary focus of the work proposed and approved at present.

Finally, some current research projects which are examining the issue of seaweed and carbon sequestration include the GeniALG H2020 research project which is examining marine macro-algae as a means of carbon capture/sequestration, and the School of Natural Sciences in NUI Galway which is doing some related work on *Ulva* green macro-algae.

*Question No. 586 answered with Question No. 575.*

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme**

587. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the next round of home retrofit insulation grants will be announced through the SEAI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26323/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Programme is funded by my Department and operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The Programme consists of three main schemes: Homes, Warmer Homes; and Communities. These schemes are supplemented by two pilot schemes exploring the multiple benefits of energy efficiency and the challenges of moving to deeper retrofit: the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme; and the Deep Retrofit Pilot.

I have allocated €85 million to these schemes in 2019.

The recently published Climate Action Plan includes ambitious targets of 500,000 retrofits as well as the installation of 400,000 heat pumps in existing homes. The Plan commits government to developing a new retrofitting delivery model, which will group retrofits together to achieve economies of scale, leverage private finance, and ensure easy pay-back methods. The savings on electricity bills from using less energy can help fund this, while homes will be warmer and produce less emissions. An area based retrofit programme would seek to capitalise on critical mass, leveraging economies of scale that would benefit both householders and the supply chain. This type of programme would focus on designated areas in both rural and urban environments and could be designed and delivered to include local authorities, approved housing bodies or other strategic delivery partners. It would also take account of the priorities to achieve greater depth of retrofit and the targeted replacement of oil boilers with renewable

alternatives.

Decisions in relation to funding allocations for residential retrofit in 2020 and future years will be made in the context of the ambitious programme of building energy efficiency upgrades set out in the Climate Action Plan, the annual Estimates processes and the €3.7 billion funding identified in Project Ireland 2040 to support residential energy efficiency upgrades and the installation of heat pumps and solar PV for the period 2018-2027.

### Alternative Energy Projects

588. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to consider the use of agricultural biomethane gas plants similar to those in used in Europe; the role such plants could play for small beef producers; the estimated tariffs that will be put in place to make such plants sustainable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26362/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government's Climate Action Plan, published on 17 June, sets out over 180 actions to address the issue of climate disruption. These actions include setting a target level of energy to be supplied by biomethane grid injection in 2030 and holding a public consultation later this year in on the potential to support biomethane use in the transport sector through the Biofuels Obligation Scheme.

Biogas produced from anaerobic digestion has the potential to play an important role in Ireland's transition to a low carbon future. In addition to helping decarbonise the heat, transport and electricity sectors by replacing fossil fuels, the production of biogas can reduce emissions in the agriculture and waste sectors. Diverting wastes, such as slurries, to biogas production avoids the significant levels of greenhouse gases these waste streams would otherwise emit.

Anaerobic digestion plants can utilise a wide variety of feedstocks, including agricultural waste, in order to produce biogas (a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide). This biogas can be combusted in boilers to produce heat, or in combined heat and power plants to produce both heat and electricity. Alternatively, the biogas can be upgraded by removing the carbon dioxide to produce biomethane which can be injected into the existing gas grid.

Biomethane can also be utilised in the transport sector. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) can be deployed for all types of road transport vehicles but is particularly suited to larger vehicles such as buses, vans and trucks and therefore represents a viable alternative to diesel for the freight sector.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) will support farms and businesses to adopt renewable heating systems, including biogas heating systems. The SSRH has been developed to financially support the adoption of renewable heating systems by agricultural, commercial, industrial, district heating operators and other non-domestic heat users not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System. Under Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan sets out an allocation of €300 million for the rollout of the SSRH for the period of up to 2027.

Earlier this month, I opened the second phase of the SSRH, an operational support for biomass boilers and anaerobic digestion heating systems for applications. Details of this scheme including the tariffs that apply are available on the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's website at the following link <https://www.seai.ie/sustainable-solutions/support-scheme-renewable/>.

## Broadband Service Provision

589. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a community facility (details supplied) in County Donegal can connect to fibre broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26374/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The premises referred to by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP.

This intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision of 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment.

In the first year of this roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that 10 of these BCPs will be deployed in Donegal. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations. A deployment plan will be made available by the bidder once the contract is signed.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by end of the second year of the overall deployment, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

## Freedom of Information Data

590. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26387/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following Table:

No. of FOI Requests Received in 2018	No. Granted	No. Part-granted	No. Refused	No. Transferred	No. Withdrawn	No. Handled Outside of FOI Process
362	74	139	101	6	41	1

## Climate Change Policy

591. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has instigated, or will instigate, an independent audit regarding the amount of

carbon emissions to be mitigated by the Climate Action Plan 2019 to tackle climate breakdown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26433/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government's Climate Action Plan, published on 17 June, sets out the expected emissions abatement contribution from existing commitments under Project Ireland 2040 and the expected contribution of Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) measures to meeting Ireland's EU Effort Sharing Regulation targets for 2021-2030 in the non-ETS sectors of the economy. The Plan includes the necessary targets and measures, supported by detailed actions and roadmaps, to close the remaining gap of 58.4 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq in the non-ETS sector. The relevant table is reproduced below.

	Carbon Budget	Compliance Gap
Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) Ceiling	378.3 Mt	-
Projected Emissions (Pre-NDP)	479.9 Mt	101.6 Mt
Contribution of Project Ireland 2040 NDP Measures	- 16.4 Mt	85.2 Mt
Contribution of LULUCF	- 26.8 Mt	58.4 Mt
Additional Abatement Effort Required	- 58.4 Mt	0 Mt

As a basis for policy planning we have sought to design a trajectory to 2030 which would not require any Exchequer purchase of credits nor the sacrifice of revenue due to the Exchequer from credits sold in ETS. We have planned cautiously by assuming a low price trajectory for oil.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prepares inventories of past, and projections of future, greenhouse gas emissions for Ireland on an annual basis. Inventories and projections are compiled by the EPA according to international standards to meet EU and UN reporting obligations and to inform national policy development.

The most recent projections report, *Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2018-2040*, published earlier this month, provides an updated assessment of Ireland's total projected greenhouse gas emissions out to 2040, and is available on the website of the EPA at [www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2018-2040/](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/air/airemissions/ghgprojections2018-2040/). As these projections were prepared before the publication of the Climate Action Plan, they do not yet take into account the targets and measures included in the Plan. It is anticipated that updated emissions projections, to be prepared later in 2019 to inform the preparation of Ireland's final National Energy and Climate Plan, will include the additional impact of the Climate Action Plan.

### Inland Fisheries Ireland

592. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 750 of 11 June 2019, the sites where the four enhancement proposals are to be tested in advance; the bodies (details supplied) proposing the enhancements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26454/19]

593. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 750 of 11 June 2019, the details of the work elements that will assist in all waters attaining good ecological status by a specified date as per the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26455/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environ-**

**ment (Deputy Seán Canney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 592 and 593 together.

As outlined in the response to Question No. 750 of 11 June, the Environmental River Enhancement Programme (EREP) undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), is driven by the EU Water Framework Directive and its requirement that status of all water-bodies should be at least “GOOD”.

The EREP is undertaken by IFI’s Research and Development Division and is an applied scientific study. In its maintenance of some 2,000 kms of channel each year, OPW is assisted by environmental guidance, developed with IFI. Some of the guidance is conservation driven and some has value added for habitat creation and river enhancement. OPW and IFI have undertaken experimental strategies to change the channel bed using the OPW digging plant. The drainage process tended to make the channel bed very uniform from side to side and in an up-stream - downstream direction. The experimental diggings have changed the shape of the channel cross-sections, creating a more diverse habitat, reducing the growth of nuisance vegetation and creating deeper water areas for trout.

In addition, the over-digging or deepening of the channel bed locally to make deep pools and the spread of the spoil in another area of the channel bed is intended to make shallow areas. This physical diversity can create or help to facilitate biological diversity, including shallow riffle habitat for juvenile salmon, trout, eel and other species and deeper pools for adult fish. These works are completed as part of the OPW drained channel maintenance programme.

River enhancement within the terms of the Water Framework Directive emphasises restoration of natural river processes. One outcome of the Directive and its impact on EREP is that OPW and IFI have agreed that any proposed ‘enhancement’ measure should be tested in advance to assess current status of fish and habitat. Four such enhancement proposals are to be so tested in 2019 with surveys of fish and habitat status scheduled. These four sites are set out in the table below;

Site Location	NSAD Applicant
River Deel (downstream of Raharney)	Boyne Catchment Angling Association
Trimblestown (downstream of Athboy)	Trim Athboy Angling Association – Part 1
Boycetown at Scurlockstown	Trim Athboy Anglers Association – Part 2
Kells Blackwater Carnaross	Kells Anglers

The IFI Projects Management Office has requested their Research Division to survey these sites as part of the EREP. They relate to projects submitted under the National Strategy for Angling Development by the organisations named above.

If the Deputy has any specific query in relation to any of these sites I would be happy to ask IFI to contact her.

*Question No. 594 answered with Question No. 575.*

### **Climate Change Policy**

595. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which he plans to ensure that, in developing proposals for carbon pricing, the impact on low-income groups and those facing greater challenges adapting are factored in under the Climate Action Plan 2019; the action number in the plan under which this

will be managed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26465/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Action 8 in the Climate Action Plan commits the Government to implementing a carbon tax rate of at least €80 per tonne by 2030 and to carrying out a full assessment of a trajectory of increases over successive annual Budgets. The Plan also commits to examining the potential impacts of this commitment on low-income and rural households, and those experiencing fuel poverty, as well as broader distributional impacts.

In this context, the Department of Finance is currently consulting on the options for the use of revenues raised from increases in carbon tax and has set out a number of options in this regard, including options to address the potential impact on low income groups and households most vulnerable to fuel poverty.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

596. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he received correspondence from a company (details supplied); if he or his officials met the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26483/19]

597. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he received correspondence from a company (details supplied); if he or his officials have met the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26484/19]

603. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of times he or his officials met a group (details supplied) in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26494/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 596, 597 and 603 together.

Correspondence was received from the legal representatives of Lissan Fuels on two occasions, namely a letter to former Minister Naughten dated 15 May 2018, and an email to Minister Naughten on 28 May 2018. There have been no meetings between Lissan Fuels and the Minister or officials of the Department.

When the Deputy refers to coal importers “Arigna, New Ross and Foynes”, it is presumed he is referring to the following companies - Arigna Fuels, Stafford Fuels, and CPL Fuels respectively. Correspondence was received from these companies on numerous occasions over the past two years as follows:

Communication was received from CPL Fuels on 11 April 2019, 10 April 2019, 5 April 2019, 11 February 2019, 15 October 2018, 9 July 2018, and 12 December 2017.

Correspondence was received from Stafford Fuels on 25 March 2019, 10 December 2018, and 12 September 2018.

In addition, former Minister Naughten and officials met with CPL Fuels on 21 June 2018, and Minister Naughten attended the official opening of the CPL manufacturing facility at Foynes on 6 February 2018. Department officials met with Stafford Fuels on 28 November 2018.

Meetings were held with Solid Fuel Trade Group (SFTG) on 22 January 2019, 2 May 2018, 12 December 2017, and 6 September 2017. These meetings were between the SFTG and Department officials, with the exception of the meeting of 12 December 2017, when the Minister

also attended.

### **Air and Water Pollution**

598. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the Minister of Health or officials from that Department have communicated with his Department on the impact of air pollutants on health and persons with particular respiratory diseases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26486/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department received a submission from the Department of Health, and two submissions from the Health Service Executive (HSE), to the public consultation held in 2017 on the proposed National Clean Air Strategy.

Officials from both Departments take part in the Air Quality Health Information Working Group, chaired by the Environmental Protection Agency, which meets twice a year.

In addition, my officials have liaised with officials from the Department of Health in relation to the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme which is a policy initiative between my Department and the Department of Health, and is jointly operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and the HSE. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have been procured to undertake a research project that will run in parallel with the scheme's delivery to determine the extent to which air quality and energy improvements can lead to tangible health and wellbeing gains.

### **Bituminous Fuel Ban**

599. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the legal threat on the smoky coal ban was received in his Department in May 2018; the actions he has taken since; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26487/19]

606. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date the legal action threatened by coal importers regarding the nationwide smoky coal ban was received by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26543/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 599 and 606 together.

I refer to the reply to Question No. 237 of 19 June 2019. The position is unchanged.

### **Illicit Trade in Fuel and Tobacco Products**

600. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on high-sulphur coal being smuggled across the Border region; if he has spoken to other Ministers regarding same; if actions are being taken to prevent this smuggling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26488/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Local Authorities are primarily responsible for the enforcement of legislation relating

to solid fuel within their functional area.

The powers that Local Authorities have in this area are quite extensive. For example:- Local Authority staff may undertake inspections of premises and vehicles being used for the sale and distribution of solid fuel as well as collect samples- A Local Authority may bring a prosecution under the Air Pollution Act for breaches of the Regulations. The maximum fine for breaches of the Regulations is €5,000 on summary conviction. - Fixed payment notices (or ‘on the spot fines’) applied by the Local Authority are in operation for alleged offences relating to the marketing, sale and distribution of prohibited fuels in Low Smoke Zones.

In addition, coal and low-smoke coal based products being offered for sale within the State must meet environmental specifications. The National Standards Authority of Ireland has prepared an annual traceability audit system, known as SWiFT 7, for showing compliance these specifications. Bagging operators placing these products on the market must have the SWiFT7 certificate and must also register with the EPA.

Complaints regarding the sale of prohibited fuels, smoky emissions or other breaches of the regulations should, in the first instance, be reported to the Local Authority concerned.

### **Bituminous Fuel Ban**

601. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he cleared the smoky coal ban through the technical regulation information system, TRIS, process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26491/19]

602. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the detail of each part of the process of consultation and discussion with the EU on the smoky coal ban in chronological order; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26493/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 601 and 602 together.

My Department has had a number of engagements with the European Commission about aspects of Ireland’s air quality policy, including the proposed national extension of the smoky coal ban. A Clean Air Dialogue was held between Ireland and the Commission in March 2017, to promote actions to improve air quality and contribute to Ireland’s implementation of EU clean air legislation. The productive dialogue included discussion of the proposed national ban, and is summarised in shared conclusions which can be found at the following address: [www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/CAD%20conclusions%20%20Final.pdf](http://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/CAD%20conclusions%20%20Final.pdf).

Under Directive (EU) 2015/1535, the European Commission operates the Technical Regulation Information System, or TRIS. This system is a tool for information, prevention and dialogue in the field of technical regulations on products and information society services. It is intended to help anticipate and prevent the creation of barriers to trade.

Draft regulations to give effect to the proposed ban were uploaded by my Department to the TRIS system in August 2017, along with a policy analysis statement. No comments or submissions were received from the Commission or from any Member State relating to the draft regulations. The Asthma Society of Ireland made a submission which supported the regulations.

*Question No. 603 answered with Question No. 596.*

## **Bituminous Fuel Ban**

604. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when it will be possible to introduce the smoky coal ban to the 73 towns that still do not have it in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26495/19]

611. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a nationwide ban on smoky coal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26738/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 604 and 611 together.

The ban on the marketing, sale and distribution of bituminous coal, or ‘the smoky coal ban’ as it is commonly known, was first introduced in Dublin in 1990, and subsequently extended to our major cities. Following a public consultation process, it was further extended in 2012, and now applies in 26 urban areas nationwide. The ban has proved very effective in reducing particulate matter and sulphur dioxide levels and has had the effect of significantly improving public health. Research indicates, for example, that the ban has resulted in over 350 fewer annual deaths in Dublin alone. I am disappointed that a number of coal firms have indicated that they would challenge the decision of two former Ministers to expand the smoky coal ban nationwide. Banning the use of smoky coal would have a positive impact on air quality and public health, particularly in built up areas.

I am working with the Attorney General to finalise a legally robust plan which will improve air quality by reducing particulate matter in the air. High levels of particulate matter arise from a number of sources, including the burning of smoky coal.

## **Broadband Service Provision**

605. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of primary and secondary schools connected to broadband under the national broadband plan in each county; the number of schools in each county awaiting connection, in tabular form; when they will be connected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26518/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Through the 2012 Schools 100Mbps Project all 780+ post primary schools across Ireland were provided with access to 100 megabits per second (Mbps) high speed broadband. The aim of this project, which was achieved, was to ensure that all second level students can enhance their learning experience through digital.

The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland has access to high speed broadband. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment across the country, and a State intervention in those areas where commercial operators have provided no concrete plans to invest.

My Department published an updated version of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). The Map shows is searchable by address/Eircode:

- The AMBER area represents the parts of the country where commercial operators have no plans to build high speed broadband networks. Premises in the AMBER area will be provided

with high speed broadband through the State Intervention.

- The BLUE area represents those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- The LIGHT BLUE area represents 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.

I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this. The Government decision on 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to National Broadband Ireland, subject to contract close, including the finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment. A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises by the end of the second year, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

As regards Primary Schools, 674 schools located in the Amber area will be provided with high speed broadband through the State Intervention. 1,965 schools located in the Blue area are already or will be provided with high speed broadband through commercial operators and 503 schools located in the Light Blue area will be provided with high speed broadband through eir's ongoing roll out which is nearing completion.

The table gives a breakdown by county of Primary schools.

COUNTY	AMBER	BLUE	LIGHT BLUE	TOTAL
CARLOW	6	29	6	41
CAVAN	21	40	14	75
CLARE	33	58	21	112
CORK	87	209	52	348
DONEGAL	43	113	19	175
DUBLIN	8	439	2	449
GALWAY	59	116	54	229
KERRY	29	65	38	132
KILDARE	14	86	3	103
KILKENNY	21	39	14	74
LAOIS	17	35	13	65
LEITRIM	14	17	8	39
LIMERICK	19	85	31	135
LONGFORD	10	20	7	37
LOUTH	6	64	1	71
MAYO	63	55	48	166
MEATH	26	76	13	115
MONAGHAN	20	36	5	61
OFFALY	15	38	13	66

COUNTY	AMBER	BLUE	LIGHT BLUE	TOTAL
ROSCOMMON	36	33	22	91
SLIGO	23	25	19	67
TIPPERARY	39	67	49	155
WATERFORD	15	48	12	75
WESTMEATH	16	44	14	74
WEXFORD	17	68	19	104
WICKLOW	17	60	6	83
TOTAL	674	1,965	503	3,142

*Question No. 606 answered with Question No. 599.*

### Climate Change Policy

607. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the strategic environmental assessment under Directive 2001/42/EC, ensuring sustainable development of the Climate Action Plan 2019, has been completed; if so, his views on the outcome of the assessment of the Climate Action Plan 2019; the way in which persons can access the assessment of the action plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26652/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Mitigation Plan was prepared within the framework of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 and was the subject of a statutory consultation, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The National Mitigation Plan remains in place as the statutory plan under the 2015 Act.

The Climate Action Plan gives further effect to, rather than replaces, the National Mitigation Plan.

The commitments set out in the Climate Action Plan will be incorporated into the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) which must be finalised and submitted to the European Commission by the end of 2019. My Department will shortly commence Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment screening processes on the draft National Energy and Climate Plan to determine whether an SEA or AA is required, taking into account the updates required to the NECP to incorporate the Climate Action Plan commitments.

