

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 41, inclusive, postponed.

Job Losses

42. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach the number of job losses to date in 2019, by county. [26958/19]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne): I am answering this question as Minister of State with delegated responsibility for the CSO. Questions on any policy matters arising should be directed to the relevant line Minister.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source of estimates of employment in the State. However, the LFS only measures the level of employment in the quarter, and not the job losses or job gains which contributed to the change in employment. It is a household survey which provides quarterly statistics on the level of employment and unemployment. Changes in the level of employment, as measured by the LFS, are the outcome of both jobs lost and jobs created over the period in question.

The most recent figures available for employment levels are for the first quarter (Q1) of 2019.

The quarterly LFS estimates of employment are produced by NUTS-3 Regions (*NUTS-3 is a geocode standard referencing the eight subdivisions of Ireland for statistical purposes*). Due to the methodology and sample size of the survey it is not possible to produce reliable county estimates from the LFS.

The number of persons aged 15 years and over in employment in Q1 2019 was 2,301,900. This was an annual increase of 81,200 or 3.7% since Q1 2018, when there were 2,220,700 persons in employment. Employment increased in all eight NUTS-3 regions over the year. The largest rates of increase were recorded in the Mid-East and South-West regions, at 7.4% and 4.2% respectively.

The Q1 2019 total of 2,301,900 was a quarterly increase, before seasonal adjustment, of 20,600 persons in employment since quarter four of 2018. There were quarterly increases in all NUTS-3 regions except the South-East and Midland regions, where employment decreased by 200 and 1,400 respectively. These figures are not adjusted for seasonality.

Questions Nos. 43 to 54, inclusive, answered orally.

Hospital Beds Closures

55. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the planned closure of beds and units at St. Mary's Hospital; the rationale for the closure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27926/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): St. Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park provides 150 long term residential beds, located across two modern purpose-built units. The hospital also provides 75 sub-acute or short stay beds, located separately in the main hospital building which dates back to the 18th century.

A recent Health and Safety Assessment identified significant patient and staff safety risk issues in the main building and in particular on Elms Ward. The risks identified relate to safety, fire safety management, layout, size, age, fixtures, fittings and lighting. Environmental risks were identified in relation to safe evacuation of patients. Elms Ward was found to have significant risk to patients and staff due to its uneven floor.

To comply with legislative requirements, and in the best interests of patients and staff, the HSE needs to close the ward on a phased basis with effect from 1st July 2019, to be completed by August. This decision was based solely on health and safety concerns, and not as a cost saving measure. There will be some reduction in access to transitional care beds from acute settings, however, all patients will remain in the Hospital until their current care is completed. The Department has been assured that all commitments for booked respite care will be honoured and plans are being put in place to that effect.

Staff were advised of this decision through consultation with their line management and they will be reassigned within the Hospital. The HSE has advised the Department that significant capital is required to address the health and safety issues and part of the project development process will be to examine all options available to provide safe services.

The primary focus must be on patients. Engagement with them, their families, staff, union representatives and any other relevant stakeholders is on-going to ensure minimal impact for all concerned during the closure of the ward.

[Smith Briefing]

Ambulance Service

56. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the status of the community paramedic project; if this has reduced the demand and response time for ambulances in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22795/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): An EU Interreg-funded programme is currently being delivered in the border counties of Ireland, Northern Ireland and west coast of Scotland. The programme aims to assess and treat higher volumes of patients more effectively, both in scheduled and unscheduled care pathways, through improved and reformed service delivery models, on a cross border basis.

The National Ambulance Service is participating in one of the unscheduled care initia-

tives. The initiative, a Community Paramedic pilot programme, involves paramedics treating patients in the community. As such, paramedics are functioning outside their customary emergency response and transport roles, in ways that facilitate more appropriate use of emergency care resources and enhance access to healthcare for patients in rural and minor urban areas.

Although the project is at a relatively early stage, the data from the pilot sites indicates that over 86% of patients seen by Community Paramedics were not transferred to an acute setting. Thus, benefits have been derived in that patients are treated in the most appropriate setting but also there has been a reduction in secondary patient transfers and reduced ED attendance. It is anticipated that, in time, the availability of a community paramedic model of care could reduce demand for emergency ambulances and help improve ambulance response times.