*Question No. 608 answered with Question No. 575.*

### Energy Conservation

609. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding for the SEAI deep retrofit pilot scheme has run out; if so, when further funding will become available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26731/19]

610. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of applications received for the SEAI deep retrofit pilot scheme; the number of applications with works completed; the number of applications outstanding in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[26732/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 609 and 610 together.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was set up to investigate the challenges and opportunities associated with providing deeper retrofits to the residential sector. The Scheme is providing vital, on the ground, evidence of how to overcome the technical and economic challenge of deep retrofit, especially the practical advice and support a householder needs to undertake it. This will help homes achieve an A3 building rating by incorporating works such as insulation, ventilation, window replacement and renewable heating technologies. The results will provide insights into the potential costs of upgrading the building stock, as a greater range of building archetypes are upgraded under the scheme.

Table 1 below sets out the number of project applications received by the SEAI since 2017. It is important to note that each project application is through a service provider and must include 5 or more houses. This approach is taken in order to incorporate an element of aggregation and maximise the learnings from the pilot.

Table 1 - Number of Deep Retrofit Projects 2017-2019

Project Status	2017	2018	2019	Total
Complete	11	25	0	37
In Progress	0	7	9	16
Under Evaluation	0	2	38	39
Withdrawn	2	4	0	6
Total	13	39	46	98

The projects “under evaluation” category includes complete applications that are being evaluated as well as applications that are incomplete or not in a position to be proposed for approval.

Table 2 below outlines the number of individual homes within the project applications.

Table 2 - Number of Deep Retrofit Homes 2017-2019

Project Status	2017	2018	2019	Total
Complete	120	139	0	259
In Progress	0	37	46	83
Under Evaluation	0	10	219	229
Withdrawn	22	28	0	50
Total	142	214	265	621

As evident from both tables, there has been a sustained increase in demand for the scheme as a direct result of the increased and positive dialogue now being engaged in across Irish society regarding climate change.

In 2018, the pilot scheme provided grants to homeowners to the value of €4.7m. This year I have allocated €7m to the scheme. At end May 2019, €1m had been paid out in grants. As projects are completed further grants will be drawn down and I expect the full allocation to be spent by year end.

The recently published Climate Action Plan sets highly ambitious targets of 500,000 retrofits as well as the installation of 400,000 heat pumps in existing homes. The lessons learned from the Deep Retrofit Pilot will be of great assistance in designing the policies and approaches required to deliver this target.

*Question No. 611 answered with Question No. 604.*

### Energy Conservation

612. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a person has the right to have a smart meter on his or her property removed after it has been installed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26762/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Smart Meter Upgrade is a key building block in enabling consumers to participate in the low carbon transition as outlined in the recently published Climate Action Plan. The programme will result in the upgrade of 2.4 million meters to modern, smart-ready technology.

Like all equipment, meters for measuring gas or electricity use require replacement over time and as older brands and models cease to be available, newer technology enables improvements in services and greater efficiencies in meter reading. Smart meters are the next generation electricity meters and will replace older mechanical meters. The question seems to imply a return to mechanical meters that will ultimately be obsolete and no longer available.

When smart meters are fully operational, consumers will have a choice to be provided with more accurate information about energy usage across the day to allow them to better manage bills with greater accuracy than at present. This information can also help consumers to make more informed choices about their electricity consumption and tariff selection.

Currently, electricity meters are manually read by ESB Networks up to four times per year. Smart Meters are able to automatically send meter readings so there will be no need for estimated bills.

New products and services will enable customers to avail of cheaper electricity by managing their energy demand, through the use of night rates or other behavioural signals.

Smart meters will also support the migration to a carbon free electricity network and will support smart grids, the electrification of heat and transport, local renewable generation and microgeneration.

ESB Networks will commence the meter replacement programme in autumn 2019. The plan is to replace 250,000 meters between autumn 2019 and the end of 2020 and a further 500,000 meters every year from 2021 to 2024.

### Energy Policy

613. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the importation of fracked gas from the United States of America; and if measures will be taken to have liquified natural gas, LNG, from fracked sources removed from the EU projects of common interest list in view of climate change commitments and in view of the commitment to ban fracking. [26918/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The recently published Climate Action Plan sets out the actions which must be taken to make Ireland a leader in responding to climate change. It sets out the actions which must be taken in every sector so we can achieve our targets.

In all projected transitions to a low carbon economy, gas will continue to play a role in Ireland's energy mix. Gas contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the power generation, industrial and commercial, residential and transport sectors by replacing more CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive fossil fuels. In Ireland gas powered generation also provides an important back-up for intermittent renewable electricity generation such as wind and solar. Ireland's gas supplies are sourced from Irish gas fields and imports through gas pipelines from the UK.

In relation to LNG projects, commercial developers have proposed a number for development, including the Shannon LNG project and another project in Cork. Final investment decisions for these projects and compliance with any legal and regulatory requirements in relation to consents or permits are the responsibility of the project promoters.

The production, sourcing, buying and selling of natural gas produced outside this jurisdiction, would also be an operational matter for the undertakings involved. Any undertaking would be required to comply with EU law in this area.

### **Skills Shortages**

614. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the driver skills shortage recently highlighted by an organisation (details supplied); the changes he will introduce to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26239/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department is very aware of the shortages of HGV drivers, as highlighted in recent years in the work of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and the labour market intelligence of the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in SOLAS. This is a critical matter, as road freight represents the most common means of transporting goods in Ireland, and as such is a vital aspect of the supply chain. Road freight in virtually all instances performs some role in the supply chain, even if it is simply to transport goods the last mile from a port or airport to the customer.

The research of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and Skills and Labour Market Research Unit has highlighted how this is a labour rather than a skills shortage, which occurs as a result of employers finding it difficult to attract and retain employees. This is representative of a Europe-wide situation whereby more HGV drivers are exiting the industry than entering it. The logistics sector as a whole has been identified as being unattractive to young people compared to other sectors, due in part to a negative perception based on the idea that work in the sector is generally low-skilled and involves long hours.

Arising from a recommendation in the latest logistics-related study undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs - Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit - my Department has agreed to chair a Logistics and Supply Chain Skills Group, composed of logistics and supply chain stakeholders and education and training representatives, which will work to support the promotion of careers, skills development and sustainable employment in Logistics and Supply Chain activities, including HGV driving.

This group, which is in the process of being established, will through cross-industry collaboration work to improve the profile of logistics and supply chain roles, making it easier to

recruit talent; make progression pathways available to those entering or already working in the roles; ensure development opportunities are available to provide the skills, knowledge and competencies required; enhance employee retention; and provide a forum for ongoing communication and leadership by the logistics and supply chain stakeholders in addressing the skills needs of these activities in Ireland.

### **Sports Capital Programme**

615. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will engage with a company (details supplied) to examine the potential for promoting and incentivising the use of a product by sports clubs in the provision of new grass playing fields or for the improvement of existing grass playing fields; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26379/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

The programme funds the provision and improvement of many types of sports facilities including the development of natural grass playing surfaces. The choice of what products and methods best meet a grantee's needs are a matter for the grantee, their technical supervisor and their chosen contractor. Furthermore, the relevant National Governing Body may also provide some technical advice to sports club or organisations. My Department does not endorse or recommend any particular product and accordingly, it would not be appropriate to engage with the company referred to by the Deputy.

### **Free Travel Scheme Eligibility**

616. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated annual cost of extending the free travel age for children on public transport to 18 years for Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann, Luas and Iarnród Éireann services. [26075/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have overall responsibility for policy and funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for public transport fares and I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Disabled Drivers Permits**

617. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review the criteria for disabled parking to include hidden disabilities that may not necessarily impair mobility significantly, such as autism or dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26076/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Disabled Parking Permit (also known as the European Parking Card or Disabled Parking Badge) is available to people living in Ireland whose mobility is severely restricted, whether they are drivers or passengers, and also to those who are registered blind. In 2010 the Department conducted a review

of the Disabled Parking Scheme, in consultation with various stakeholders and one of the issues examined was eligibility for the scheme. As a result of the review the scheme was revised so that permits are now given on the basis of mobility impairment rather than the diagnosis of a particular condition or illness. This is in line with the original intention of the scheme.

The possibility of extending the eligibility criteria for the scheme to include people with invisible disabilities such as those mentioned by the Deputy has been raised on a number of occasions and the Department has consulted extensively with the joint issuing authorities of the scheme, the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWC), on this matter. In light of this consultation there are currently no plans to change the criteria.

I would particularly emphasise to the Deputy that issuing a large number of extra permits by extending the eligibility criteria would in fact put the existing scheme under significant additional pressure and compromise the availability of disabled parking spaces in general.

### **Public Transport Subsidies**

618. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of subvention that will be provided to each transport operator (details supplied) in 2019. [26118/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. My Department has allocated €287m in public service obligation (PSO) funding to the National Transport Authority for 2019. It is the NTA's statutory responsibility to allocate this funding to the transport operators. I have, therefore, forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive responses within ten working days.

### **Rural Transport Services**

619. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passenger journeys on Local Link services in 2018. [26119/19]

**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 which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter I have forwarded your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Public Transport Data**

620. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the metro north project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26120/19]

621. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the DART underground project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26121/19]

622. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the DART expansion programme; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26122/19]

623. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Dublin city centre resignalling programme; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26123/19]

624. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the reopening of the Phoenix Park tunnel; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26124/19]

625. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the central traffic control centre for commuter and intercity rail; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26125/19]

626. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to safety and efficiency maintenance of the rail network; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26126/19]

628. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the capital plan 2016-2021 to the acquisition of replacement buses; the amount spent; the number of buses acquired; the estimated expenditure on replacement buses over the life of the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26128/19]

629. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to upgrading quality bus corridors; the amount spent to date; the number of bus corridors upgraded; the estimated capital expenditure to be spent over the remaining life of the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26129/19]

630. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Luas cross-city project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26130/19]

643. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the alloca-

tion from the Exchequer and other sources under the Capital Plan 2016-2021 to the smarter travel policy; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26143/19]

670. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital funding provided through the National Development Plan 2018-2027 for upgrading or improvement of rail lines outside the greater Dublin area by region and year in which funding is expected to be used in tabular form. [26577/19]

671. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital funding provided through the National Development Plan 2018-2027 for the electrification of rail lines outside the greater Dublin area by region and year in which funding is expected to be deployed in tabular form. [26578/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 620 to 626, inclusive, 628 to 630, inclusive, 643, 670 and 671 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the Capital Plan 2016-2021 has been superseded by *Project Ireland 2040*.

As the Deputies are also aware, *Project Ireland 2040* provides indicative allocations over the next ten years for a range of public transport related projects and programmes including those referred to by the Deputies.

As noted in *Project Ireland 2040* individual projects and programmes remain subject to compliance with the *Public Spending Code*, including its requirements in relation to appraisal and Sanctioning Authority approval points.

Details regarding indicative allocations, current status and expected completion dates where applicable are published on the *Project Ireland 2040* Tracker as published by the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform and available at the following link:

[www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/).

With regard to DART Underground, the DART Expansion Programme as proposed to be funded under *Project Ireland 2040* does not include the Underground element but that instead the route for the Underground Tunnel will be established and protected to allow for its future delivery.

In relation to the Luas Cross City and Phoenix Park Tunnel projects, it should be noted that both projects are completed since 2017 and are contributing to the provision of an enhanced public transport service for all users.

In terms of the potential electrification of the rail network outside the Greater Dublin Area, *Project Ireland 2040* commits toward an evaluation of high-speed rail on the main inter-urban network against improvements to existing line speeds and that evaluation will be commenced next year.

## Rail Services

627. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a feasibility study has been implemented in accordance with the capital plan 2016-2021 to examine options for expanding freight on the railways; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26127/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In relation to the movement of goods, i.e. freight, it is an objective of my Department to generally ensure that this key element of economy and society operates in an optimal manner, taking account of the needs of the environment, as well as that economy and society. The performance and competitiveness, in quality, service and cost, of all the participants in the transport and logistics chain, including producers, retailers, importers, exporters and transport providers, are relevant.

The question of what mode is used depends on what is most appropriate, taking account of the technical aspects of each mode, the nature of the goods being moved and requirements of those using them, and Ireland's geographical characteristics. Rail freight currently accounts for a very low share of freight transported in Ireland, at just over 1% of total domestic freight tonnage. This reflects the short distances within the island and the generally high-value, low-volume nature of goods being moved.

A key priority for the Government in relation to investment in the rail network is to safeguard investments already made and to maintain safety standards. In the framework of national and EU objectives to move to lower-emission modes of transport, my Department will continue to examine with the relevant stakeholders how to support such developments, including where appropriate the development of rail freight.

*Questions Nos. 628 to 630, inclusive, answered with Question No. 620.*

### **Road Projects Expenditure**

631. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent from the Exchequer under the capital plan 2016-2021 on the N25 New Ross bypass public private partnerships, PPP, by year to date; the completion date of the project; the expected annual amount to be allocated from the Exchequer to the end of the PPP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26131/19]

632. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Galway bypass; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26132/19]

633. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Mallow relief road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26133/19]

634. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Adare bypass; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26134/19]

635. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Slane bypass; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26135/19]

636. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N28 Cork to Ringaskiddy road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital

cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26136/19]

637. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N69 Shannon to Foynes road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26137/19]

644. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Cork Limerick road; the estimated cost of the project; the expected completion time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26144/19]

647. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N5 Westport to Turlough project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26173/19]

648. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N22 Ballyvourney to Macroom project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26174/19]

649. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N8-N25 Dunkettle Interchange project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26175/19]

650. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26176/19]

651. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the M7 Naas to Newbridge bypass widening project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26177/19]

652. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N56 Dungle to Glenties project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26178/19]

653. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Moycullen bypass project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26179/19]

654. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N56 Mountcharles to Inver road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[26180/19]

658. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the N17-N18 Gort-Tuam PPP; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26184/19]

659. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the M11 Gorey to Enniscorthy PPP; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26185/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 631 to 637, inclusive, 644, 647 to 654, inclusive, 658 and 659 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and 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 construction of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

The Government's Capital Investment Plan (CIP) "Building on Recovery - Infrastructure and Capital Investment" provided the strategic and financial framework for TII's activities for the period 2016 to 2021. This was followed by the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027. When my Department provides capital funding to TII for the implementation of the NDP, TII's function is to then deliver on an integrated approach to the future development and operation of the national roads network throughout Ireland. Consequently, TII is best placed to advise on the current status and funding in respect of the above schemes.

Noting the above position, I have referred your questions to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Road Projects Expenditure**

638. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Shannon crossing bridge at Killaloe; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26138/19]

639. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Athy southern distributor road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26139/19]

640. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Portlaoise southern distributor road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26140/19]

641. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to phase 4 of the Dingle relief road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26141/19]

642. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Laytown to Bettystown link road; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost to finish the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26142/19]

646. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the roads maintenance programme; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26172/19]

655. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Sallins by-pass project; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26181/19]

656. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Garavogue River road project in County Sligo; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26182/19]

657. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation from the Exchequer and other sources under the capital plan 2016-2021 to the Grange Castle business park upgrade; the amount spent to date; the expected completion date; the estimated capital cost of finishing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26183/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 638 to 642, inclusive, 646 and 655 to 657, inclusive, together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. Each local authority is the contracting authority for the purpose of implementation of regional and local road improvement projects.

Project Ireland 2040, including the National Development Plan (NDP), is the continuation of the original 2016-2021 "Building on Recovery" capital plan. Under the NDP my Department is committed at present to providing grant funding towards the cost of 12 significant capital road improvement schemes. The table below reflects the current position regarding my Department's funding of the NDP regional and local road schemes mentioned by the Deputy.

As regards grant expenditure to date on these schemes, the Regional and Local Road payment booklets available in the Oireachtas library provide details of grant payments made by my Department to the end of 2018. The 2019 Regional and Local Road allocation booklet outlines the allocations for these schemes this year and the table below outlines grants paid out to date in 2019. I would point out that cost estimates for road improvement schemes are reviewed at project development milestones and allowing for cost inflation and project implementation risks can be subject to change.

Name of Project	Spend to Date in 2019 €	Total Estimated Cost to DTTaS	Project Completion Date
R407 Sallins By Pass	1,594,133	57,000,000	2020
Athy Southern Distributor Road	416,333	34,000,000	2023
Adamstown and Nangor Road Upgrade	3,769,578	18,000,000	2019

Name of Project	Spend to Date in 2019 €	Total Estimated Cost to DTTaS	Project Completion Date
Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Road	50,000	20,000,000	2022
Portlaoise Southern Distributor Road	1,091,956	7,000,000	2019
Laytown to Bettystown Link Road	38,606	5,000,000	2020
Dingle Relief Road	634,119	4,000,000	2019
Shannon Crossing/Kilalloe Bypass/R494 Up-grade	900,956	62,000,000	2023

The bulk of the funding available under the NDP for regional and local roads is earmarked for maintenance and renewal work. In this context grants are provided on an ongoing basis to local authorities under a range of programmes operated by the Department with the allocations for individual programmes determined on an annual basis within the overall capital envelope. The Regional and Local Road allocation and payment booklets in the Oireachtas library provide allocation and expenditure details by grant programme.

*Question No. 643 answered with Question No. 620.*

*Question No. 644 answered with Question No. 631.*

### **Rail Network Maintenance**

645. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent operating and maintaining each rail line in 2018. [26145/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

*Question No. 646 answered with Question No. 638.*

*Questions Nos. 647 to 654, inclusive, answered with Question No. 631.*

*Questions Nos. 655 to 657, inclusive, answered with Question No. 638.*

*Questions Nos. 658 and 659 answered with Question No. 631.*

### **National Mitigation Plan Implementation**

660. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on item No. 72 of the update report on the national mitigation plan (details supplied); the number of members in the group; the grades of each; the date on which the group was established; the number of times it has met; the main purpose of the group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26196/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Mitigation Plan proposed the establishing of a Behavioural Economics Working Group recognising the particular role that understanding human behaviour plays in effecting passenger mode shift. A Working Group approach was envisaged to review research and best practice in motivating significant modal shift away from cars towards public and active travel.

Since then, specifically to acknowledge the importance of human and psychological factors in influencing the uptake of sustainable solutions, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) have established a dedicated Behavioural Economics Unit which is tasked with researching and communicating methods to encourage people to make better energy use decisions across a range of areas including some aspects of the transport sector. My Department is working with this Unit on transport projects and in 2018 co-funded a research project with SEAI entitled 'Examining a range of behavioural nudges that would assist in decarbonising the national car fleet'. The work of this SEAI Unit, securing relevant research and the collaboration with my Department were considered more effective means of advancing this key work than establishing a separate transport specific Behavioural Economics Working Group.

My Department is very aware that behavioural insight to influence change in the transport sector is essential. Supporting a shift away from the use of the passenger car, where feasible, remains central to the transport sector's response, not only to the climate change challenge but also to air quality and congestion challenges.

The National Development Plan has earmarked €8.6 billion for investment in public and sustainable transport to improve the capacity and attractiveness of the networks. Since 2013 we have seen an increase of almost 31 million journeys on subsidised public transport and commercial bus services, with an increase of 16 million passengers in 2017 (a 7% rise on 2016 figures) across Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann and Luas services.

Furthermore, my Department supports a wide range of active travel behavioural change programmes, including Green Schools, Smarter Workplaces and Campuses, and CycleRight which continue to promote the many and varied benefits of sustainable transport and are instrumental in the decision making of many to reduce car use and switch to more sustainable modes of transport.

Similarly, the recently published Climate Action Plan contains several actions which seek to increase the level of modal shift. A copy of the Plan can be found on the website of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, at the following link: [www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/topics/climate-action-plan/Pages/climate-action.aspx](http://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/topics/climate-action-plan/Pages/climate-action.aspx).