The pilot project is expected to be completed in September 2020. At that stage the results will be evaluated and used to inform any further rollout of the community paramedic model of care. Of course, this initiative, where the focus is on delivering enhanced patient care in the community, is fully in line with the objectives of Sláintecare.

Mental Health Services Provision

57. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the mental health support services he is making available free of charge to families in emergency homeless accommodation; if these are available to all families in hubs and-or hotels and guesthouses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21736/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I would like to assure the Deputy that addressing the health needs of homeless persons and improving their access to healthcare services are a priority for the Department of Health and the HSE.

Currently, health services for the homeless population are delivered by multiple providers including Statutory Services, Non-Government Organisations and charitable organisations. In addition to local Community Mental Health Teams and Acute Mental Health Units, HSE Mental Health Services have established Specialist Homeless Mental Health Teams, dedicated to meet the mental health needs of people who are homeless.

There are two Specialist Homeless Mental Health Teams located in Dublin, one in Cork and a dedicated mental health homeless team is currently being developed in Kerry.

The HSE is currently working on a service improvement project which focuses on improving mental health care pathways for people who are homeless. This project will create a stepped model of care to ensure the homeless population in Community Health Organisations 6, 7 and 9 receive timely access and appropriate mental health care which cater for their mental health needs. The model will establish clear mental health care pathways into, and between, primary care, addiction services and specialist mental health services and support mental health staff working within the NGO structures.

HSE Homeless Multidisciplinary Teams are established in each Community Health Organisation. These teams comprise nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, mental health and addiction workers. These teams ensure that people who are homeless are linked with appropriate health and social care services.

Counselling is available to homeless persons through a national service, Counselling in Primary Care. Counselling is also available through the HSE Addiction Services and by HSE-funded Non-Government Organisations such as the Dublin Simon Community Sure Steps

Counselling service and Merchants Quay Ireland. In 2018, the National Office for Suicide Prevention provided additional funding to the Dublin Simon service for a homeless-specific Out-of-Hours Counselling Service.

Families in emergency homeless accommodation have access to all the services mentioned, in addition to the general mental health services that are available to all citizens. Most people with mental health problems can be treated by their GP, but when necessary, are referred to specialist HSE Mental Health Services.

Again, let me assure the Deputy that addressing the matter of persons and families in emergency homeless accommodation is priority for the Government and the mental health and well-being of each person is a particular concern for the Department of Health. For this reason, in 2016, the Department allocated €2 million New Development funding for mental health homeless services. This year, the Department apportioned an additional €1 million New Development funding to boost mental health provision across homeless, travellers, refugees and addiction services.

Community Care Provision

58. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the action being taken to reduce the waiting list for home support hours in the north Dublin local health office area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27762/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Improving access to home support remains a priority for Government. Over the past four years we have seen a considerable increase of nearly €140 million in the budget which has grown from €306 million in 2015 to almost €446 million this year.

In 2019, the HSE intends to provide 17.9 million home support hours to 53,000 people and a further 360,000 hours of support through intensive home care packages to 235 people. Up to the end of April, about 5.6 million home support hours were delivered nationally.

In 2019, additional funding has been made available to CHO Dublin North City and County in order to provide 2,813,000 home support hours, an increase of 54,824 hours on last year.

Despite this significant level of service provision, the demand for home support continues to grow. In the first four months of the year some 5,761 new clients commenced receipt of home support.

I acknowledge that in some cases access to the service may take longer than we would like.

I recently met with senior HSE management and representatives from CHO management on the issue of home support. Through this engagement, I have been provided with reassurance that the HSE will meet its service plans targets this year with respect to home support services.

Departmental Agencies

59. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the situation regarding section 39 organisations declaring deficits in service agreements with the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27658/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004,

the HSE provides funding to bodies that deliver services similar, or ancillary to, services that the HSE may provide. These organisations provide a broad range of services and are governed by Service Level Agreements with the HSE.

There are approximately 2,200 Section 39 voluntary organisations and 150 of these receive funding from the HSE in excess of €1m per annum. A substantial number of these Section 39 voluntary organisations provide disability services.

Significant resources have been invested by the health sector in various services during the past number of years. Since our Government took office, the National Service Plan budget for social inclusion, mental health, disability services, and services for older people, has been increased by €747 million / 24%. This year alone, the Health Service Executive has allocated €3.9 billion to these programmes.

I understand that a number of service providers have highlighted their individual challenges, which include deficits accrued over many years. My Department and the HSE continue to put significant effort and resources into assisting service providers to manage priority needs within the funding available.

As Minister of Health, my primary concern is to ensure the continuity of appropriate person-centred services is maintained and delivered in an equitable manner consistent with the care and support needs of individuals.

Arising from the 2019 Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly funded health and personal services, I intend to establish a new dialogue forum between the Department, relevant health agencies and representation from voluntary organisations in the health and social care sector to provide a mechanism for engaging with the sector on the proposed Sláintecare reforms and other policy initiatives and to consider the group's recommendations on governance.

More broadly, I am continuing my examination of the recommendations of the report in the context of strengthening the relationship between the State and the voluntary organisations in the best interests of the service users. My focus will always be on the service users and their families.

Nursing Home Services

60. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health further to Topical Issue No. 2 of 4 April 2019, the reason his reply indicated difficulties in recruitment of healthcare assistants was due to pay scale and not due to lack of availability in view of the fact that private nursing homes do not receive an equivalent National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, rate; and if comparative NTPF rates for all nursing homes, private, voluntary and public will be supported [27955/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Over the last two years, an additional €45 million has been provided to NHSS budget for the continued provision of services in line with competitive pricing and demand. As outlined in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2019, the NHSS is expected to support 23,042 people in 2019. The NHSS budget for 2019 is €985.8m which is an increase of €24.3m over its 2018 budget.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) negotiates and agrees maximum prices with registered private and voluntary nursing homes for each private and voluntary nursing home who wishes to be an approved nursing home for the purposes of the Scheme. The NTPF has

statutory independence in the performance of its function, and negotiates with each nursing home on an individual basis. Separately, under Section 33 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009, provision is made for the HSE to make charges in respect of long term care services. The provision sets out that charges shall not exceed the cost incurred by the HSE in relation to the provision of such care services. There are no plans to amend the legislation in this regard.

The nursing home sector has raised concerns in relation to staffing, particularly with regard to securing access to appropriately qualified staff. On foot of these concerns nursing home providers have requested the removal of health care assistants from the ineligible list of permits issued by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to bring in workers from outside of the EEA. The representatives of the nursing homes sector have been advised that there needs to be a clear demonstration that recruitment difficulties are solely due to shortages and not to other factors such as salary or working conditions. The sector has been advised that more evidence is required of the labour shortages and to demonstrate full engagement with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to recruitment of healthcare assistants from within the EU in the first instance. On provision of this evidence by the sector this matter may be considered further.

[Work Permit doc]

HSE Planning

61. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is acceptable that the HSE capital plan has not been published to date; his further views on whether this delay amounts to poor financial management; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27890/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has been working with the Health Service Executive and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to develop a multi annual capital plan for the health services.

The Summer Economic Statement, published recently by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, provides an expenditure reserve of up to €200m in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the new children's hospital and the National Broadband Plan.

This will allow my Department and the HSE to finalise a multi-annual Capital Plan in the near future.

The Health capital allocation in 2019 is now €642m for the construction and equipping of health facilities. This represents an increase of €224m on last year's capital provision.

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.

Hospitals Capital Programme

62. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when capital funding for the development of St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar, Ramelton Community Hospital and Lifford Community Hospital will be allocated to ensure they meet HIQA standards and

retain and expand their existing bed numbers in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27807/19]

79. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his long-term plans for a number of community hospitals in County Donegal including the community hospitals in Lifford, Ramelton and St. Joseph's Hospital, Stranorlar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27806/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 62 and 79 together.