## **Road Projects**

661. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding projects (details supplied) as of 17 June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26208/19]

**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. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, development and construction of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred your question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

## **Public Sector Vehicles Data**

662. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number

of vehicles in the State fleet as of 2019; and the number of these vehicles which are fully electric vehicles. [26225/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the National Vehicle File is categorised based on motor tax classifications the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in the format sought; however, the following relevant data has been extracted from the File. As of the 31st of May 2019 there were 6,573 vehicles registered under the ‘State Owned, Emergency Vehicles and Rescue Vehicles’ tax classification; the Deputy should note that this definition potentially omits many state/public vehicles that are not registered under this tax exemption category. Based on this definition, there are 13 electric “State Vehicles” registered.

The transition to alternatively-fuelled vehicles, including electric vehicles (EVs), is a necessary step-change if Ireland is to effect a substantial reduction in transport emissions, particularly in the passenger car sector which accounts for over half of all land transport emissions. In order to expedite the deployment of low carbon technologies, especially the uptake of EVs, my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment jointly convened an inter-Departmental Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce to consider a full suite of potential measures available to Government. The role of public sector leadership in encouraging EV uptake was examined by the Taskforce; it was recommended that the National Procurement Service introduce a new public procurement framework contract for EVs which would allow public bodies to purchase EVs with reduced administrative burden. This recommendation was echoed in the recently published Climate Action Plan (Action 149). It is expected that this measure will promote greater uptake of EVs within the State Vehicle Fleet.

While the initial uptake of EVs in Ireland was relatively slow, there are a range of factors accepted internationally as being barriers to transition to EV technology including limited vehicle choice, range anxiety and low consumer awareness. This slower than anticipated transition to EVs was not Ireland-specific and did not indicate a lack of ambition or support. Increasing range performances, technology advancements, greater affordability and improved consumer choice are beginning to trigger large-scale change. This year we saw a marked increase in EV sales; at the end of May 2019 there were 11,418 EVs were registered on Irish roads (6,892 full battery electric and 4,526 plug-in hybrids).

Beyond the passenger car fleet I am also committed to encouraging greater uptake of low emitting technologies, including electrification, in the public transport fleet. In the urban bus fleet, I have outlined a clear trajectory to low emission buses, with no more diesel-only buses purchased for the urban public bus fleet from next month and by 2035 to only have low emitting buses in the urban PSO bus fleet. We also plan to create a full metropolitan area DART network for the Greater Dublin Area; this is the part of the national rail network that carries over 75% of total rail passengers each year. It will mean high-frequency electrified rail services to Drogheda, Celbridge/Hazelhatch, Maynooth and M3 Parkway, as well as new interchange stations with bus, LUAS and Metro networks. These major projects will help supplement the range of viable low carbon alternatives to private passenger car travel and positively impact on our sectoral emissions profile.

### **Environmental Regulations**

663. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he plans to ban the import of Euro 5 engines and older; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26319/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The transition to alternatively-fuelled vehicles and away from fossil-fuelled vehicles is a necessary step-change to effect a substantial reduction in transport emissions, particularly in the passenger car fleet which accounts for 52% of total transport emissions.

While there are no certainties in predicting future technologies, the move to zero-tailpipe emissions of the national car fleet represents a feasible option. Indications from car manufacturers and energy market analysts suggest that mass market adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) is probable. In order to stimulate this widespread adoption of EVs, as well as other alternative fuels, a Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce was established in 2016 to recommend to Government a range of measures available to increase the uptake rates of low emitting vehicles. Consequently, the State has provided and maintained various incentives to mitigate the cost of and encourage the transition away from conventional fossil fuels. In the recently published Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown an ambitious target of having nearly 1 million over electric vehicles on Irish roads by 2030 was set.

Over the coming years, further steps will be needed to help move Ireland towards this target and, more broadly, our national emissions targets, and the Climate Action Plan indicates a pathway to achieving this. Specifically in relation to the Deputy's suggestion about restricting imports, he will be aware that one of the pillars of EU legislation is to permit the free movement of goods between Member States, and that this allows European citizens greater consumer choice. Accordingly, there are no plans to introduce a ban on the importation of vehicles from member states; imported vehicles from non-EU jurisdictions, though, could potentially be subject to more stringent restrictions and this will be kept under review.

### **Bus Services**

664. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to planned changes to the 126 bus route in order to address the issues with unreliability on the route. [26359/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Bus 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.

### **Road Traffic Legislation**

665. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the regulations that govern roadside vendors, for example, strawberry sales trailers. [26377/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Section 71 of the Roads Act 1993 contains provisions relating to unauthorised signs, caravans, vehicles etc. on public roads.

Subsection (1) of this Section, states that any person who, without lawful authority or the consent of a road authority, erects, places or retains, on a public road, any caravan, vehicle or other structure or thing (whether on wheels or not) used for the purposes of advertising, the sale of goods, the provision of services or other similar purpose shall be guilty of an offence.

I understand that the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation's Casual Trading

Act, 1995 provides for the regulation of casual trading and you may wish to refer to that Department for further information in that regard.

### Freedom of Information Requests

666. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26400/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information the Deputy has requested is included below in tabular form.

-	No. of FOIs
Granted	104
Part-Granted	135
Refused	96
Transferred to the Appropriate Body	3
Withdrawn	26
Handled outside of FOI	26

### Public Transport Provision

667. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the new public transport projects to be delivered under the Climate Action Plan 2019 that are not already part of an existing plan, such as the National Development Plan 2018-2027; the cost of these new projects; the way in which they are to be funded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26464/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The recently published Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown sets out a whole-of-Government approach to climate action and maps a potential pathway to meet Ireland's 2030 emission reduction commitments. The Plan clearly recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption.

The transport sector, which accounts for about 20% of Ireland overall carbon emissions (and about 27% of Ireland's accountable emissions in the non-ETS sector), plays a key role in the national decarbonisation effort. My Department has worked hard to develop an ambitious, challenging and wide-ranging set of actions for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan, particularly in relation to public transport and active travel.

A critical challenge is reducing the 52% of transport emissions that come from private car use. Our aim in expanding the carrying capacity and the attractiveness of our public transport and active travel networks is to provide a viable sustainable alternative to private car use for more people for more of their journeys. Supporting a shift towards more sustainable transport in this way will help reduce congestion, lower climate-harmful emissions, and improve air quality.

Under Project Ireland 2040, an indicative allocation of €8.6 billion is assigned to support sustainable mobility. This will make public transport and active travel a viable alternative for more people for more of their journeys. The substantial investment will be used to support

MetroLink, BusConnects, the DART Expansion Programme and vastly improved active travel infrastructure in all our major cities. In fact, the National Development Plan budget for new public transport/active travel projects is well above what we will be investing in new roads, which is a reversal of the balance of investment between these two areas in the past.

It is clear that prioritising investment in our public transport network is working; during the reporting period of 2017 alone, an additional 16 million public transport passenger journeys were made in Ireland while the number of walking and cycling trips also increased, particularly within the Greater Dublin Area.

To ensure that the carbon footprint of this significant modal shift is minimised we are committed to improving the energy and emissions efficiencies of the public transport fleet. Of course, because less than 5% of Ireland's transport-derived CO2 emissions arise from public transport, we need to realise that efforts to "green" the fleet will have only a limited impact in reducing emissions, but these measures are nonetheless important in leadership terms. In the urban bus fleet, a clear trajectory to low emission buses has been outlined in the Climate Action Plan. We are committed to no longer purchasing diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleet from next month and by 2035 to only have low emitting buses in the urban PSO bus fleet.

For rail we've significantly increased the amounts of money made available each year to support the maintenance and renewal of the heavy rail network, which is now funded at the so-called 'steady state' level as measured on an annual basis. That means more investment in important works such as track relaying, ballast-cleaning and signal improvements all resulting in an improved passenger experience across the country. This year, I expect construction to start on a new National Train Control Centre which will be a state-of-the-art network management centre and it will lay the groundwork for the expansion of services planned in the years ahead.

It is equally important to consider the potential contribution of electrified rail to decarbonisation objectives. We plan to create a full metropolitan area DART network for the Greater Dublin Area; this is the part of the national rail network that carries over 75% of total rail passengers each year. It will mean high-frequency electrified rail services to Drogheda, Celbridge/Hazelhatch, Maynooth and M3 Parkway, as well as new interchange stations with bus, LUAS and Metro networks. In this regard, the NTA and Iarnród Éireann have recently commenced a procurement process for the establishment of a 10 year framework agreement for the purchase of additional lower emitting rail fleet required for the expansion of the DART network. These major rail projects will help supplement the range of viable low carbon alternatives to private passenger car travel and positively impact on our sectoral emissions profile.

Furthermore, as set out in the Climate Action Plan we have also committed to next year commencing an evaluation of the potential economic benefits associated with development of a high-speed network along the major inter-urban rail network against improvements to the existing network to deliver high speeds.

### **Greenways Funding**

**668. Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a feasibility review for the Quiet Man greenway in County Galway; when it is due for completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26519/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Last Friday the 21st of June, I announced funding of €40 million for 10 new Greenway projects. While an application was made by Galway County Council during last years funding call for the Quiet Man

Greenway, it was not included among the projects awarded funding.

In this particular round of funding I sought projects which were ready to begin construction in the near future. Unfortunately as the application was for a feasibility study it was not in a position to receive funding on this occasion.

My Department has no role in the proposed feasibility study and I am not in a position to provide the Deputy with further information in this regard.

### Greenways Development

669. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications in each county for greenway developments to date in tabular form; the funding provided to date for greenway developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26520/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Greenways programme, previously called the National Cycle Network, was launched in 2012. The calls for applications held since then have taken place in 2012, 2013 & 2018. In total, 151 applications have been made to this Department for Greenways since 2012. Below is a table breaking down the number of applications by county:

County	No. of Applications
Carlow	2
Cavan	3
Clare	5
Cork	7
Donegal	7
Dublin	9
Galway	12
Kerry	8
Kildare	5
Kilkenny	2
Laois	4
Leitrim	5
Limerick	9
Longford	4
Louth	6
Mayo	4
Meath	5
Monaghan	3
Offaly	4
Roscommon	3
Sligo	5
Tipperary	9
Waterford	9
Westmeath	7
Wexford	9

County	No. of Applications
Wicklow	5
Total	151

Since 2012, a total of €80,180,065 has been allocated to Greenways all around the country. This includes the €40m awarded last week by myself and Minister of State Griffin to 10 new projects.

*Questions No. 670 and 671 answered with Question No. 620.*

### Roads Maintenance Funding

672. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discretionary road grants provided through Transport Infrastructure Ireland to individual local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26636/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. Each local authority is the contracting authority for the purpose of implementation of regional and local road improvement projects.

While payments in respect of regional and local road grants are processed on TII's payment system sign-off on all such payments is provided by the Department.

Details of grant allocations, including Discretionary Grant allocations, to individual local authorities can be found in the 2019 Regional and Local Road allocation booklet available in the Oireachtas library. Details of grant payments for previous years are set out in the Regional and Local Road grant payment booklets which are also available in the Oireachtas library.

### Climate Change Policy

673. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost per tonne of abating greenhouse gas emissions by diverting freight to rail. [26658/19]

674. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost per tonne of abating greenhouse gas emissions by facilitating and incentivising switching from diesel and petrol cars to electric cars. [26659/19]

675. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost per tonne of abating greenhouse gas emissions by facilitating and incentivising modal shift from cars to public transport. [26660/19]

676. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost per tonne of abating greenhouse gas emissions by facilitating and incentivising modal shift from cars to bicycles. [26661/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 673 to 676, inclusive, together.

Central to the development of the new Climate Action Plan was the economic evaluation of key emission mitigation technologies. A Marginal Abatement Cost Curve approach (MACC) was used to compare ‘business-as-usual’ economic activity to ‘low carbon’ options. In the Plan an estimated marginal cost per tonne of carbon abated was attributed to certain technologies. This technique allows for comparative analysis of ‘low carbon’ alternatives across key sectors. An overview of costs and emission reduction potential of sector-specific mitigation approaches can be found in Table 4.2 of the Climate Action Plan (page 28) <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/Climate%20Action%20Plan%202019.pdf>).

According to this analysis some of the most cost-effective abatement opportunities - from a societal perspective - include the electrification of transport. This is expected due to fast-falling battery prices, which are likely to put the lifetime total cost of ownership of electric vehicles on par with those of fossil fuel vehicles over the next decade or so. The Climate Action Plan shows the expected average abatement cost over the period 2021 to 2030 for switching from fossil-fuelled passenger cars to electric vehicles on a total cost of ownership basis at around -€116 cost per tonne.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the estimated cost per tonne of emissions abated through measures that encourage modal shift to either public transport or active travel is less readily available. Nevertheless, indicative calculations by my Department estimate that by replacing 10,000 daily car journeys with cycling (assuming the replaced car journey length was equivalent to the average bike journey length in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA)) approximately 37.25 ktCO<sub>2</sub> could be abated between 2020 and 2030. The National Transport Authority has also estimated that replacing 10% of car trips in the GDA (travelling the average GDA morning peak distance) with public transport could potentially result in an annual emission abatement of 22ktCO<sub>2</sub>.. For context, the transport sector in Ireland emitted a little over 12,000 ktCO<sub>2</sub> in 2017.

To further reduce the carbon footprint of modal shift towards public transport I have committed to continuing to improve the energy and emissions efficiencies of the public transport fleets. In the urban bus fleet, a clear trajectory to low emission buses has been outlined with no more diesel-only buses being purchased for the urban public bus fleet from next month and by 2035 to only have low-emitting buses in the urban PSO bus fleet. My Department has estimated that when the entire bus fleet is converted to low-emitting that up to 15 ktCO<sub>2</sub> will be saved annually compared to the business-as-usual diesel fleet.

It is also important to consider the potential contribution of electrified rail to mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. We plan to create a full metropolitan area DART network for the Greater Dublin Area; this is the part of the national rail network that carries over 75% of total rail passengers each year. It will mean high-frequency electrified rail services to Drogheda, Celbridge/Hazelhatch, Maynooth and M3 Parkway, as well as new interchange stations with bus, LUAS and Metro networks, resulting in approximately 130 ktCO<sub>2</sub> annual abatement when complete. The NTA and Iarnród Éireann have recently commenced a procurement process for the establishment of a 10 year framework agreement for the purchase of additional lower-emitting rail fleet required for the expansion of the DART network. In addition, the delivery of eight additional high capacity Luas trams could also reduce emissions by 12 ktCO<sub>2</sub> per annum, assuming the Luas trips replace 63.3 million kms driven by private car. These major rail projects will help supplement the range of viable low carbon alternatives to private passenger car travel and positively impact on our sectoral emissions profile.

It is clear that prioritising investment in our public and active transport network and encouraging modal shift is working – during the reporting period of 2017 alone, an additional 16 million public transport passenger journeys were made in Ireland while the number of walking

and cycling trips also increased, particularly within the Greater Dublin Area. Collectively, these efforts have resulted in activities that yield fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in addition to reducing vehicle volume and improving air quality. In fact, 2017 saw a welcome return to a drop in transport sector emissions, the first time in four years.

Finally, in relation to the Deputy's question regarding diverting freight to rail, it is important to note that Irish rail freight quantities are comparatively small and have declined over recent decades. Long run data from the CSO shows that the total tonnage of goods carried by rail decreased from 3.4 million tonnes in 1985 to 581,000 tonnes in 2016. Internationally, where viable, rail freight can be a lower emitting alternative to road freight, particularly over long distances with bulky loads. However, in Ireland, the limited number of high-volume bulk movements combined with the country's small size and low density of activity means that rail freight is not generally as economically viable as road freight, although in certain, specific circumstances it does provide a viable alternative.

### **Driver Test**

677. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a reader (details supplied) is not available in County Kerry; if same will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26743/19]

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

### **Haulage Industry Regulation**

678. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a derogation from the new smart tachograph regulations will be provided to companies that purchased vehicles prior to the introduction of the regulations and were carrying out works on the vehicles pre-registration (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26756/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement of road safety for all road users is an important aim of the regulations that lay down rules on the requirement for tachograph in the road transport sector. These regulations are Regulation (EU) No 165/2014, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/799 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/502, which states the following:

The smart tachograph must be fitted to all vehicles in scope that are registered from 15 June 2019 onwards. There are no provisions for any derogations in the Regulations as they stand, to allow for any exceptions to this rule. As Commission Regulations, these have direct effect throughout the EU and any question of a derogation would require consideration at European rather than national level.

I trust this clarifies the position in this regard.

### **Bus Services**

679. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given to relocating a bus stop (details supplied); and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [26763/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### Road Improvement Schemes

680. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the situation regarding the L2455 Lehenaghbeg-Lehenaghmore road; if the NTA has submitted its latest observations to the local authority regarding the design; the way in which he plans to expedite an urgently needed road; if funding will be forthcoming; and when he expects the road to be delivered. [26837/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

Before the financial crisis, local authorities could apply on a regular basis for grants for Specific or Strategic Improvement Grants for the strengthening, widening or realignment of regional and local roads. However, the extent of the cutbacks in grant funding during the crisis meant these grant schemes had to be curtailed after 2013 because expenditure on maintenance/renewal was falling well short of what was required to adequately maintain the regional and local road network.

Project Ireland 20240 does provide for the gradual build up in funding for the road network but it will take time. For this reason there is limited scope at present for funding projects under the Specific or Strategic Grant Programme.

Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under these Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. All projects put forward by local authorities for consideration must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and my Department's Capital Appraisal Framework and it is important for local authorities to prioritise projects within their overall area of responsibility with these requirements in mind.

I understand that Cork County Council, which had responsibility for Lehenaghmore, had prepared a draft road improvement scheme for the area with a view to improving public transport and pedestrian access. Responsibility for Lehenaghmore has now been transferred to Cork City Council. I understand that there has been interaction between both Councils and the National Transport Authority regarding the scheme which fed into a review of aspects of the design. Once the design of the proposed scheme is finalised it will be for the Council to decide how best to proceed.

If funding is sought under the Regional and Local Road Programme, a Preliminary Appraisal in relation to the proposed upgrade will have to be submitted as required under the capital project appraisal process. Once an appraisal is received it has to be assessed taking into account other competing projects and the overall roads budget. Such an appraisal has not been submitted to date by Cork County Council or Cork City Council in relation to the upgrade of the L2455 Lehenaghbeg/Lehenaghmore road. It is also open to the Council to consider other sources of funding, including own resources.

## **Industrial Relations**

681. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) has refused to accept an invitation extended by the WRC to attend a conciliation conference with a union regarding a range of issues affecting the members of the union at the company; his views on the fact that this beneficiary of a significant State contract continues to ignore the industrial relations machinery of the State; the cost, value and duration of the NCT contract with the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26889/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The operation of the NCT contract is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. Neither I nor the Authority have any role in the industrial relations of commercial entities, whether or not they happen to secure particular contracts with the Authority.

## **Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries**

682. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the May 2019 meeting of the collaborative forum of former residents of mother and baby homes and related institutions did not take place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26060/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Following the receipt of the Collaborative Forum’s first report, I signalled the opportunity to take some time to reflect upon the learning from the process to date. In this way the mandate of the Forum can be refined to further enhance the State’s engagement with former residents.

Ahead of holding a meeting with the Forum, I intend to examine how best to conduct a focused interim evaluation which involves the Forum members and considers important issues relating to the Forum’s composition and mandate.