The overarching policy of the Government is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. The standard of care delivered to residents in public units is generally very high, but we recognise that many of our community hospitals are housed in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. It is important therefore that we upgrade our public bed stock and this is the aim of the Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units.

The HSE is responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services, including the facilities at St. Joseph's Community Hospital Stranorlar, Ramelton Community Hospital and Lifford Community Hospital, Donegal. The HSE have advised the following in relation to these facilities.

The Community Nursing Unit programme provides for the retention of services at St. Joseph's Community Hospital Stranorlar and Ramelton Community Hospital with a requirement for refurbishment of both centres.

In the short term the HSE will invest minor capital in both units in 2019 and 2020 in order to deal with HIQA compliance issues and an agreed schedule of works is being finalised with HIQA.

The redevelopment of the Lifford unit on the existing site is not deemed viable. The need for additional beds and the potential to develop a new facility on a greenfield site will be reviewed further post 2021.

Cancer Screening Programmes

63. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of claims made against the cancer screening programme regarding BreastCheck screening since its commencement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27722/19]

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.

I have been informed by the State Claims Agency that a total of 22 claims have been made in relation to the BreastCheck programme. These claims relate to allegations of cancer misdiagnosis, clinical procedures, slip trips and falls, and other physical hazards.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

64. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether there is

a shortage of full-time consultants in post here and that this shortage is a material contributor to the current waiting lists; if he will commence the unwinding of new entrant pay disparity for consultants in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27894/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The public health service in Ireland operates in a global market for medical specialists which is experiencing a world-wide shortage. Nonetheless, the number of consultants working in the public health service continues to grow year on year. It increased by 125 whole time equivalents (WTE), or just over 4 per cent, in the year to the end of May 2019. In the five years to the end of May 2019 the number of consultants has increased by 533 - over 20 per cent - and now stands at 3,121 WTE's.

While it would be preferable if all vacant posts could be occupied on a permanent basis, the majority of vacant posts not filled on a permanent basis are filled by alternative arrangements; fixed-term, locum or other agency arrangements, to support service delivery. It is recognised that many areas in our health system currently lack sufficient capacity to meet the ever-increasing demand for services and the needs of patients, resulting in unacceptably long waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures. Reducing waiting time for patients for operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. Last year saw a 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. This was from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017, and represents a reduction of over 18% in the overall number of patients waiting for a procedure. The number of patients waiting in excess of 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.

Recruitment and retention of consultants has been examined by the Public Sector Pay Commission. The Commission found that evidence of recruitment campaigns with very low levels of applications was indicative of on-going difficulties regarding the recruitment of consultants. The Commission acknowledged that the difference in pay between the pre-existing and new entrant consultants is greater than that for other categories of public servants. It 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 Government accepted the Report of the Commission and recognises that there are significant recruitment and retention challenges in relation to consultant posts. The proposal of the Commission does need to be addressed. The next step is to engage with the representative organisations of medical consultants.

Services for People with Disabilities

65. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the way in which it is planned to address the funding challenges which are impeding the move from congregated settings in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27818/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Report “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion” proposes a new model of support in the community moving people from Congregated settings to the community in line with Government policy. The Report identified around 4,000 people (based on 2008 census) with disabilities in Ireland living in congregated settings, defined as a residential setting where people live with ten or more people.

The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. The objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

By the end of this year, we will have exceeded this target and under 2,100 people with a disability will remain living in congregated settings. I want to emphasise that the appropriate supports and resources are being put in place to ensure that people are supported as they move out of residential centres. The model of care for individuals will be based on a person centred plan (PCP). The PCP may change over time in line with an individual’s needs and circumstances and the model of service delivery applicable at a particular time.

Any opportunity for residents to live in smaller settings in the community will come after considerable planning and discussion with those residents and their families. It will be on the basis that it will enhance their life, and anyone who moves will continue to access the services they require.

The HSE has prioritised the transition of a further 160 people from congregated settings in 2019 under its Service Plan, and I am informed that 49 people have moved into their homes in the community to the end of March this year.

The HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations of “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion”. I am informed that the total budget to St Patrick’s Centre Kilkenny is €16.94m. St. Patrick’s has submitted funding proposals related to decongregation to the HSE and a validation of these requirements is underway. In the context of same, it is not appropriate to prejudge the outcome of this process until the matter concludes.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

66. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 57 of 13 March 2019, the status of the State property transfer process in relation to the transfer of land on Inisbofin, County Galway by Galway County Council to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; if the property has been transferred; if a portion of the property has now been transferred to the HSE via an intra-State property transfer; if the design brief has been updated and a new design team appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27937/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE is responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services, including the development of primary care facilities at Inisbofin, County Galway. The HSE has advised that Galway County Council is transferring land to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht who will then transfer a portion of the land to the HSE. The transfer has not yet been completed. The design brief in relation to the development of primary care facilities on the island is currently being updated with a view to seeking approval to appoint a new design team for the project.

Hospital Services

67. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the establishment of a day hospital in Swords, County Dublin will be considered. [27657/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Development Plan 2018-2027 outlines that new dedicated ambulatory/elective-only hospital facilities will be delivered in Dublin, Cork and Galway to tackle waiting lists and provide access to diagnostic services.

The Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 includes a commitment that the criteria for ambulatory/elective sites will be determined during the course of this year. This will involve policy development to determine the services to be delivered, the facilities required and the relationship with existing hospitals in the catchment area. This work will draw upon international evidence, including the merits of stand-alone facilities or dedicated facilities on the site of a general hospital. In advance of the development of the criteria for site selection, it is not possible to evaluate the merits of the particular proposed location at this stage.

Hospital Waiting Lists

68. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce waiting times for outpatient appointments in Waterford University Hospital in which the number of persons waiting over 18 months stood at 11,412 at the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27744/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures is a key commitment of government. While the last 18 months have seen considerable progress in the reduction of waiting times for Inpatient and Daycase treatments, I am conscious that the Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge as demand for acute hospital services continues to grow.

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 the National Treatment Purchase Fund Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019, while the NTPF will provide additionality through the provision of 25,000 IPDC appointments, 5,000 GI scopes, and 40,000 outpatient appointments.

South/South West Hospital Group has advised my Department that University Hospital Waterford is focused on the reduction of waiting lists, and is actively working with the NTPF to engage in initiatives to reduce outpatient waiting times. To date this year the NTPF has approved an additional 3,600 outpatient appointments for University Hospital Waterford. These outpatient initiatives are focused on those specialties that have a number of long-waiting patients.

For example, an additional ENT Consultant is focusing on long waiting patients, while UHW Audiology Department is working with an external provider to schedule hearing test assessments for long waiters. Furthermore consultant led Virtual ENT clinics are also being set up.

For the specialty of Urology, a Locum Consultant Urologist has been appointed to focus on the longest waiting patients. An additional clinic has been established to schedule long-waiting patients, and from mid-July an additional urology clinic will also commence as part of the

wider South South-West Hospital Group plans in South Tipperary General Hospital.

UHW further advise that to address the Rheumatology outpatient waiting list, extra time slots have been made available for the longest waiting patients at external clinics, while an out of hours clinic has also been set up to deal with other long waiting patients.

In addition to these initiatives, the University Hospital Waterford Central Appointments Office has recently taken over the management of the Outpatient Waiting List for Gastro-Enterology and Paediatrics. University Hospital Waterford has advised that it remains committed to working in collaboration with South South-West Hospital Group, and the NTPF, on waiting list initiative supports.

Question No. 69 answered with Question No. 50.

Community Care Provision

70. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the action being taken to reduce the waiting list for home support hours in the north-west Dublin local health office area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27764/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Improving access to home support remains a priority for Government. Over the past four years we have seen a considerable increase of nearly €140 million in the budget which has grown from €306 million in 2015 to almost €446 million this year.

In 2019, the HSE intends to provide 17.9 million home support hours to 53,000 people and a further 360,000 hours of support through intensive home care packages to 235 people. Up to the end of April, about 5.6 million home support hours were delivered nationally.

In 2019, additional funding has been made available to CHO Dublin North City and County in order to provide 2,813,000 home support hours, an increase of 54,824 hours on last year.