I am also actively considering the composition of the Forum to ensure the continuity of the process.

I hope to engage directly with Forum members on the future of the Forum in the coming weeks.

## **Early Childhood Care and Education Funding**

683. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided to an organisation (details supplied) for the purposes of providing childcare in County Wexford in the past five years. [26330/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The organisation in question operates a number of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) services in County Wexford. These services offer a range of ELC/SAC programmes, including the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) programme, Training and Education Childcare (TEC) programme and the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

The table below outlines the funding paid to the organisation in question for ECCE, CCS, CCSP, TEC and AIM, as well as Capital funding over the years 2014 to 2019.

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total Paid 2014-2019
428,714.00	355,317.98	357,486.93	590,649.03	590,461.98	273,531.46	2,596,161.38

### Childcare Services Provision

684. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the provisions that will be made to provide childcare to children whose parents are long-term unemployed but in need of additional childcare assistance arising from addiction or other personal issues. [26331/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Through the National Childcare Scheme and a range of other measures, I am committed to changing Ireland's childcare system from one of the most expensive in the world to one of the very best. In designing the National Childcare Scheme, extensive research and consultations have been carried out to ensure that this goal is achieved and that the Scheme can help as many families as possible.

The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support. The Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. In this way, it aims to combat the poverty traps which may exist within the existing schemes, and to make work pay for parents.

I have also worked to poverty-proof the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the highest subsidy rates under the Scheme. Indeed, international reports have stated that the Scheme will significantly address affordability for lower income families, with analysis showing that Ireland will, for example, change from being the most expensive country in the OECD for childcare for lone parents, to 11th position.

In addition, the National Childcare Scheme includes specific arrangements for vulnerable children and families to be sponsored by certain statutory bodies to enable such children to avail of free or additional childcare under the Scheme. The five statutory bodies specified as sponsors in the Childcare Support Act 2018, and the specific groups of children who will benefit, are:

- Minister for Education and Skills - for teen parents who are still in education or training;
- Minister for Justice and Equality - for refugees and asylum seekers, to enable parents' participation in education, integration and other relevant supports;
- Child and Family Agency - to promote the welfare of children, either where there is a child protection concern, or as a form of early intervention or family support;
- HSE - to support child development for children who are below the age for participation in ECCE and where there is an identified need for childcare as a developmental support for the child; and
- Local Authorities – to support homeless persons with children that are homeless or moving out of homelessness to access childcare services.

Arrangements are also in place to ensure that no one loses out in the initial transition to the new Scheme. All families in receipt of current targeted supports will have the choice to switch over to the new scheme when it launches or to remain on their current support (i.e. effectively remain on their current payment) until at least the end of August 2020.

Department officials have also been directed to undertake research and analysis to examine any adjustments to the National Childcare Scheme which might be required to address unusual or anomalous cases, where this is the right thing to do to protect and benefit lower income parents. In this regard, I would highlight that the new National Childcare Scheme has been designed to be flexible, with income thresholds, maximum hours and subsidy rates which can be adjusted in line with Government decisions and as more investment becomes available. As such, any adjustments deemed necessary by Government can be carried out in a quick and responsive manner.

### Freedom of Information Data

685. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26386/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table below.

No of Requests Received in 2018	Granted	Part Granted	Refused	Transferred	Withdrawn/ Handled outside of FOI	Cases brought forward to 2019
136	40	71	12	0	3	10

### Aftercare Services Provision

686. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if locations in which parents cannot access an afterschool place for their children following the introduction of the new childcare scheme are assisted to provide such places in order that parents can fulfil their work commitments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26522/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The National Childcare Scheme (NCS), which will be introduced later this year, is a new user-friendly scheme to help parents meet the cost of quality childcare. The development of this Scheme is a significant move forward in delivering quality, accessible, affordable childcare to families throughout Ireland.

The NCS will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) cost. The Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. It will also make work pay for parents trying to get back into employment or training as they will now be able to avail of help with their childcare costs. Many working families will, for the first time, be entitled to subsidies which will reduce their childcare costs significantly. Others will see an increase in their level of subsidy.

I am committed to transforming the Irish childcare system from one of the most expensive

in the world to one of the best. This requires sustained investment over several years. Over the last four budgets, investment in childcare has increased by 117%, while over past four years, childcare places in Ireland have doubled and the overall number of children supported by State subsidies has doubled.

I will continue to support providers with regard to increased provision of early learning and care and school age childcare places. In 2019, I have secured a capital budget of €6.25m for the sector which will enable a focus on further increasing the number of places available, and supporting the transition of services to the forthcoming National Childcare Scheme.

In terms of specific capital funding made available for School Age Childcare services, €1m was allocated, with individual grants of up to €20,000 in value available for providers for the creation of new school age places. It is anticipated that this funding will assist in the creation of more than 2,300 additional school age places.

I am also very pleased to have ensured that childcare was identified as a strategic priority in the National Development Plan (2018-2027) and to have secured €250m in capital funding for early learning and care and school age childcare under the plan. This represents the kind of large-scale investment in the sector by the State that has not been undertaken since the National Childcare Investment Programme that concluded in 2010.

This capital investment will, I believe, be essential to respond to the increased demand in the years ahead. Research is on-going in my Department to determine areas of specific need that the National Development Plan funding will address when it comes on-stream.

### **Cycling Facilities Funding**

687. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on cycling infrastructure by location and nature of expenditure in 2018 and to date in 2019, respectively in tabular form. [26587/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department has no responsibility for the development of cycling infrastructure nationally. In terms of supporting employees wishing to cycle to work, my Department provides secure parking facilities for cyclists as part of its overall lease arrangement via the Office of Public Works.

### **Youth Services Funding**

688. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the grants and funding issued to organisations and projects in the Dublin 5, 13 and 17 areas in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26601/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In 2019, €60.4m has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services, an increase of €1.5m on 2018. This additional funding is being used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people and to assist national youth organisations in their work to support local voluntary youth services.

I have also provided an additional 12% in overall funding for the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme, which supports youth work activities at a local level, bringing the total allocation to over €2m.

*Questions - Written Answers*

The details of the grants and funding issued to organisations and projects in the Dublin 5, 13 and 17 areas in 2018 and to date in 2019 can be found in the table below. This information was supplied by the City of Dublin Youth Services Board. Please note that the list includes payments in the City of Dublin Youth Services Board system that are processed and due for payment on 27th June.

Post Code	Category	Group Name	Year	Grant Type	Grant Amount
D05	Club	140th Dublin Beaumont Scout Group	2018	General	€5,250.00
D05	Club	160th Dublin Ardlea Scout Unit	2018	General	€2,770.00
D05	Club	35th Dublin Grange Scout Group	2018	General	€2,180.00
D05	Club	58th/85th Dublin Donnycarney Scout Group	2018	General	€2,650.00
D05	Club	73rd Dublin (Raheny) Scouting Ireland	2018	General	€5,546.25
D05	Club	74th Scout Troop - Edmore	2018	General	€2,600.00
D05	Club	80th Dublin St Brendans Coolock Scout Group	2018	General	€2,590.00
D05	Club	Beaumont Foroige Club	2018	General	€600.00
D05	Club	Buion an Leanbh Prague Guides	2018	General	€2,750.00
D05	Club	Buion Naomh Breandan Guides	2018	General	€5,000.00
D05	Club	Maranatha Youth Club	2018	General	€4,170.00
D05	Club	Order of Malta Raheny Unit	2018	General	€2,160.00
D05	Club	Raheny Foroige Club	2018	General	€2,690.00
D05	Club	Sliebh Mór Outdoor Sports Club	2018	General	€2,400.00
D05	Club	St John Ambulance Clontarf Cadet Division	2018	General	€2,380.00
D05	Club	St Pauls Youth Club (Artane)	2018	General	€3,250.00
D05	Project	Donnycarney Youth Project	2018	SPY	€121,353.00
D05	Project	Donnycarney Youth Project	2018	YPFSF 2	€57,696.00
D05	Project	Kilmore West Youth Project CLG	2018	YPFSF 1	€128,995.00
D05	Project	Le Cheile Donnycarney Community & Youth Centre CLG	2018	YPFSF 2	€164,275.00
D05	Project	St Monica's Youth Project	2018	New Initiative Grant	€10,000.00
D05	Project	St Monica's Youth Project	2018	YPFSF 1	€119,111.00
D13	Club	46th Dublin Scout Group	2018	General	€2,680.00
D13	Club	Cool Side of God YC	2018	General	€2,390.00

Post Code	Category	Group Name	Year	Grant Type	Grant Amount
D13	Club	Dublin All Stars Marching Band	2018	General	€4,750.00
D13	Project	Trinity & Priorswood Youth Service	2018	DCYA Capital Grant	€7,855.00
D13	Project	Trinity & Priorswood Youth Service	2018	SPY	€69,978.00
D13	Project	Trinity & Priorswood Youth Service	2018	YPFSF 1	€62,932.00
D17	Club	130th Dublin Priorswood Scout Group	2018	General	€4,100.00
D17	Club	Dance X	2018	General	€3,290.00
D17	Club	Dom Savio Club	2018	General	€2,310.00
D17	Club	New Life for Youth	2018	General	€5,000.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2018	DCYA Capital Grant	€18,587.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2018	LDTF Main-stream	€123,264.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2018	SPY	€281,957.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2018	YPFSF 1	€160,699.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2018	YPFSF 2	€432,862.00
D17	Project	TRAVACT - Northside Travellers Support Group (NE2-9)	2018	SPY	€82,254.00
					€1,915,324.25
D05	Club	160th Dublin Ardlea Scout Unit	2019	General	€2,750.00
D05	Club	58th/85th Dublin Donnycarney Scout Group	2019	General	€3,250.00
D05	Club	73rd Dublin (Raheny) Scouting Ireland	2019	General	€3,860.00
D05	Club	74th Scout Troop - Edensmore	2019	General	€5,000.00
D05	Club	80th Dublin St Brendans Coolock Scout Group	2019	General	€2,600.00
D05	Club	Buion Naomh Breandan Guides	2019	General	€2,750.00
D05	Club	Order of Malta Raheny Unit	2019	General	€2,270.00
D05	Club	Raheny Foroige Club	2019	General	€2,400.00
D05	Club	St Pauls Youth Club (Artane)	2019	General	€5,250.00
D05	Project	Donnycarney Youth Project	2019	TYFS	€134,286.00

Questions - Written Answers

Post Code	Category	Group Name	Year	Grant Type	Grant Amount
D05	Project	Kilmore West Youth Project CLG	2019	TYFS	€61,996.00
D05	Project	Le Cheile Donnycarney Community & Youth Centre CLG	2019	TYFS	€82,134.00
D05	Project	St Monica's Youth Project	2019	TYFS	€57,054.00
D13	Club	46th Dublin Scout Group	2019	General	€4,695.00
D13	Club	Cool Side of God YC	2019	General	€2,340.00
D13	Club	Dublin All Stars Marching Band	2019	General	€2,750.00
D13	Project	Trinity & Priorswood Youth Service	2019	TYFS	€95,931.00
D17	Club	130th Dublin Priorswood Scout Group	2019	General	€3,000.00
D17	Club	Dance X	2019	General	€3,250.00
D17	Club	New Life for Youth	2019	General	€5,500.00
D17	Project	Sphere 17 Regional Youth Service	2019	TYFS	€749,086.00
D17	Project	TRAVACT - Northside Travellers Support Group (NE2-9)	2019	TYFS	€41,124.00
					€1,273,276.00
Post Code	Category	Group Name	Year	Grant Type	Grant Amount
D05	Summer Project	74th Scout Troop - Edensmore	2018	General	€750.00
D05	Summer Project	Artane Summer Project	2018	General	€500.00
D05	Summer Project	Blossom Ireland Discovery Camp	2018	General	€750.00
D05	Summer Project	Raheny Summer Project	2018	General	€500.00
D05	Summer Project	Supercool Summer Project	2018	General	€750.00
D17	Summer Project	Aoibhneas Womens & Childrens Refuge (Coolock)	2018	General	€1,000.00
D17	Summer Project	Dance X	2018	General	€1,000.00
D17	Summer Project	Dean Swift Summer Camp	2018	General	€750.00
D17	Summer Project	Dom Savio Club	2018	General	€250.00
D17	Summer Project	New Life for Youth	2018	General	€1,000.00
					€7,250.00
D05	Summer Project	74th Scout Troop - Edensmore	2019	General	€750.00

Post Code	Category	Group Name	Year	Grant Type	Grant Amount
D05	Summer Project	Artane Summer Project	2019	General	€500.00
D05	Summer Project	Raheny Summer Project	2019	General	€500.00
D05	Summer Project	Supercool Summer Project	2019	General	€750.00
D17	Summer Project	Aoibhneas Womens & Childrens Refuge (Coolock)	2019	General	€1,000.00
D17	Summer Project	Dance X	2019	General	€1,000.00
D17	Summer Project	Dean Swift Summer Camp	2019	General	€750.00
D17	Summer Project	New Life for Youth	2019	General	€1,000.00
					€6,250.00

### Youth Services Expenditure

689. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full-year cost if the budget for the youth sector increased by 4.5%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26602/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work involving approximately 1,400 youth work staff working in youth services and communities throughout the country.

The current allocated funding for the youth sector in 2019 is €60.395m; this represents a 2.5% increase on the 2018 allocation. An increase of 4.5% in the budget for the youth sector would result in an overall allocation of €63.113m; this would be a €2.7m difference from the current allocation.

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

Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed in 2017, which mapped youth service provision across the State as well as an Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement tool which was designed in collaboration with the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector and was officially launched in January 2019. This mapping and tool will assist the Department and the relevant ETBs in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify requirements in their area and facilitate decisions on service requirement by reference to evidenced need.

### Domestic Violence Services Funding

690. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the

funding provided to domestic and gender-based violence organisations in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by organisation in tabular form. [26635/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provides funding and coordination supports to some 59 organisations that deliver a range of services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence throughout the country.

In 2019, €25.3 million is being allocated to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.5 million over 2018.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on the matters raised with regard to funding for individual organisations within the specified time period.

### Departmental Funding

691. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the recipients of the funding allocated under the network support fund announced in November 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26681/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** What Works (formerly QCBI) is a Department of Children and Youth Affairs initiative which aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people. What Works will ensure that key groups working with children, young people and their families know what works, how it works, and it will provide an evidence supported approach to apply to this work.

What Works focuses on enhancing key areas as they relate to children and young people's services:

- Data and Evidence,
- Capacity,
- and Quality in Prevention and Early Intervention policy, service and practice.

The What Works Network Support Fund announced in November 2018 aims to support organisations promoting evidence informed approaches to prevention and early intervention services, so that those working with and for children, young people and their families are supported in doing the right things, in the right way and at the right time. Subject to funding availability, this funding scheme will be open to applications until 5 November 2019 and awards will be announced on a rolling basis.

To date some €260,000 has been awarded to successful applicants under the What Works Network Support Fund. The recipients of funding thus far are listed below in tabular form for each of the years 2018 and 2019.

#### 2018

Organisation	Amount Awarded	County
GOSHH Ireland CLG	2,000.00	Co Limerick
Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN)	2,000.00	Co Dublin
Cavan County Childcare Committee CLG	1,600.00	Co Cavan

Organisation	Amount Awarded	County
Total amount approved for funding 2018:	5,600.00	

**2019**

Organisation	Amount Awarded	County
Breaking Through Company Limited by Guarantee	13,200.00	Co Kildare
Cavan County Council Arts Office	20,000.00	Co Cavan
CASP CSMT	9,000.00	Co Limerick
DESSA (Disability Equality Specialist Support)	5,704.00	Co Dublin (for CYPSCS Donegal)
Barnardos Cork	7,475.00	Co Cork
Tusla (on behalf of Limerick CYPSC)	20,000.00	Co Limerick
Children in Hospital Ireland	18,000.00	Co Dublin
The Social and Health Education Project CLG	20,000.00	Co Cork
GOSHH Ireland CLG	10,000.00	Co Limerick
Children's Grief Centre	10,000.00	Co Limerick
The Parenting Network	20,000.00	Co Dublin
Sligo Family Support CLG	15,000.00	Co Sligo
Limerick Youth Service (on behalf of West Limerick Youth and Community Workers Network (WLYCWN))	2,629.00	Co Limerick
Ballymun Network for Assisting Children & Young People (BNACYP) (Ballymun Local Drugs & Alcohol Task Force)	8,400.00	Co Dublin
Children's Research Network (Trinity College Dublin)	13,350.00	Co Dublin
Health Service Executive Dublin North City and County Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Occupational Therapy Department	20,000.00	Co Dublin
Kerry CYPSC	13,000.00	Co Kerry
Prevention and Early Intervention Network	20,000.00	Co Dublin
National Forum of Family Resource Centres	10,000.00	Dublin
Venture Out Wilderness Project CLG	5,000.00	Galway
Total amount awarded for funding 2019:	260,758.00	

**Freedom of Information Data**

692. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26398/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department received a total of 58 requests in 2018. Two requests were carried forward from the previous year, while three requests were carried forward into 2019, leaving a total of 57 completed requests in 2018.

Those cases were decided as follows:

Status	No.
Granted	14
Part-Granted	12
Refused	13
Withdrawn	6
Handled outside FOI	12
Total	57

### Departmental Funding

693. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if supports are available to a community service (details supplied) that is in urgent need of a more adequate building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26542/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department provides a range of supports to communities and community centres nationwide, in both urban and rural areas, by helping citizens to participate in the development of their communities and by providing funding to improve facilities.

In addition, the Community Enhancement Programme can contribute towards the renovation of community centres. My Department also provides funding under the LEADER programme, which can support the development of Community Centres outside of the five main cities.

Separately, once a Community Centre is in place, the Community Services Programme supports community businesses to provide local services and create employment opportunities for disadvantaged people. Where an application is successful under the programme, my Department can provide a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions.

### Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

694. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount drawn down to date under the new rural regeneration scheme; the projects that have received funding to date; the amount in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26545/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The first call for applications for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund closed at the end of September 2019. €1 billion is committed to the Fund over a 10 year period to support rural economic development and help build strong communities. €315m is allocated to the Fund for 2019-2022.

In November 2018 and February 2019 I announced details of a total of 38 Category 1 projects (capital projects which were fully planning and consent ready) and 46 Category 2 projects

(those needing further development to make them ready for delivery) which were successful under the first call from the Fund, providing €86m in support for projects worth a total of €117m.

Following the announcement of the 84 successful projects, my Department engaged with each lead party to complete required due diligence and enter into contractual arrangements whereby project payments are phased in line with delivery.

Significant progress is already being made on the 38 Category 1 projects with many completing procurement. A number of the projects have already met their first milestone and funding has been released.

To date, a total of €420,881.84 has been drawn down from the Fund. This number will significantly increase over the coming weeks and months as procurement phases end across the 84 projects and construction gets underway in Category 1 projects and detailed planning begins in Category 2 projects.

In conclusion, details are set out in the table below of the amounts paid out to date by my Department from the Fund. It should be noted that this does not include claims made but not yet paid by my Department.

Project Name	Lead Applicant	Drawdown from the RRDF
Community Shops Kilkenny	Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	€6,381.84
GTeic Hub An Spidéal	Údarás na Gaeltachta	€173,000.00
Banteer Amenity Project	IRD Duhallow CLG	€180,000.00
Blackwater River Valley	Waterford LEADER Partnership	€61,500.00

### Community Services Programme

695. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the community services programme; when it is expected to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26778/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports around 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model, with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. More than €46 million is available through the programme in 2019.