Despite this significant level of service provision, the demand for home support continues to grow. In the first four months of this year some 5,761 new clients commenced receipt of home support.

I acknowledge that in some cases access to the service may take longer than we would like.

I recently met with senior HSE management and representatives from CHO management on the issue of home support. Through this engagement, I have been provided with reassurance that the HSE will meet its service plans targets this year with respect to home support services.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

71. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if Naas General Hospital will be considered for an extension to accommodate the population growth in its catchment area. [27923/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In January 2018, I published the Health Service Capacity Review which made clear that we need additional capacity across nearly all areas of the health service over the next decade. The review acknowledged the demographic challenge facing the Irish health service in the near future due to our growing population, with

our over 65 population set to increase by nearly 60% and the over 85 population set to double. These latter two groups are high users of health services and it is important that we invest in order to provide safe and timely care to the whole population.

Arising from the findings of the Capacity Review, the Government committed to investing in an extra 2,600 beds in our hospitals and 4,500 more community beds in the National Development Plan over the period to 2027.

The Capacity Review also acknowledged the need for reform of the health service and provided projections based on reform scenarios that align with the Sláintecare vision and reform programme. It is also clear we should not plan investments in the health service as it is currently configured. Investment and reform should go hand in hand with each driving the other.

Any proposals for an extension to Naas General Hospital will be considered in the context of service reform requirements overall in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group and subject to the availability of capital funding and the progress of other priority projects.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

72. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if the recruitment process to replace the retiring cardiologist serving Sligo University Hospital can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27748/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Pursuant to the Health Acts, the Consultants division of National Doctors Training and Planning Unit, HSE, is responsible for the regulation of the number and type of medical consultant posts engaged in the provision of public services. All applications for Consultant posts should be made using the Consultant Application Portal Module in the Doctors Integrated Medical System (DIME). Where a post is vacant, alternative arrangements are usually made to support service delivery.

The HSE has advised that there are currently two Consultant Cardiologists employed in Sligo University Hospital, one permanent staff member and one temporary staff member. An application has been submitted to fill a retirement post in this service. Once approval is received for this post, Saolta University Health Care Group will advertise the two Consultant posts for the Cardiology service.

With regard to national cardiac services, the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is ongoing. The aim of the Review is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at the population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive through establishing the requirements for an appropriate configuration of specialist cardiac services throughout Ireland.

While much work has been completed in relation to informing the optimal configuration of adult cardiac services, some significant and important work remains outstanding. In order to allow this work to be completed, the work of the Steering Group will continue through the summer months. I am advised by the Steering Group that it will be in a position to confirm a completion date this September.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

73. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the necessary staff have been recruited to ensure that the paediatric outpatient department and urgent care centre at Connolly

Hospital can be operational from 8 a.m. until midnight, seven days a week, as was previously committed. [27659/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The new Children's Health Ireland paediatric outpatient and urgent care centre at Connolly Hospital is due to open on 31 July 2019.

The unit will provide a range of services, including urgent care for the treatment of minor injury and illnesses and a short stay observation unit, where children are observed and treated for up to 6 hours before being discharged or, in a very small number of cases, referred onwards to one of the children's hospitals. The delivery of urgent care services will initially be provided on a phased basis. Children's Health Ireland will be confirming the exact opening hours shortly. During the initial opening phase, two specialties will also deliver outpatient services at the unit, Monday to Friday 08.00- 18.00; these are General Paediatric services and Orthopaedic services which will provide a fracture clinic.

The recruitment of staff for the new unit is well advanced in respect of medical, nursing, health and social care professional and administrative staff. There are recruitment challenges nationally and internationally in certain specialities, such as consultant paediatric radiology. Children's Health Ireland has advised that while recruitment is ongoing in this area, contingency plans are under development to support these services at the unit.

All nursing positions have been successfully filled within the organisation. The Health and Social Care Professionals and administrative and operations posts are being filled through an internal recruitment campaign with an external recruitment campaign to follow if additional posts need to be backfilled within CHI.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

74. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health his plans to update the long-term illness scheme to include illnesses such as fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27801/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme at this time. However, I wish to inform the Deputy that the LTI Scheme will be included as part of the review of the basis for existing hospital and medication charges, to be carried out under commitments given in the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy.