The CSP currently co-funds the salaries of some 1,660 FTEs and 300 manager posts in community organisations. Between part-time and full-time positions, the CSP will support around 3,000 people this year.

My Department commenced a review of the CSP earlier this year. The review is examining how the programme fits with overall Government priorities, as well as with my Department's other community programmes and policy objectives, and will help inform decisions on the future shape and structure of the programme.

The review is being carried out by an independent reviewer, Indecon Consultants. The reviewer has commenced consultation with key stakeholders, including all CSP supported organisations. The review will take six months to complete, with a final report expected in early Autumn 2019.

I am committed to continuing the CSP beyond 2019 and the recommendations from the

review will shape the programme going forward. In the meantime, my Department continues to accept expressions of interest from organisations, with funding for new organisations considered in light of available budgets during the year.

### **Civil Registration Service**

696. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which a person can become solemnisers, non-religious affiliated to the State, solemnisers for the public for both marriages and funerals and be in compliance with civil ceremony requirements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26426/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** To become a registered solemniser a person must have an application made on their behalf, by an authorised body, to have that person added to the Register of Solemnisers. Section 45 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 defines the bodies that are permitted to apply to have persons added to the Register of Solemnisers. This section was amended by section 2 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 (CRAA 2012), to allow a secular body to make such an application. The full list of bodies that are permitted to make an application are: the Health Service Executive, a religious body, or a secular body.

Section 3 of CRAA 2012 defines a body as a secular body if it is an organised group of people and-

- (a) it has not fewer than 50 members,
- (b) its principal objects are secular, ethical and humanist,
- (c) members of the body meet regularly in relation to their beliefs and in furtherance of the objects referred to in paragraph (b),
- (d) it does not have any rules regarding marriage or the solemnisation of marriages that contravene the requirements of this Act or any other enactment or rule of law,
- (e) it is shown to the satisfaction of an tArd-Chláraitheoir to be a body that has appropriate procedures in writing for selecting, training and accrediting members as fit and proper persons to solemnise marriages,
- (f) it is a body that, on the date of its making of an application under section 54 or 57, has been in existence for a continuous period of not less than 5 years,
- (g) it is a body-
  - (i) that is entitled to an exemption under section 207 or 208 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, and was so entitled for a continuous period of not less than five years immediately preceding the date of the body's most recent application under section 54 or 57, and
  - (ii) in respect of which-
    - (I) a number (commonly referred to as a CHY number) stands issued by the Revenue Commissioners for the purposes of that exemption, and
    - (II) that number stood issued for a continuous period of not less than 5 years immediately preceding the date of its most recent application under section 54 or 57,
- (h) it is a body that does not have the making of profit as one of its principal objects, and

(i) it maintains a register of its members.

The Register of Solemnisers is established for the purpose of solemnising marriage ceremonies only. There are no civil registration requirements for conducting funeral services.

### **Invalidity Pension Payments**

697. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) was entitled to an arrears payment for invalidity pension in 2013 from the date of application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26068/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for an invalidity pension (IP) was received from the gentleman in question on 08 April 2013. He was awarded IP with effect from 11 April 2013 and received his first payment to his nominated post office on 30 May 2013. Arrears due from 11 April 2013 to 29 May 2013 issued to him by cheque on 06 August 2013. He is in receipt of a state pension contributory from 29 November 2015.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Benefit Applications**

698. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an application by a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay in same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26097/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's benefit (CARB) is a PRSI based payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 9 May 2019. 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.

### **State Pensions Reform**

699. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans in regard to pensions for persons with class S contributions (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26103/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension.

With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on the issues of most interest to them including how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to shortly bring a proposal to Government setting out that design. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I am aware of a report in one particular publication which was inaccurate in this respect, and I understand that the publication in question has subsequently published a correction.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications Waiting Times**

700. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the actions she is taking to reduce the waiting periods for those applying for disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26150/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** My Department is committed to making decisions on entitlement as quickly as possible.

The target processing time for the DA scheme is to process 75% of new claims within 12 weeks. In May 2019, the average waiting time for new DA applications was 14 weeks.

My Department recognises that the current processing times for DA must be improved and is working to achieve this. The current processes in place and resources assigned to this area of my Department, along with the number of Medical Assessors available to provide medical opinions are kept under constant review to ensure that any delays are minimised.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Eligibility**

701. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a review will be made of the means assessment for disability allowance in order that an applicant who lives with his or her parents and non-married partner can be assessed in his or her own regard financially and not with the partner's income included; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26151/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Social welfare legislation provides that, for social assistance schemes, all income and capital (such as savings, investments and property other than the family home) belonging to the claimant and his or her spouse/partner, where applicable, are assess-

able for means assessment purposes.

If a claimant is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting, the Department will assess the couple's means when carrying out a means test for a social assistance payment. This is the case even if only one of the couple is actually claiming a payment. The purpose of this means assessment is to maintain the overarching policy of ensuring that social welfare expenditure is targeted to those who need it most.

For claimants of some schemes who are living with their parents and under the age of 25, parental income is taken into account when assessing means. This is not the case for disability allowance where the parent's income is not taken into account.

Any changes to the manner in which means are assessed would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

### **Money Advice and Budgeting Service**

702. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the changes that have taken place to date as part of the restructuring of the MABS service; the costs incurred; the changes to office locations or staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26204/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), under the aegis of the Citizens Information Board, provides assistance to people, in particular those on low incomes or living on social welfare payments, who are over-indebted and need help and advice with debt problems. As part of its free services, MABS provides help and advice to those in mortgage arrears.

In February 2017, the CIB Board made the decision to restructure the governance arrangements of the network of 93 local Citizens Information Services and MABS companies to 16 regional companies (8 Regional CIS and 8 Regional MABS).

The aim of the restructuring was to enhance the service for users by improving the governance arrangements for CIB's funded services and optimising the benefits from operating a more modern and streamlined citizen-focused service delivery model.

This restructuring process was completed in October 2018. New service-level agreements are in place for all the new companies, in line with best governance practice.

All staff, assets and liabilities of the local MABS companies have transferred to the new companies. There have been no job losses, no closure of service delivery points and no diminution in services provided to MABS clients. To support the new regional structure eight additional posts were created across the network with the appointment of a Regional Manager in each of the new MABS companies.

The benefits in service delivery to MABS clients are evident. The regional companies have more flexibility in allocating staff resources to areas of need and specialist skills are more easily shared. Administrative resources freed up from previous work associated with supporting 51 local companies can now be focused directly on client's requirements. Standardisation of practices is being achieved. More regular case reviews are being undertaken and there is increased focus on quality assurance and on achieving improved outcomes to clients debt problems.

The total cost of the restructuring of the MABS companies amounted to €668,240, based

on an apportionment of the costs between the CIS (45%) and MABS (55%) networks. This figure also includes the 2018 costs of employing the 8 new Regional Managers in the MABS companies.

CIB continues to work closely with the new boards and regional managers to support the new companies and ensure that delivery of high quality services to citizens remain the priority.

### **State Pension (Contributory)**

703. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason after the consideration of the home caring period of a person (details supplied) the pension rate remained unchanged. [26206/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The state pension (contributory) entitlement of the person concerned was calculated based on the yearly average of their social insurance contributions divided over the number of years of their working life. In that decision, the person benefitted from the maximum allowable homemaking disregard (of 20 years) and currently qualifies for €211.40 weekly (or 85% of maximum rate pension).

Since late September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of approximately 90,000 pensioners, born on or after 1 September 1946, who have a reduced rate State pension contributory, entitlement based on post Budget 2012 rate-bands. These payments are being reviewed under a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pension calculation which includes provision for homecaring periods.

The rate of the person concerned has been examined under the new arrangements and the resultant rate compared to their existing payment rate. It has been determined in this case that the person would receive €195.60 (or 78.75% of the maximum rate of pension). As the highest achievable rate is already in payment, the person is better off to remain on their existing rate of payment.

An advisory letter to this effect has issued to the person concerned. This letter encourages them to contact the dedicated helpline if they want this outcome explained to them in more detail.

For those who do not qualify for the maximum rate State pension (contributory), there are other state pension payments available. Notably, they may qualify for the State pension (non-contributory) which is a means-tested payment (based on their share of household means) with a maximum payment of 95% of State pension (contributory). If their spouse has a contributory pension they may qualify for an increase for a qualified adult, (based on the qualified adult's means), amounting to up to 90% of a full rate pension. Only those with significant means would not be eligible for these payments.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

704. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26254/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Applications for CA were received from the person concerned on 15 March 2019, in respect of both his parents.

An increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

The applications were awarded to the person concerned on 19 June 2019 with effect from 21 March 2019. The first payment will issue to his nominated post office on 4 July 2019.

Arrears of allowance due from 21 March 2019 to 3 July 2019 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 19 June 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

705. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26291/19]

**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 CA was received from the person concerned on 16 May 2019. 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.

### **Freedom of Information Data**

706. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26391/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The number of freedom of information requests received in the Department in 2018 was 2,510.

The numbers that were granted, part-granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information, are set out in the tabular statement below.

#### **Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests Received by DEASP in 2018**

Status	No.
Granted	684
Part-Granted	1,275

Status	No.
Refused	369
Transferred	20
Withdrawn	69
Handled outside of FOI	89
Pending	4
Total No. of FOIs Received	2,510

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Working Family Payment

707. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a working family payment will be reviewed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26441/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children. Approximately 53,000 families benefit from this weekly payment.

WFP for the person concerned was due for renewal on 21 February 2019 and an application to renew WFP was received on 24 January 2019.

The person concerned has 2 children and the income limit for a family with 2 children is €622 per week. The person concerned had average net earnings of €601.15 per week in 2018 based on the P60 provided.

WFP is calculated as 60% of the difference between the weekly household income and the income limit applicable to that family.

WFP entitlement for the person concerned was €12.50 per week. However once a person qualifies for WFP they are entitled to a minimum payment of €20 per week.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### State Pension (Contributory)

708. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the changes she plans to the State pension (contributory) in 2020; and if this will affect persons paying an S1 PRSI contribution. [26442/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension. With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on the issues of most interest to them including how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to shortly bring a proposal to Government setting out that design. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform. As I have stated before, the position of Class S contributors will be considered carefully in the finalisation of the scheme, particularly in the context of the introduction of Class S in 1988, and any implications that might have in relation to the final scheme decided upon.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Eligibility**

709. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the reason disability allowance has been suspended for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; when a decision will be made on reinstating the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26449/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Disability allowance (DA) is subject to periodic reviews. This lady's entitlement was recently reviewed and it was established that she had means not previously disclosed to the Department.

On 20 May 2019 the person concerned was notified that her DA was suspended pending an investigation. This lady met with a social welfare inspector (SWI) on 17 May 2019 and on 24 May 2019. The SWI requested a further interview on 12 June 2019 but the person concerned failed to attend the interview.

This lady spoke with the deciding officer (DO) on 14 June 2019 who outlined what was required in order for a decision to be made on her review. On receipt of this information a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Payments**

710. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a payment for a person (details supplied). [26452/19]

**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 22 November 2018. His first payment issued to his nominated bank account

on 13 June 2019. Arrears due from 22 November 2018 to 12 June 2019 including the Christmas bonus (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue to his nominated bank account on 27 June 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Unemployment Data

711. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of long-term unemployed in each county who have been unemployed for greater than one, three and more than five years, in tabular form; the number who have never worked; the programmes in place to help transition persons from long-term unemployment back into the workforce; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26521/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Labour Force Survey is the official measure of unemployment in the State. I am advised by the Central Statistics Office that data from the Labour Force Survey is not available at a county level, however regional figures that provide an average for 2018 of the number of persons unemployed for one year and over, three years and over and five years and over are set out below.

Meanwhile, the Labour Force survey does not ask respondents if they have never worked in any capacity. Rather, respondents are asked if they have never worked apart from in casual or holiday work, both of which may be a significant sources of employment for some people. On this basis, CSO estimates that the number of people who have been unemployed for at least one year and who have stated that they have never worked (other than in casual or holiday work) is approximately 9,700 at a national level (regional or age breakdowns are unavailable as the sample sizes are too small).

Number of unemployed persons by duration classified by NUTS3 Region, 2018

Region	Persons aged 15-74 years and in unemployment for one year and over (Thousands)	Persons aged 15-74 years and in unemployment for 3 years and over (Thousands)	Persons aged 15-74 years and in unemployment for 5 years and over (Thousands)
Border	3,600	1,900	[1,200]
West	5,800	3,200	2,100
Mid-West	5,400	2,400	[1,500]
South-East	6,500	3,400	2,100
South-West	6,400	3,200	2,000
Dublin	11,400	5,200	3,300
Mid-East	6,500	2,800	[1,600]
Midlands	4,300	2,300	1,700
Total	49,900	24,400	15,500

Parentheses [ ] estimates are considered to have a wider margin of error and should be treated with caution

Government policy to reduce unemployment is twofold. The policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs have created an environment in which business can succeed and has led to the creation of more than 400,000 jobs since the economic low point. Secondly, through the Pathways to Work strategy, my Department ensures that as many new jobs as possible are filled by people taken from the live register, particularly the long-term unemployed.

Activation Policy continues to focus on support measures for the long-term unemployed. The Pathways to Work strategy prioritises long-term unemployed people, most notably through targeted wage subsidies under JobsPlus; and through reserved places for long-term unemployed jobseekers on employment and training programmes. Furthermore, activation services provided by, or on behalf of my Department through contracted services, provide appropriate activation services for jobseekers in a one-to-one case managed way.

The table below outlines the latest available data on a range of activation programmes which are provided by my Department to the long term unemployed during the activation process to facilitate pathways to secure and sustainable full-time employment. Programme data for February 2019 is compared to February 2018 and shows a fall in participation levels which is in line with reduced levels of unemployment.

#### **Activation Programmes (February 2018 and February 2019)**

Activation Schemes	Feb-18	Feb-19
Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme – self-employed strand.	9,188	6,075
Short-term Enterprise Allowance	344	286
Total - Back to Work schemes	9,532	6,361
Part-time Job Incentive	414	287
TÚS - Community Work Placement Initiative	6,347	6,373
Gateway (2013) (This programme closed in December 2018)	38	0
Other Activation Programmes	6,799	6,660
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)	3,309	3,019
Back to Education Allowance	10,704	8,665
Total - Back to Education Courses:	14,013	11,684
Community Employment Schemes (excluding Supervisors)	21,717	21,388
FAS (Solas) full time training for the unemployed	5,823	5,545

Government policy has been effective in reducing long-term unemployment. I welcome the most recent data from the CSO Labour Force Survey which shows that the rate of long-term unemployment in Ireland which peaked at 9.5% in 2012 has fallen to 1.7% by the first quarter of 2019. Ireland has therefore already brought the long term unemployment rate below 2.5%, a target set out in Pathways to Work 2016-2020.

#### **State Pensions Reform**

712. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the entitlements that will accrue for workers who must retire at 65 years in each of the years 2019 to 2021 and who will not reach 67 years of age in 2021, who are not eligible for a State pension in 2021; and if they will have to sign on for a jobseeker's payment for more than one year. [26549/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** It is well known that people are living for much longer. As a result of this demographic change, the number of State pension recipients is increasing year on year. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which, arising from these demographic changes alone, are currently increasing by approximately €1 billion every 4 to 5 years.

The purpose of changes to the State pension age is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This sustainability is vital, if the current workers, who fund State pension payments through their PRSI, are to receive a pension themselves when they reach retirement age. Therefore, the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

In most cases, it is hoped that workers will continue to work up to State pension age, and so the question of claiming a social protection payment would not arise. Where this is not possible and a person loses their employment before reaching State pension age, they may apply for either the jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance schemes. Jobseeker's payments are currently paid to eligible jobseekers aged 18 to 66 years subject to the person satisfying the general scheme conditions. Social Welfare legislation states that jobseeker payments may be made until the person reaches pensionable age. In this regard, the duration of jobseeker's payments will naturally adjust in line with increases in state pension age.

Jobseeker's Benefit is normally paid for 9 months (234 days) for people with 260 or more PRSI contributions paid and for 6 months (156 days) for people with fewer than 260 PRSI contributions paid. Arrangements are in place to provide that jobseekers whose benefit expires in their 65th year can generally continue to be paid benefit up until pensionable age provided they satisfy the necessary contribution conditions.

It is important to note that there is no legally mandated retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so. In this regard, the Workplace Relations Commission has produced a Code of Practice on Longer Working and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) has published guidance material for employers on the use of fixed-term contracts beyond normal retirement age.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **State Pension (Contributory)**

713. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the contributory pension review for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26647/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Since late September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of approximately 90,000 pensioners, born on or after 1 September 1946, who have a reduced rate State pension contributory entitlement based on post Budget 2012 rate-bands. These payments are being reviewed under a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pension calculation which includes provision for homecaring periods.

The person concerned has been reviewed using information already held by the Department in relation to their HomeCaring Periods. The person has a total of 752 reckonable paid contributions which combined with the maximum permissible number of combined HomeCaring periods and reckonable credits of 1,040, (as set out in legislation) results in an increase from 85% to 86.15% of maximum rate of pension.

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A review outcome letter has issued to the person, outlining details of their increase and includes a breakdown of their social insurance contribution record. Arrears of payment, back-dated 30 March 2018, will issue shortly.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Payments Administration**

714. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated savings in each of the years since the inception of sections 13 and 14 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013. [26750/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Sections 13 and 14 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013 introduced the Recovery of Benefits and Assistance scheme which enables the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to recover the value of certain social welfare payments from compensation awards made to persons as a consequence of personal injuries claims. It is important to note that recovery is made from the compensator and not from the injured person.

The scheme commenced on 1 August 2014 and the amounts recovered in the years 2014 to 2018 inclusive are as follows:

2014 (August to December) €5.03m

2015 €21.60m

2016 €22.75m

2017 €26.41m

2018 €24.75m

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Homeless Persons Supports**

715. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her role in the funding and issuing of free Leap cards for homeless families; the estimated cost of providing free cards to families in emergency accommodation outside of school term time; and if free cards for homeless families will be extended to include non-term time. [26766/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland commits to providing access to free public transport for family travel and for school journeys for homeless families in emergency accommodation. My Department is represented on the inter-agency group on homelessness where this issue is under consideration. As the Deputy is aware, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive currently provides Leap Cards to families to help meet costs of getting children to and from school. Further extension of that scheme is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme is considered the “safety net” within

the overall social welfare system in that it provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. The main purpose of the scheme is to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes.

Families living in emergency accommodation placements may have additional costs, such as travel. Additional supports can be provided through a supplement under the SWA scheme which can be paid in addition to the weekly social welfare payment. In addition, under the SWA scheme the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income.

Decisions on ENPs and SWA supplements are made at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. Assistance can be provided for travel costs where there are no other supports available.

I trust that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals**

716. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26775/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 7th March 2019. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 8th May 2019 setting out the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

An appeal was registered by the Social Welfare Office on the 31st May 2019. Further medical evidence that was submitted with the appeal was forwarded to the Department's Medical Assessor for their medical opinion. As part of the appeals process, the application will be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted. Alternatively, the case will be referred for consideration by the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of the deciding officer's review as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

717. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26776/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The domiciliary care allowance (DCA) application from the person concerned has been finalised. She was notified in a letter dated 4th June 2019 that DCA has been awarded from 1st November 2018. This includes a back-dating payment for the maximum six months allowable in respect of the months November 2018 to April 2019. Arrears

due for this period issued to her with the June 2019 payment on the 18th June 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

718. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26779/19]

**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 CA was received from the person concerned on 30 April 2019. 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.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

719. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26780/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that an application from the person concerned for disability allowance (DA) was received by the Department on 13th May 2019.

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 his/her report to DA section, 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.

### **Carer's Allowance Review**

720. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of carer's allowance reviews carried out in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26798/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested payment, made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that they require that level of care. An increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

Before a decision can be made on entitlement to CA, evidence must be provided in respect of the carer's habitual residence in the State, the level of care they provide, their means and also that the person being cared for has such a disability that they require full-time care and attention.

Carer's allowance reviews take place in a number of circumstances as follows:-

- If the decision on a new claim is negative the customer has the option of a review.
- Once claims are in payment, my Department undertakes periodically reviews to ensure that there is continued entitlement.
- A customer can at any stage request a review of their entitlement

I am advised by my Department that there are no statistics available on the number of carer's allowance reviews carried out each year.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Eligibility**

721. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of abolishing the means test for the carer's allowance. [26807/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Government acknowledges the important role that family carers play and is fully committed to supporting carers in that role. This commitment is recognised in both the Programme for a Partnership Government and the National Carers' Strategy.

My Department provides a range of supports to those who are caring for family members, friends or neighbours. These measures aim to recognise the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate income supports, to enable carers to remain in touch with the labour market to the greatest extent possible and to empower carers to participate fully in economic and social life. These income supports include the following:

- Carer's Allowance
- Carer's Benefit
- Carer's Support Grant
- Domiciliary Care Allowance

Carers may also (subject to certain conditions) qualify for the Household Benefits Package and a Free Travel Pass.

Spending on these payments in 2019 is expected to exceed €1.2 billion.

Carer's Allowance is a means-tested payment for carers who look after certain people in need of full-time care and attention on a full time basis. The means test for Carer's Allowance is now one of the most generous means tests in the social welfare system, most notably with regard to spouse's earnings. Since April 2008, the income disregard has been €332.50 per week for a single person and €665 per week for a couple. This means that a couple with two children can earn in the region of €35,400 and qualify for the maximum rate of Carer's Allowance. A half-rate carer's allowance is also payable with other welfare payments e.g. pensions and dis-

ability payments.

The conditions attached to payments of Carer's Allowance are consistent with the overall conditions that apply to social assistance payments generally. This system of social assistance supports provides payments based on an income need with the means test playing the critical role in determining whether or not an income need arises as a consequence of a particular contingency – be that illness, disability, unemployment or caring. Carer's Allowance acts as an income support for those who cannot earn an income in the open labour market due to their caring responsibilities. The continued application of the means test not only ensures that the recipient has a verifiable income need but that resources are targeted to those with greatest need.

Based on the number of carers identified as part of Census 2016, it is estimated that a universal carer's payment could cost up to €1.2 billion per annum.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

### **National Carers Strategy Implementation**

722. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she has taken and plans to take to support carers in terms of dealing with the physical and mental toll of providing full-time care. [26808/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Government acknowledges the important role that family carers play and is fully committed to supporting carers in that role. This commitment is recognised in both the Programme for a Partnership Government and the National Carers' Strategy.

The Department of Health has responsibility for the National Carers' Strategy which sets out the strategic direction for future policies, supports and services provided by Government Departments and agencies for carers.

The primary responsibility for providing respite care facilities and services rests with the Health Service Executive.

My Department provides a range of supports to those who are caring for family members, friends or neighbours. These measures aim to recognise the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate income supports, to enable carers to remain in touch with the labour market to the greatest extent possible and to empower carers to participate fully in economic and social life.

These income supports include the following:

- Carer's Allowance
- Carer's Benefit
- Carer's Support Grant
- Domiciliary Care Allowance

Spending on these payments in 2019 is expected to exceed €1.2 billion.

In December, I approved funding of over €1.7 million to provide a range of training and supports for family carers under the Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2018. The scheme is being administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department and 13 projects were selected to deliver

training, information and related support services for family carers.

These projects are:-

- Family Carers Ireland, Dublin
- St Munchin's Community Centre Company Limited by Guarantee, Limerick
- IRD Duhallow Company Limited by Guarantee, Cork
- Galway Autism Partnership Company Limited by Guarantee, Galway
- Irish Foster Care Association Company Limited by Guarantee, Dublin
- Carebright Company Limited by Guarantee, Limerick
- Irish Heart Foundation, Dublin
- National Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Ireland Ltd, Dublin
- Care Alliance Ireland (in collaboration with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland)
- ABAILE Autism Support Company Limited By Guarantee, Louth
- Peter Bradley Foundation Company Limited By Guarantee (t/a Acquired Brain Injury Ireland), Dublin
- St Francis Hospice, Dublin
- The Rehab Group, Dublin

Finally, as part of its commitment under the Carers' Strategy, my Department also hosts an Annual Carers' Forum for carers and their representative organisations which affords an opportunity for carers to engage with the relevant Departments and state agencies on an ongoing basis.

The most recent Forum was held on 21 May and was attended by over 70 participants who were individual carers and representatives of carers' organisations, including Care Alliance Ireland and Family Carers Ireland. Participating Departments and agencies in the Forum were Health; Children and Youth Affairs; Education and Skills; Justice and Equality; Housing, Planning and Local Government; and Transport, Tourism and Sport, Health Service Executive and Tusla.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Support Grant**

723. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the annual respite entitlements of those receiving full-time care. [26809/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Carer's Support Grant (formerly called the Respite Care Grant) is an annual payment made by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to full-time carers.

The Grant is paid automatically to carers who are receiving Carer's Allowance (whether full rate or half rate), Carer's Benefit, or Domiciliary Care Allowance. Other full-time carers

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who are not receiving any of these payments may also apply for the Carer's Support Grant. The Grant is paid at the rate of €1,700 per annum in respect of each person being cared for.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

724. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26814/19]

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

The department received a claim for IP for the lady concerned on 05 March 2019. This claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on 21 June 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Childcare Services**

725. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on the impact of the new national childcare scheme for low-income families, in particular lone parents; if concerns have been raised with her by stakeholders; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26845/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I work closely with that Minister on a regular basis on a range of issues, including the national childcare scheme, which is to be expected given the shared policy objectives across our respective departments.

The new national childcare scheme will benefit most families; however, I understand from that a number of issues have been raised with as regards to the impact on lone parents. Arrangements are in place to ensure that no one loses out in the initial transition to the new Scheme. So, whilst there may have been fears that, in a small number of cases, a family currently receiving the maximum amount of financial support for full-time childcare under an existing programme may receive less under the new Scheme, particularly if their child is, in reality, receiving after-school care only rather than full-time childcare, they will not lose out. The family can continue to access their current targeted supports (i.e. effectively remain on their current payment) until at least the end of August 2020.

I understand that officials from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs have also been directed to undertake research and analysis to examine any adjustments to the National Childcare Scheme which might be required to address unusual or anomalous cases, where this is the right thing to do to protect and benefit lower income parents. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the new National Childcare Scheme has been designed to be flexible, with income thresholds, maximum hours and subsidy rates which can be adjusted in line with Government decisions and as more investment becomes available. As such, any adjustments deemed

necessary by Government can be carried out in a quick and responsive manner.

### **Childcare Services**

726. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she had an engagement with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the new national childcare scheme and the potential impact on low-income families and, in particular, lone parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26846/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I work closely with that Minister on a regular basis on a range of issues, including the national childcare scheme, which is to be expected given the shared policy objectives across our respective departments.

The new national childcare scheme will benefit most families; however, I understand from that a number of issues have been raised with as regards to the impact on lone parents. Arrangements are in place to ensure that no one loses out in the initial transition to the new Scheme. So, whilst there may have been fears that, in a small number of cases, a family currently receiving the maximum amount of financial support for full-time childcare under an existing programme may receive less under the new Scheme, particularly if their child is, in reality, receiving after-school care only rather than full-time childcare, they will not lose out. The family can continue to access their current targeted supports (i.e. effectively remain on their current payment) until at least the end of August 2020.

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### **State Pension (Contributory)**

727. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures she will take to address the losses in pension income suffered by tens of thousands of women arising from the 2012 reforms introduced by her predecessor; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26853/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As announced in January 2018, pensioners born on or after the 1st September 1946, affected by the 2012 changes in rate bands, will have their state pension (contributory) entitlement calculated under an interim 'Total Contributions Approach' (TCA). These changes also provide for up to 20 years of home caring periods in the pension entitlement calculation, for those who took time out of the workplace for parenting or caring duties.

My Department is currently implementing reviews in respect of pensioners who reached pension age on or after 1 September 2012, many of whom were affected by the rateband changes and some of whom were not, but who may benefit from the new scheme, notably the provisions regarding Homecaring. To date, over 26,000 such pensioners have benefitted, and others

are expected to benefit as reviews progress. It is important to note that nobody is worse off as a result of these reviews, with pensioners receiving the same amount as they previously did if the reviews do not warrant an increase.

The Government intends to introduce a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards.

I launched a public consultation on the design of the full TCA on the 28th of May 2018 to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback. All Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing in Leinster House by my officials shortly afterwards. The consultation was open for over 3 months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on a number of issues, including the number of years required for a full pension, as intended as part of the consultation process.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now finalising the scheme and I intend to shortly bring a proposal to Government setting out that design. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Proposed Legislation**

728. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the planned legislative changes to address the area of bogus self-employment announced in the media on 25 March 2019 will be published; the number of occasions on which she or her officials have consulted directly with trade unions on the changes she plans to make since the announcement on 25 March 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26883/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am particularly determined to tackle the issue of false self-employment. I believe the deliberate mis-classification of a worker as a self-employed contractor, in a situation where they are actually working as an employee, is wrong for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it denies the worker full protection under the Social Welfare Acts, which means he or she is deprived of entitlements such as short-term illness and disability benefits. Secondly, it deprives the worker of protection under labour law which means the a worker is left without any redress if they are unfairly dismissed, made redundant, or are not paid minimum wage rates, for example. Thirdly, this form of non-compliance by employers deprives all taxpayers in the form of reduced returns to the Social Insurance Fund.

I believe that enforcement of PRSI compliance is paramount and I have instructed my Department’s inspectors to increase the level of employer inspections nationwide. This work is ongoing. Additionally, I have established a new Unit of inspectors, specifically trained and dedicated to the detection and tackling of false self-employment in particular.

I have also assigned my officials the task of modernising the Code of Practice on employment status. This is a vital tool for employers and employees so they can be clear when a worker is genuinely self-employed or alternatively when they should be recorded as an employee under full PRSI. A new manual – the Guidance on Employment Status – is currently being finalised. The new Guidance will be put on a statutory footing, to ensure it becomes central to

the decision-making process in employment status cases.

A good deal of progress has been made by my officials in developing a number of legislative proposals that strengthen the protections for workers in situations of false self-employment. These include providing anti-penalisation provisions for workers who will be able to take a claim to the WRC if they are victimised by an employer for raising a query regarding their status. I also wish to increase penalties for employers who deliberately mis-classify employees as being self-employed.

Work is ongoing to finalise the Guidance document and the legislative proposals and I hope to progress these this year.

The Trade Union movement has a key part to play in any work to tackle these issues and I value its input, as I value the input of employer representative bodies.

I have consulted with both sides regarding this matter of false self-employment as part of my own and my officials' engagement in the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF). I chaired the inaugural meeting of the LEEF subgroup on Employment Legislation and Regulation and I and my Department bring these issues to the LEEF plenary meetings. There have been four Employment Subgroup meetings since it was established in July 2018, and four LEEF Plenaries at which this topic was discussed with ICTU.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Mayoral Election**

729. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for a plebiscite to allow for a directly elected mayor in Sligo town. [26053/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** The Programme for a Partnership Government includes a commitment to consider the issue of directly elected mayors for Ireland's cities. In this regard, following consideration and approval by Government of detailed policy proposals on directly elected mayors with executive functions, plebiscites were held on the Government's proposals in Cork City, Limerick City and County and Waterford City and County Council areas on 24 May, 2019.

The people of the Limerick City and County Council voted in favour of the Government's proposals for a directly elected Mayor with executive functions for their area, while the people of Cork City and Waterford City and County Council areas narrowly rejected the proposals.

My Department will now prioritise the delivery of the mandate given by the people of Limerick and, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2019, a report with legislative proposals for a directly elected mayor for Limerick will be submitted to the Oireachtas.

There has been consideration of governance arrangements and the office of mayor or cathaoirleach for other local authority areas. There will be a Citizens Assembly in 2020 to consider the issue in Dublin. The position regarding other local authority areas will be kept under review.

### **Traveller Data**

730. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-

ernment the number of Traveller children in homelessness in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26507/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department currently publishes data on a monthly basis on the number of homeless persons accommodated in emergency accommodation funded and overseen by housing authorities. These reports are based on data provided by housing authorities, produced through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS). The reports are collated on a regional basis, are published on my Department's website and can be accessed using the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

The reports do not provide information on the ethnicity of households accessing emergency accommodation and as such the information requested by the Deputy is not available in my Department.

### Prospecting Licences

731. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his officials or the relevant State agencies have been consulted on a planning application by a company (details supplied) to build an underground gold and silver mine in west County Tyrone under EU transboundary environmental requirements. [26071/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department has made enquires with the Northern Ireland Department for Infrastructure in relation to this matter. I am advised that no transboundary consultation between that Department and any body or agency in Ireland has taken place in respect of this planning application to date. I understand that the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland has not yet considered the application in the context of any potential transboundary effects. However, I am advised by my Department that where a likely significant transboundary effect is identified, such consultation will be initiated in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Espoo Convention on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the EU EIA Directive.

Where it is considered that the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment in Ireland, it is open to my Department to request for such a consultation to be carried out.

### Traveller Accommodation

732. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding allocated and drawn down by local authorities for Traveller accommodation to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26189/19]

755. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding allocation for Traveller accommodation for each local authority in each of the years 2014 to 2019; the drawdown to date for each local authority in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26503/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 732 and 755 together.

In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

Housing authorities submit funding proposals for individual Traveller-specific projects and developments on an annual basis. These projects are assessed on a case-by-case basis in my Department in advance of allocations being made. In addition, further funding may be considered by my Department throughout the year in the light of progress across the programme generally. There is regular contact between my Department and housing authorities in order to try to ensure maximum progress and drawdown.

The amounts of funding allocated and drawn down in each of the years 2014 to 2019 by local authorities for Traveller-specific accommodation are set out in the following link:

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-06-25\_pq732-25-06-19\_en.docx">Allocation v drawdown</a>]

### **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy**

733. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the date on which the finalised regional spatial and economic strategy for the eastern and midlands region will be published. [26191/19]

748. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the date the finalised regional spatial and economic strategy for the eastern and midlands region will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26429/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 733 and 748 together.

The making of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a function of the relevant Regional Assembly, in this case the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), under Section 21 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

At the meeting of EMRA on 3 May 2019, the Members of the Assembly agreed to make the RSES for the Region on 28 June 2019, in accordance with section 24(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). This was confirmed by the Regional Assembly in a letter to my Department, dated 15 May 2019. It is my understanding that the finalised RSES will be published on 28 June.

### **County Development Plans**

734. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will request Fingal County Council to provide him with a comprehensive briefing on the substance of all postal and online submissions made through the public consultation phase of the draft Castlelands, Balbriggan, development master plan (details supplied); if the council will be instructed to defer further action on the plan pending a review by him of the substantive briefing; if his views on the briefing will be made available before the plan is progressed by the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26192/19]

735. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if Fingal County Council will be instructed that if as the Castlelands, Balbriggan, development draft master plan (details supplied) is to be progressed, it must be amended as necessary in order that it is fully aligned with the new eastern and midlands regional spatial and economic strategy as developed within the national planning framework under Project Ireland 2040 and specifically to ensure that the plan is aligned comprehensively with the designation of Balbriggan by the regional spatial and economic strategy, RSES, as a small hinterland town that is not suitable for and is not to receive high-density and-or high-rise development. [26193/19]

736. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will request Fingal County Council to provide a copy of all internal correspondence and relevant planning written and email documentation between the planning division and the Our Balbriggan project of the council from the inception of the project to date in respect of the draft Castlelands, Balbriggan, development master plan published on 7 May 2019 (details supplied). [26194/19]

749. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will request Fingal County Council to provide him with a comprehensive briefing on the substance of all postal and online submissions made through the public consultation phase of the draft Castlelands, Balbriggan, development master plan that opened on 7 May 2019 and closed on 28 May 2019 (details supplied); if the council will be instructed to defer further action on the plan pending a review by him of the substantive briefing; if his views on the briefing will be made known before the plan is progressed further by the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26430/19]

750. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if Fingal County Council will be instructed that if as the draft Castlelands, Balbriggan, development master plan published 7 May 2019 (details supplied) is to be progressed, it must be amended as necessary in order that it is fully aligned with the new eastern and midlands regional spatial and economic strategy as developed within the national planning framework under Project Ireland 2040 and, specifically, to ensure that the plan is aligned comprehensively with the designation of Balbriggan as a small hinterland town that is not suitable for and is not to receive high-density and-or high-rise development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26431/19]

751. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will request Fingal County Council to provide a copy of all internal correspondence and relevant planning documentation written and email between the planning division and the Our Balbriggan project of the council from the inception of the project to date in respect of the draft Castlelands, Balbriggan, development master plan published on 7 May 2019 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26432/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 734 to 736, inclusive, and 749 to 751, inclusive, together.

Masterplans are not statutory plans in their own right. Accordingly, such plans, and the information sought in relation to the Castlelands Masterplan in particular, are a matter for the local planning authority and, as Minister, I have no direct function in the adjudication of the masterplan preparation process.

The preparation of the Castlelands Masterplan within Balbriggan is a requirement of the Fingal County Development Plan 2017-2023, for lands that are primarily subject to a zoning objective to "Provide for new residential communities, subject to the provision of the necessary

social and physical infrastructure.” This requirement is for one of a total of eight such Masterplan areas within Balbriggan under the Fingal County Development Plan.

While Masterplans are not formal statutory development plans under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), they may be prepared in order to set out further technical detail in respect of zoned amenity and/or development lands, to inform future planning applications and/or ‘Part 8’ Local authority consent processes.

Proposals for development set out in Masterplans further to a County Development Plan are required to be consistent with national and regional development objectives and any relevant specific planning policy requirements set out in ministerial guidance. As part of a masterplan consultation process, a planning authority may invite the submissions and observations of interested parties, and this may inform the outcome of the masterplan process.

In cases where a masterplan informs the preparation of a planning application in full or in part, the assessment of any subsequent planning applications pursuant to that masterplan, is the stage of the development process at which the intended outcome of the masterplan, in full or in part, is subject to formal determination by the local planning authority or An Bord Pleanála.

The non-statutory nature of masterplans means that the local planning authority or An Bord Pleanála are not required to be bound by all of the objectives of a masterplan in the determination of a planning application. This is particularly relevant where a masterplan is deemed to be not consistent with national and regional development objectives or any relevant specific planning policy requirements set out in Ministerial guidance.

It remains the right of interested parties to make a submission in respect of any planning application on lands subject to a masterplan and to also make a subsequent appeal to An Bord Pleanála (if submissions have been made to the local authority in respect of the relevant planning application). In the case of strategic housing development (also known as ‘SHD’), for proposals with more than 100 dwellings, there is also provision for submissions to be made by any interested party to An Bord Pleanála as part of the application process.

Under Section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), as Minister, I am specifically precluded from exercising power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

### **Urban Renewal Schemes**

**737. Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of a project (details supplied) as of 17 June 2019; when the first tranche of funding will issue to Mayo County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26207/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In 2018, bids were invited from public bodies for funding support from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) either under Category A for projects that were proposed as being ready to be initiated or under Category B as projects that required further consideration and development.

On 26 November 2018, initial URDF support of €100m was provisionally allocated to a total of 88 projects under the first call for proposals. As part of this first tranche of approvals, Mayo County Council was provisionally awarded URDF support of €3,217,000 towards their proposal for the advancement of the Ballina Innovation Quarter, which includes the Military

Barracks.

Since last November's announcement, my Department has engaged with a large number of the successful applicants to discuss the details of their proposals, the planned advancement of projects and to establish the level of related URDF funding demands expected to arise for 2019 and beyond.

In this regard, my Department has recently written to Mayo County Council in connection with the project in question and a meeting with the Council to discuss the matter will be scheduled shortly.

### Local Authority Functions

738. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number and name of designated municipal districts in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26250/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** The number and names of designated municipal districts in County Mayo are outlined in the Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee (No.1) report which was published in June 2018 and which is available on my Department's website at the following link:

[https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/local\\_electoral\\_area\\_boundary\\_committee\\_no.1\\_report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/local_electoral_area_boundary_committee_no.1_report_2018.pdf)

In the case of Mayo, the recommended municipal district configuration was accepted in full and is outlined in the following table.

Municipal Districts	Number of members
Ballina	6
Castlebar	7
Claremorris-Swinford	10
Westport-Belmullet	7

### Strategic Infrastructure Provision

739. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status as of 14 June 2019 of the proposed strategic development zone, SDZ, for Ireland West Airport, Knock; the extra resources allocated to Mayo County Council to complete same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26251/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 30 May 2017, the Government designated 284 hectares lands at Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) under Section 166 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

On 29 May 2019, the specified development agency, in this case Mayo County Council, published the draft planning scheme for the SDZ for public consultation for six weeks, closing on 12 July 2019, in accordance with Section 169 of the Act.

The Chief Executive of the planning authority is required to submit a report on submissions

and observations received during the consultation period, for consideration by the Council no later than 12 weeks after giving notice of the draft planning scheme. Further details are available on Mayo County Council's website at [www.mayococo.ie](http://www.mayococo.ie). Following the Council's making of the planning scheme, any person who made submissions or observations in respect of the draft planning scheme may appeal the decision of the planning authority to An Bord Pleanála within four weeks.

Further to determination of the Planning Scheme by An Bord Pleanála, if approved, the planning authority must grant permission for any development which is consistent with the planning scheme, with no further appeal to An Bord Pleanála against the decision of the planning authority.

The preparation of the planning scheme in respect of the IWAK SDZ is a function of the relevant development agency, in this case Mayo County Council, under Section 168 of the Act and it would be inappropriate for me, given the public consultation process currently underway, to comment on the draft scheme. However, I intend to make a submission in my role as statutory consultee, in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

I do not propose to allocate additional resources to Mayo County Council in relation to the process of preparing the SDZ planning scheme outlined above.

### **Seaweed Harvesting Licences**

740. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the granting of seaweed harvesting licences. [26255/19]

741. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has identified a body to develop and implement a strategy to underpin the development of the wild seaweed sector and the licensing system that was promised in 2018. [26256/19]

742. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the process for applying for a licence to harvest seaweed along the coast. [26257/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 740 to 742, inclusive, together.

In June 2018, at the Our Ocean Wealth Summit in Galway, I clarified the interaction between applications for licences to harvest wild seaweed and existing seaweed harvesting rights, which had been the issue which caused my Department to place the existing applications on hold. Since that time, my Department has been engaging with the applicants involved.

The speech which I made at the Our Ocean Wealth Summit, which sets out the position on this matter, is available on my Department's website at the following link:

*<https://www.housing.gov.ie/water/foreshore/minister-englishs-address-ocean-wealth-summit>*

With regards to the process for applying for a licence to harvest wild seaweed, there are a variety of factors involved in the processing of applications. Information on the consent process is available on my Department's website at the following link:

*<https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/foreshore/applying-consent/consent-process-explained>*.

Each application is processed on a case-by-case basis and timelines depend primarily on the applicant in terms of the provision of technical and environmental information and the necessity for my Department to liaise with external expert bodies regarding the application.

The process of identifying a suitable body to take responsibility for the seaweed sector is ongoing and is being considered in the context of the development of legislation that will modernise the regulatory framework for marine planning and development management in the Irish maritime area.

### **Planning Issues**

743. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on the fact that, as a result of the introduction of the fast-track planning application process, master plans compiled by local authorities, such as the one compiled for Citywest in South Dublin County Council, are being bypassed with little or no recourse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26269/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In making a decision on an application for permission for Strategic Housing Development (SHD), one of the matters that the Board is required to consider is the report of the relevant planning authority on the proposed development. The report includes the authority's opinion on the proposed development, a recommendation on whether to grant or refuse permission and the views of the elected members on the proposed development as expressed at a meeting of the Area Committee or Municipal District, where such a meeting has taken place.

Other matters to which the Board has to have regard in making its decision include the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, the development plan, including any relevant local area plan, any submissions or observations received, as well as any relevant Ministerial or Government policies, including any guidelines issued by my Department. In this regard, master plans do not have a formal status analogous to statutory development plans or Local Area Plans.

Planning authorities play a key role in the determination of SHD applications. The pre-application stage of SHD requires the prospective applicant to consult, in the first instance, with the relevant planning authority prior to consulting with the Board. In addition, the Board requires the planning authority's written opinion on the proposed development in advance of its pre-application consultation with the prospective applicant, and the planning authority's attendance at any such consultations.

### **Local Authority Housing Funding**

744. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding provided to Cavan and Monaghan county councils in respect of the home loan scheme; when the necessary funding will be put in place to ensure that applications can be processed and finalised without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26314/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland home loan (RIHL) scheme was launched on 1 February of last year. The 2018 approved allocation to Cavan County Council was €2.1 million, with €5m for Monaghan County Council.

When the scheme was initially being developed, it was estimated that the drawdown of loans would be approximately €200 million over three years. The RIHL has proven to be more successful than initially anticipated, with some €140 million drawn down to the end of March 2019. The first tranche of funding has not been exhausted.

My Department publishes information on the overall number and value of (i) loan approvals and (ii) loan drawdowns. Information up to the end of Quarter 1 2019, in respect of all local authorities, including Cavan and Monaghan County Councils, 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>*.

My officials have been engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform since October 2018 when higher lending and drawdown volumes were beginning to materialise.

I informed the Dáil on 29 January 2019 of the scheme's success and of the need for additional funding and indicated that my Department was in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance with regard to the allocation for 2019.

At all times, the scheme remained open and all local authorities were advised to continue to receive and process applications up to and including the issuing of loans.

My Department has consulted in detail with each Local Authority as to the anticipated demand in its area, and the likely level of approvals expected. This information has been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with request for sanction for additional borrowing by the Housing Finance Agency. The HFA have an ongoing borrowing facility for when sanction is given so that they are in a position to proceed to borrow this second tranche of funding immediately.

The first tranche of funding has not been exhausted, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan remains open to new applicants, and local authorities are to continue to receive, process and issue loans.

### **Local Authority Housing Data**

745. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authority houses being leased out by each local authority to older persons in long-term residential care under the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26335/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department does not hold the type of detailed information requested.

The administration of the Fair Deal Scheme, which includes an assessment of the assets of the applicant, including their property, is carried out by the HSE.

If a tenant of an individual local authority is accepted into the Fair Deal Scheme, issues relating to their tenancy of that dwelling are a matter for the local authority concerned to consider.

### **An Bord Pleanála Data**

746. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the dates and attendees of each meeting of the implementation group of the organisational review of An Bord Pleanála which was published in 2016; the person that chaired each meeting; and the dates and attendees of each meeting between this group and his Department since the publication of the report. [26360/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** An Organisational Review of An Bord Pleanála was undertaken by an independent expert panel and published in March 2016.

An Implementation Group, comprising representation from my Department and An Bord Pleanála (the Board) was established to oversee the implementation of the expert panel recommendations. The review group is co-chaired by the Principal Officer in the Planning Policy Section of my Department and the Chief Officer of the Board. The Group reports to the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Planning in my Department and the Chair of the Board.

The Implementation Group published its Terms of Reference and Plan for Implementation in 2016. The Implementation Group has met formally on a number of occasions (18 October 2016, 25 November 2016, 26 January 2017, 22 September 2017 and 22 May 2019) and informally on 18 August 2017, to consider the recommendations across a number of common themes relating to legislative provisions, communications and stakeholder engagement, the Board's role and governance, along with organisational and operational matters. A table detailing dates and attendees is included below. The schedule of meetings also reflects the Board's need to deliver on other reform initiatives outside of the review, particularly the introduction and early operation of the new Strategic Housing Development process in the second half of 2017 and into 2018.

Both my Department and the Board have continued to progress their relevant recommendations between meetings of the group and also through routine engagements which take place on a regular basis to progress a variety of matters including workforce planning, governance and oversight, the Board's Information and Communications Technology project and legislative matters, some of which are relevant to the work which is being undertaken in addressing the organisational review. The impact of the progress made is demonstrated in significant improvements being achieved by the Board in its rate of compliance with the target periods for determination of cases.

A further formal meeting of the Implementation Group will be held in Q3 2019. The membership of the Implementation Group is published in its Terms of Reference which is available on my Department's website at the following link: [https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/organisational\\_review\\_of\\_abp\\_implementation\\_group\\_-\\_terms\\_of\\_reference\\_plan\\_for\\_implementation\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/organisational_review_of_abp_implementation_group_-_terms_of_reference_plan_for_implementation_-_final.pdf).

Due to a number of recent staff changes in both organisations, the membership of the review group will be refreshed in advance of the next formal meeting. The Implementation Group will continue its work over the coming months with a view to publishing its final report on implementation by the end of Q3 2019.

Date of meeting	Attendees - DHPLG	Attendees - ABP
18 October 2016	Terry Sheridan (Co-Chair), Niall Cussen, Niamh Drew, Brendan Buggy	Loretta Lambkin (Co-Chair), Rachel Kenny, Gerry Egan
25 November 2016	Terry Sheridan (Co-Chair), Niall Cussen, Niamh Drew, Brendan Buggy	Loretta Lambkin (Co-Chair), Gerry Egan

Date of meeting	Attendees - DHPLG	Attendees - ABP
26 January 2017	Terry Sheridan (Co-Chair), Niall Cussen, Niamh Drew, Brendan Buggy	Loretta Lambkin (Co-Chair), Rachel Kenny, Gerry Egan
22 September 2017	Terry Sheridan (Co-Chair), Niamh Drew	Loretta Lambkin (Co-Chair), Gerry Egan
22 May 2019	Terry Sheridan (Co-Chair), Ciara Gallagher	David Walsh, Loretta Lambkin (Co-Chair),

### Freedom of Information Data

747. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26395/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The statistical breakdown of Freedom of Information requests received and processed by my Department in 2018 is set out in the following table.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Freedom of Information Requests - 2018

Cases Brought Forward from 2017	Total Received from 01/01/2018	Requests Granted	Requests Part-Granted	Requests Refused	Requests Transferred	Requests Withdrawn/ Lapsed/ Handled Outside FOI	Requests Live at 31/12/2018
22	455	131	119	121	1	80	25

*Question No. 748 answered with Question No. 733.*

*Questions Nos. 749 to 751, inclusive, answered with Question No. 734.*

### Local Authority Housing Data

752. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authority-owned houses that are vacant for periods (details supplied) in each of the years 1 June 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [26444/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Local authorities are responsible, in the first instance, for the management and maintenance of their own housing stock under the Housing Acts, including the carrying out of responsive and planned maintenance and the identification of housing in need of upgrade, regeneration or adaptation.

The National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC) reviews and reports on social housing related issues in local authorities every year, including the number of vacant local authority houses at a particular point in time. NOAC's activities in this regard are summarised in its Annual Performance Indicator Reports for the years 2014-2017; the most recent data on a

local authority basis are set out in their 2017 report, which is available on the NOAC website at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NOAC-Performance-Indicators-Report-2017.pdf>. The previous annual reports are also available on the NOAC website.

It should be noted that the number of void properties, both nationally and in each individual local authority area, changes on an ongoing daily basis, as would be expected in the management of over 130,000 homes, where tenants move in and out regularly. My Department is continuing to engage with local authorities, to support them in returning both short and longer-term vacant properties to use as swiftly as possible. Elected Councils also have a role to play in supporting this work by making adequate budgetary provision for housing repairs and maintenance, utilising the housing rental income available to them.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility**

753. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the threshold of an annual household income of €60,000 is being reconsidered or under review in regard to the housing adaptation grant for persons with a disability; and if not, if he will consider a review with the intention of updating the means testing process in order to reflect average industrial wages. [26468/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department provides funding to local authorities for the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for Older People and People with a Disability in private houses.

The Scheme is focused towards lower income households with the greatest needs and a means test applies to the Scheme in order to achieve fairness and value for money in its operation. The current income limits for the Scheme were reviewed and amended in 2014, arising from the recommendations of a review group, which included consultations with the Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Disability Authority, Ataxia Ireland and the Irish Society for Autism. I have no plans at this stage to change the annual household income threshold referred to.

For the purposes of the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, household income is calculated as the annual gross income of the registered property owner together with all household members over 18, or over 23 if in full-time education, in the previous tax year. Certain income is disregarded in calculating household income, including €5,000 for each member of the household up to 18 years, Family Income Supplement, Domiciliary Care Allowance and Carer's Benefit or Carer's Allowance, if paid in respect of the person to whom the grant application relates.

### **Construction Industry Register Ireland**

754. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the requirements that builders from Northern Ireland must go through to register as builders here; if his attention has been drawn to delays or difficulties regarding same; if his attention has further been drawn to the number of builders already registered to build here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26482/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Currently, there is no statutory register of builders in Ireland. The Government has committed to placing the Construction Industry Register Ireland, or CIRI, on

a statutory footing. CIRI was established on a voluntary basis in 2014 by the Construction Industry Federation and over 850 building and contracting entities are currently included on the register.

The Government approved the draft heads of a Bill to place the CIRI on a statutory footing and the Bill was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee's report has since been received and my Department is currently working through the Committee's recommendations.

The main objective of the legislation is to develop and promote a culture of competence, good practice and compliance with Building Regulations within the builder community of the construction sector. The establishment of a robust, mandatory, statutory register of builders and specialist contractors is an essential consumer protection measure giving those who engage a registered builder the assurance that they are dealing with a competent and compliant operator. In addition, it will complement the reforms made through the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and contribute to the development of an enhanced culture of competence and compliance in the construction sector. My Department is working with the Attorney General's Office with a view to achieving publication of the Bill later this year.

*Question No. 755 answered with Question No. 732.*

### **Traveller Accommodation**

756. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of reviews of health and safety standards conducted at Traveller accommodation units in each local authority; the system in place to conduct such reviews; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26504/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

In general, local authorities are responsible for the management and maintenance of Traveller accommodation in their areas and my Department does not have a role in the operational running of individual sites. However, following the tragic loss of life in Carrickmines, County Dublin on 10 October 2015, my Department's National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) was tasked with developing and overseeing a programme to review and enhance Fire Safety in local authority provided Traveller accommodation. The programme was undertaken in association with Traveller representative groups. As part of the review process, a working draft of a "Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Traveller Accommodation" was developed. The process of formal approval of the draft document for publication as national guidance was recently completed and the document is being prepared for publication. My Department will be writing to bring the updated document to the attention of all local authorities and advising on the use of this document, as the basis for fire safety requirements in all Traveller accommodation.

### **Traveller Accommodation**

757. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Traveller-specific units of accommodation delivered in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in each local authority in tabular form; the average cost of such units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26505/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

Traveller-specific projects and developments are focused on group housing schemes and halting sites. This includes meeting Traveller-specific housing needs through a range of mechanisms, including the provision of mobiles and caravans; the provision and refurbishment of halting sites and bays with sites; the refurbishment and extension of existing group housing; the return to use of void group housing; and the provision of new group housing.

The amount recouped to local authorities from 2014 to date is as follows:

Year	€
2014	€3.1m
2015	€4.1m
2016	€4.3m
2017	€4.8m
2018	€6.3m
2019 to date	€2.2m

The table below sets out the number of units delivered over the same period.

#### Traveller Accommodation Units

LOCAL AUTHORITIES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 to date
CARLOW	0	0	0	3	0	0
CAVAN	0	0	1	20	0	0
CLARE	5	0	0	1	1	0
CORK City Council	0	6	3	0	26	0
CORK County	0	0	0	35	0	0
DONEGAL	1	1	1	2	8	0
DUBLIN City Council	3	7	9	43	11	0
DÚN LAOGHAIRE-R.DOWN	0	13	1	4	12	0
FINGAL	2	12	0	28	1	1
SOUTH DUBLIN	3	0	3	0	0	0
GALWAY City Council	1	2	1	0	0	0
GALWAY County	0	0	4	0	0	0
KERRY	1	1	3	26	6	0
KILDARE	0	0	0	0	0	0
KILKENNY	5	6	8	1	0	3

LOCAL AUTHORITIES	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 to date
LAOIS	0	3	0	0	0	0
LEITRIM	0	1	2	14	0	0
LIMERICK City & County Council*	1	4	2	16	17	16
LONGFORD	0	3	0	0	0	0
LOUTH	0	2	10	0	1	0
MAYO	0	0	0	0	0	0
MEATH	0	0	0	1	0	0
MONAGHAN	0	0	0	0	0	0
OFFALY	7	1	1	1	0	0
ROSCOMMON	0	0	1	3	1	0
SLIGO	0	0	0	0	4	0
TIPPERARY*	6	2	4	0	5	0
WATERFORD City Council*	0	0	1	0	13	0
WESTMEATH	0	0	1	0	0	0
WEXFORD	8	1	3	0	0	0
WICKLOW	1	1	0	2	1	0
TOTALS	44	66	59	200	107	20

\*merged 2014

### Homeless Accommodation Provision

758. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of bed and breakfasts, hotels and hostels used to provide accommodation for homeless persons in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county in tabular form; the names of the providers in each county; the amount paid to each provider; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26506/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of emergency accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities.

My Department does not fund any homeless service directly but provides funding to housing authorities towards the operational costs of homeless accommodation and related services under Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988. Under Exchequer funding arrangements, housing authorities must provide at least 10% of the cost of services from their own resources. Furthermore, housing authorities may also incur additional expenditure on homeless-related services outside of the Exchequer funding arrangements provided by my Department. Therefore, the exact amounts spent by housing authorities on homeless services, as well as the types of accommodation, are a matter for individual housing authorities in consultation with the Management Group of the relevant regional joint Homelessness Consultative Forum. My Department does not collate information regarding the number of hotels, bed and breakfasts and hostels that are used as emergency accommodation.

Financial reports from each of the regions, setting out total expenditure on homeless services are published on my Department's website at the following link; <https://www.housing.gov.ie>

### **Capital Assistance Scheme Funding**

759. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 671 of 18 June 2019, if there has been a reduction in the initial allocation or diversion of a portion of the allocation to other projects in either his Department or other Departments (details supplied); if so, the amount being diverted; the Departments the funding is being diverted to; and the projects involved in this regard. [26539/19]

760. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the €93 million allocation to the capital assistance scheme, CAS, in budget 2019 is divided regionally; and if not, if it is allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. [26551/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 759 and 760 together.

There has been no reduction in, or diversion of funds away from, the 2019 funding provision of €94.875 million for the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS).

Funding is not divided or allocated on a regional basis. It is the local authorities who approve new CAS projects in the first instance, based on proposals they receive from approved housing bodies (AHBs) and these funding approvals issue on an ongoing basis. My Department provides the Exchequer funding to the local authorities, in line with the projects approved by the authorities and according as projects progress.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes Grants**

761. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the expanded grant scheme for septic tanks as announced under measure 8, domestic wastewater treatment systems grant scheme, septic tanks, in February 2019 will come into effect; when local authorities such as in counties Sligo and Mayo will be provided with the details for applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26682/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I refer to the reply to Question No. 266 of 19 June 2019 which sets out the position in this matter.

### **Housing Assistance Payment**

762. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if rent increases for existing HAP tenants are allowed to exceed the HAP limits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26688/19]

763. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons at the maximum rate of the HAP limits in each local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26689/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 762 and 763 together.

Under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, tenants source their own accommo-

ation. The accommodation sourced by tenants should be within the prescribed maximum HAP rent limits, which are based on household size and the rental market within the area concerned.

Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit in circumstances where it is necessary, because of local rental market conditions, to secure appropriate accommodation for a household that requires it. It is a matter for the local authority to determine if the application of the flexibility is warranted on a case by case basis.

Information in relation to number of HAP recipients benefitting from discretionary increases and the average level of discretion, as well as average landlord payment by local authority, at the end of Quarter 1 2019, is set out in the following table:

Local Authority	Total No	No of tenancies not requiring Discretion	No. of Tenancies availing of discretion	Average level of discretion %	Average landlord Payment By LA
Carlow County Council	691	524	167	16.6%	554
Cavan County Council	297	252	45	20.0	455
Clare County Council	1,320	847	473	19.0	465
Cork City Council	2,123	1,149	974	15.4	774
Cork County Council	3,379	2,901	478	17.3	737
Donegal County Council	1,712	1,665	47	19.4	394
Dublin City Council	2,642	1,685	957	13.7	1,292
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co Council	444	92	352	17.4	1,359
Fingal County Council	1,434	635	799	14.3	1,340
Galway City Council	1,448	571	877	15.5	807
Galway County Council	1,041	817	224	15.9	711
Kerry County Council	984	570	414	18.1	516
Kildare County Council	1,996	1,110	886	14.4	921
Kilkenny County Council	861	762	99	18.8	578
Laois County Council	701	450	251	18.6	581
Leitrim County Council	219	213	6	20	414
Limerick City and Co Co	2,201	2,008	193	17.8	584
Longford County Council	295	224	71	17.4	408
Louth County Council	2,769	2,286	483	17.2	846
Mayo County Council	1,147	224	923	17.7	506
Meath County Council	1,792	735	1,057	15.3	937
Monaghan County Council	545	279	266	18.6	490
Offaly County Council	854	677	177	17.3	515

Local Authority	Total No	No of tenancies not requiring Discretion	No. of Tenancies availing of discretion	Average level of discretion %	Average landlord Payment By LA
Roscommon County Council	367	300	67	17.8	457
Sligo County Council	671	642	29	16.8	506
South Dublin Co Council	2,690	2,526	164	14.9	1,230
Tipperary County Council	1,764	1,371	393	18.4	492
Waterford City and County Council	1,818	1,486	332	18.2	513
Westmeath County Council	701	541	160	16.6	559
Wexford County Council	1,069	802	267	16.3	527
Wicklow County Council	1,011	777	234	16.3	1,005
Total	40,986	29,121	11,865	16.3	817 Average

Additional discretion of up to 50% above rent limits is available to assist in housing homeless households in the Dublin Region. The additional discretion available to homeless households recognises the difficulty this cohort of households face in sourcing and securing properties in a highly competitive rental market.

The table below provides details on the use of discretion in the Dublin local authority areas, including the Dublin Region Homeless Executive:

	Overall No. of Tenancies	No. of DRHE Tenancies	Number in receipt of discretion	Average rate of discretion %
Dublin City Council	5,536	2,894	3,851	32.3
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	645	201	533	25.7
Fingal County Council	1,962	528	1,327	23.7
South Dublin Co Council	3,358	668	832	34.5

At the end of Q1 2019, 35.7% of the total number of households being supported by HAP were benefitting from the additional flexibility. When the additional discretion available to homeless households in the Dublin region is removed, 28.9% of households nationally were benefitting from the additional flexibility. In those cases, the average rate of discretionary payment being used was 16.3% above rent limits provided. This increases to 22.2% when the Dublin region homeless area data is included.

I continue to keep the operation of HAP under review but I am currently satisfied with how the scheme is operating and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting current housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme set out in Rebuilding Ireland.

### Electoral Reform

764. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment his plans to amend the law to prevent candidates from contesting local authority elections in more than one electoral area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26694/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** A person can be nominated to stand for election in more than one local electoral area. Article 14(3) of the Local Elections Regulations 1995 provides that a separate nomination paper is required for each local electoral area for which a candidate is nominated at a local election.

Article 124 of the 1995 Regulations, as amended, provides that where a person is elected as a member of the same local authority for two or more local electoral areas, the person shall, within the three day period after the return is made of persons elected to be members of the local authority, declare in writing which one of those areas the person chooses to represent. If the declaration is not delivered within this period, the person shall be deemed to have chosen to represent the local electoral area in respect of which they received the greatest number of first preference votes.

While electoral law is kept under review, I have no plans at present to amend these provisions.

### Local Authority Housing Data

765. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number and location of properties acquired by each local authority under the buy and renew scheme since its inception in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26737/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Since the Buy & Renew Scheme was introduced in 2017, local authorities have delivered over 400 properties, with funding of €76.8m approved by my Department.

Details of the numbers of properties per local authority are set out in the table below. Local authorities may also acquire properties in need of remediation under their normal acquisitions programmes, the responsibility for which is largely delegated to local authorities.

Local Authority	No of Properties
Carlow	17
Cavan	1
Clare	25
Cork City	32
Cork County	3
Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	13
Dublin City	32
Fingal	30
Kerry	34
Kildare	4
Laois	3
Leitrim	5
Limerick	46
Louth	51

Local Authority	No of Properties
Meath	29
Monaghan	18
Offaly	4
Sligo	1
Tipperary	10
Waterford	35
Westmeath	2
Wexford	7

### Homeless Persons Supports

766. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his role in the funding and issuing of free Leap cards for homeless families; the estimated cost of providing free cards to families in emergency accommodation outside of school term time; and if free cards for homeless families will be extended to include non-term time. [26765/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under Rebuilding Ireland, my Department is funding an initiative to provide homeless families residing in temporary emergency accommodation in the Dublin Region with access to free public transport for essential school journeys. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) oversees the implementation of this initiative and, working in partnership with the National Transport Authority, has put arrangements in place for the provision of Leap cards to the families concerned. These Leap cards provide for free public transport for school-going children and accompanying adults, where necessary. The cards are distributed through the Family Homeless Action Teams, which are also funded by the DRHE.

As the Leap cards were introduced to support essential school journeys, there are no plans to extend the provision of the cards outside of the school term. However, Transport for Ireland will be running a 'Kids go Free' programme during July 2019, where child Leap card holders can travel for free on Leap card enabled services from 1-28 July. In addition, the Community Welfare Service of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may consider, on a case-by-case basis, the needs of an individual household in respect of exceptional transport costs.

### Local Authority Housing Rents

767. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the percentage at which differential rent is assessed differs from local authority to local authority; and the percentage at which local authorities (details supplied) assessed their rent for 2013, 2017 and 2019. [26789/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The right of local authorities to set and collect rents on their dwellings is laid down in section 58 of the Housing Act 1966. The making or amending of such schemes is an executive function and is subject to broad principles laid down by my Department including that –

- the rent payable should be related to income and a smaller proportion of income should be required from low income households;

- provision should be included for the acceptance of a lower rent than that required under the terms of the scheme in exceptional cases where payment of the normal rent would give rise to hardship, and

- appropriate local factors should be taken into account including the costs of the maintenance and management of the stock of rented dwellings and the adequacy of the rental income to meet such costs.

Each local authority has its own separate differential rent scheme or schemes in operation. All these schemes, including those referenced by the Deputy, ensure that the rent payable is related to household income albeit at different headline percentage rates. As rent is calculated using each local authority's own formula, the schemes do vary in a number of ways from each other. This is particularly the case when it comes to what may or may not be considered as reckonable/assessable income for rent purposes. Typically all local authorities make available their up to date rent scheme online.

Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides for the Minister to introduce a national rents framework for social housing tenants. Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft of such a framework, which has as its main aim the harmonisation of local authority rents, to ensure that rent schemes are fair and sustainable, prioritise those on lowest incomes and avoid creating social welfare traps that may prevent people from either returning to work or to the private housing market. The general over-arching principle that rents should be related to incomes will be maintained.

This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. I expect that the review will be completed in the near future, at which point I will consider what proposals might be brought to Government as part of a wider social housing reform package of measures, that would continue to ensure that housing support goes to those who need it most within a system that is responsive to people's changing needs and circumstances. I hope to finalise this matter by the end of Q3 2019.

## **Water Quality**

768. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to recent reports that lead concentration levels well above the legal limit have been found in drinking water in areas (details supplied); his plans to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26790/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** With effect from 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels including the delivery of water services capital infrastructure, while the local authorities remain responsible for supervising the group water sector.

Based on current available data, Irish Water estimates that lead pipework exists in approximately 180,000 residential properties in Ireland. While there are no lead water mains in Ireland, service connections within properties can contain traces of lead. The vast majority of lead pipes are contained within properties built up to and including the 1970s.

The Government published a National Strategy to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water in June 2015. In response to the recommendations of this strategy, Irish Water prepared

a detailed Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Plan to identify measures to mitigate the risks to human health posed by the presence of lead in drinking water. Irish Water has indicated that it will remove all lead in public supply pipes over the next ten years. They have also put in place an interim water treatment programme to protect consumers from lead exposure while this replacement programme is implemented.

Irish Water is responsible for the service pipe up to the property boundary; however, most lead pipes are within the property boundary and are the responsibility of the property owner. My Department has introduced a grant scheme to assist owners of premises connected to a domestic water supply with the costs of replacing lead piping or related fittings located within the internal distribution system of the premises, as defined in the Water Services Act 2007. The grant is administered by local authorities and information on how to apply for this grant is available on my Department's website at the following link: [https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/leaflet\\_-\\_grant\\_to\\_replace\\_lead\\_pipes\\_and\\_fittings.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/leaflet_-_grant_to_replace_lead_pipes_and_fittings.pdf)

### **Home Loan Scheme**

769. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the way in which income from an invalidity pension is regarded in the context of the underwriting decisions in the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26811/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is not, as a general rule, available to those in receipt of unemployment or other social welfare benefits. However, where there is a primary income of a waged or salaried nature, long-term State benefit payments may be considered. State benefit payments allowable are:

- State Pension (Contributory);
- State pension (Non-Contributory);
- Widow's / Widower's Pension;
- Blind Pension;
- Invalidity Pension; and
- Disability Allowance.

The long-term nature of the payment must be confirmed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. All applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are referred to the relevant local authority's Credit Committee for a final decision.

### **EU Directives**

770. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on a ban on ivory trading domestically and in the European Union as a measure to counter the illegal market in non-antique ivory; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26209/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My De-

partment is responsible for the implementation of the Wildlife Act and the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations, which together provide the legislative framework for the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Ireland.

This UN Convention regulates trade in certain listed species, including elephants, between Parties. Ireland has been a Party to the Convention since 8th January 2002.

Ireland does not have significant trade in ivory specimens and the domestic market allows only for trade in pre-Convention ivory. This trade consists primarily of carved artifacts, antique items and some musical instrument components and is governed by CITES.

Applications for CITES certificates or permits are examined carefully by the Irish CITES Management Authority in my Department to determine that the ivory has an attested legal origin. If the Management Authority is satisfied that the ivory has been legally acquired, it will then issue a certificate or permit to verify that fact in line with current CITES regulations.

The EU and its Member States have been at the forefront in the regulation of ivory trade and stringent rules are already in place. While these have functioned effectively to date, the current EU ivory guidance document is in the process of revision and will incorporate stricter rules on trade in raw and worked ivory.

As a Member State, Ireland participates in regular EU CITES Management Committee and Scientific Group meetings and supports a common EU approach to CITES matters, including the ivory trade. The Irish authorities will continue to participate fully in discussions around this issue.

### **Departmental Functions**

771. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the bodies in the State that have statutory authority to function as the competent authority to make determinations under appropriate assessment legislation for terrestrial and marine environments. [26425/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** When a public authority receives an application for consent for a plan or project, or proposes to undertake or adopt a plan or project, it has a duty under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, to undertake a screening for appropriate assessment and, if necessary, an appropriate assessment. The 2011 Regulations define public authority as follows:

‘ “public authority” means—

- (a) a Minister of Government,
- (b) a local authority,
- (c) An Bord Pleanála,
- (d) Environmental Protection Agency,
- (e) the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland,
- (f) a harbour authority or a harbour company within the meaning of the Harbours Acts 1946 to 2009,
- (g) Fáilte Ireland,

- (h) Health Service Executive,
- (i) a regional authority,
- (j) Inland Fisheries Ireland,
- (k) Geological Survey of Ireland,
- (l) Teagasc,
- (m) National Roads Authority,
- (n) Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland,
- (o) Electricity Supply Board,
- (p) Commission for Energy Regulation,
- (q) Port and Harbour Authorities including Port companies established under the Harbours Act 1996,
- (r) Dublin Docklands Development Authority,
- (s) Waterways Ireland,
- (t) Bord Na Móna,
- (u) Coillte,
- (v) Health and Safety Authority,
- (w) Bord Gáis,
- (x) Marine Institute,
- (y) Bord Iascaigh Mhara,
- (z) Eirgrid,
- (aa) a Board or other Body (but not including a company under the Companies Acts) established by or under statute,
- (bb) a company under the Companies Acts, in which all the shares are held—
  - (i) by or on behalf of or jointly with a Minister of Government,
  - (ii) by directors appointed by a Minister of Government, or
  - (iii) by a board, company or other body referred to in paragraph (f) or subparagraph (bb) (i) or (bb)(ii),
- (cc) a planning authority.’

### **Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications**

772. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a decision will be made on an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26074/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. With respect to 53 raised bog special areas of conservation sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;

- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period (up to 25 May 2010 in respect of the 29 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation between 1997 and 1999 and up to 31 December 2011 in respect of the 24 raised bog special areas of conservation nominated for designation in 2002);

- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and

- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

I am advised that a letter had issued from my Department in respect of this application and contact has been made again with the applicant with a view to further processing the application.

### **EU Directives**

773. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide a copy of the briefing notes provided to her in respect of the wild birds derogation declaration for the period May 2019 to April 2020 under regulation 3(1)(a) of the European Communities (Wildlife Act 1976) (Amendment) Regulations 1986. [26153/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am arranging for the Deputy to be provided with the relevant documents referred to in the Question.

### **Wildlife Control**

774. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide copies of all licence applications under the birds directive, under section 42 of the Wildlife Act 1976 or under other legal means allowable, received to date in 2019 in which the applicants were seeking to exercise controls on seagull species and-or their nests and or eggs; the outcome for all such applications with regard to licences granted and licences denied; and the reason in each case. [26154/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am arranging for the Deputy to be provided with the relevant documents referred to in the Question.

### **Wildlife Control**

775. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the damage being caused in respect of the eight licences granted by her Department to Dublin City Council to scare seagulls off the treated public water reservoirs at Stillorgan and Ballyboden,

each of which cited the serious damage criterion of the section 42 provisions in the Wildlife Act 1976; the characteristics of the damage such that it was claimed to be serious by the applicant and accepted as being serious by her Department; and if the interests of public health and safety as catered for in the EU birds directive was a determining factor in the granting of the licences. [26155/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** There are provisions under the Wildlife Acts allowing for the control of bird species in certain circumstances. There is a facility under Section 42 of the Wildlife Acts whereby organisations and individuals may apply to my Department for permits, on a case by case basis, to prevent serious damage caused by individual protected animals and birds on specific lands. Permissions are only issued where there is evidence of such damage.

Dublin City Council were granted a number of Section 42 permits since 2014 to control seagulls at the Stillorgan reservoir and the Ballyboden water treatment plant. The permits were granted on the basis that, given that both reservoirs were open to the elements, the seagulls were fouling the reservoirs' waters in both facilities and this was considered a serious issue of damage. The control method involved in all cases was the use of falcons to scare seagulls and the culling of seagulls was not permitted.

It is my Department's understanding that the reservoir at Ballyboden is now roofed in and consequently the scaring of seagulls is not necessary.

### **Wildlife Control**

776. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide copies of all correspondence since 2016 between her Department and the European Commission and-or the EU Directorate-General for Environment in respect of controls on seagull species, compliance with the birds directive and compliance with reporting requirements, including quantitative data. [26156/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am arranging for the Deputy to be provided with the relevant documents referred to in the Question.

### **Wildlife Control**

777. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department is monitoring the serious harm being caused by seagull colonies to fauna in urban settings, for example, in St. Stephen's Green and Marley Park; if her Department is directly responsible under Article 9.1(c) for the protection of the fauna being harmed; and if not, if her Department relies on other agencies and organisations to seek protection of at risk fauna. [26157/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department is aware of the impact of gull species in urban areas. My Department has received no reports of serious harm caused by seagull colonies of the type referred to in St Stephen's Green and Marley Park.

There are provisions under the Wildlife Acts allowing for the control of bird species in certain circumstances. There is a facility under Section 42 of the Wildlife Acts whereby organisations, such as local authorities, and individuals may apply to my Department for permits, on a

case by case basis, to prevent serious damage caused by individual protected animals and birds on specific lands. Permissions are only issued where there is evidence of such damage. Legislation in relation to the conservation of bird species in line with the EU Birds Directive, which I presume is being referred to in the question, comes within the remit of my Department.

### Inland Waterways Maintenance

778. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will direct Waterways Ireland to carry out work to alleviate a dangerous situation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [26337/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Waterways Ireland is operationally independent in regard to its management of the inland waterways under its remit therefore I do not have any function in this regard.

I am informed however that the area to which the Deputy refers has been inspected by Waterways Ireland Operations staff and all areas where mowed grass was evident on the trackway have been cleared. No evidence of structural damage to existing tar surfaces was observed.

### Freedom of Information Data

779. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of freedom of information requests granted, part granted, refused, transferred to an appropriate body, withdrawn or handled outside of freedom of information in 2018, in tabular form. [26388/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The information that the Deputy has requested regarding the number of Freedom of Information requests received by in this department for the year 2018 is detailed in the table below;

Total Requests received	Personal	Non-Personal	Mixed	Granted	Part Granted	Refused	Transferred	Withdrawn	Handled outside FOI
242	5	237	0	59	72	65	3	27	16

### EU Directives

780. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason a recommendation (details supplied) was not accepted and implemented in time for the 2019-20 derogation declarations published on 1 May 2019; and if the recommendation will be implemented in time for the 2020-2021 and future derogation declarations. [26797/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department published a consultants report in October 2018 on a review of the derogation process under Article 9 of the EU Birds Directive. The consultants in their report made a number of recommendations in relation to the annual renewal of the Wild Bird Declarations which my Department will implement having regard to resources and other ongoing priorities in my Department arising from time to time.