For people who are not eligible for the LTI Scheme, there are other arrangements which protect them from excessive medicine costs.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €124 a month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals with ongoing expenditure on medicines.

People who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services

for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the HSE can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family.

People who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of GP consultations.

Hospital Waiting Lists

75. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce outpatient waiting times; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the number of patients waiting more than 18 months in Kerry University Hospital has increased by 1,878, 2,347.5%, since May 2016 and stood at 1,958 at the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27810/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF), who will supply additionality to HSE activity, in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. The NTPF has advised that to date in 2019, Kerry University Hospital has received approval for NTPF funding for additional outpatient appointments - including 300 Orthopaedic Outpatient appointments and 260 Neurology Outpatient appointments.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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.

With regard to overall measures being implemented at Kerry University Hospital to address Outpatient Waiting Lists, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy Directly.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

76. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to

tackle the delays in reimbursing patients who have availed of the cross-border treatment directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27813/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE is responsible for the operation of the Cross Border Directive (CBD) and the management of processing reimbursements for treatment under the Cross Border Directive (CBD) is an operational matter for the HSE. I have, therefore, asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

As the Deputy is aware, the numbers of persons availing of the Directive has been increasing steadily for a number of years with a corresponding increase in the workload for the CBD office. I am aware that the HSE is currently considering a business case, and other interim steps, to address the issues which have arisen with regard to the processing of reimbursements.

Departmental Agencies Funding

77. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether it is appropriate for the HSE to be providing significant loans to section 39 organisations; and if there are concerns regarding the governance of these organisations as a result. [27725/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a matter for the Health Service Executive, I have asked them to respond to you directly.

Hospital Staff

78. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his views on the staffing levels in Naas General Hospital; and if there are plans to reduce workloads on staff. [27924/19]

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.

Question No. 79 answered with Question No. 62.

Mental Health Commission Reports

80. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to address the issues raised in the annual report of the Mental Health Commission and the inspector of mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27743/19]

127. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the recent annual report of the Mental Health Commission which found unacceptable failings in hygiene and maintenance at units across services; and his plans to improve conditions and strengthen mental health patients' rights. [27651/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health(Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 80 and 127 together.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the important work of the Mental Health Commission in holding our mental health services to account, and helping to improve standards across facilities and services. The Department of Health is committed to the Mental Health Commission's vision of a mental health service underpinned by the human rights of service users.

I welcome the positive trend towards greater compliance with Commission regulations by the 64 Approved Centres in 2018. I note that compliance across Approved Centres has improved from 76% in 2017 to 79% in 2018. I am glad to see that the Commission has registered significant progress between 2016 and 2018, with 32 Centres achieving good compliance and no Centres with poor compliance.

However, I recognise that further improvements are needed. The Commission, in both the 2018 Annual Report and in the Inspector's Report, identified areas of low compliance in certain Approved Centres. In instances where the high standards are not being met, it is important that the Commission continues to work with the HSE to identify solutions and to put these in place. In this regard, the HSE, with the Commission, has developed Corrective and Preventative Action Plans for centres found to be non-compliant.

The Department of Health will continue to monitor progress made by the HSE in improving compliance, to improve service delivery for mental health service users across the system.

Hospital Waiting Lists

81. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the significant increase in waiting times for outpatient appointments in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan since May 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27761/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. While the NTPF have already approved over 38,000 outpatient appointments, they advise that the impact of these initiatives may not be seen until the end of the year. Approximately 75% of outpatient appointments approved to date relate to 4 high-volume specialties, specifically Ophthalmology, ENT, Orthopaedics, and Dermatology.

In relation to the reason for the significant increase in waiting times for outpatient appointments in Our Lady's Hospital Navan since May 2016, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

82. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health when the orthopaedic theatres at Merlin Park Hospital, Galway which have been closed since September 2017 will be

reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27934/19]

516. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when full orthopaedic services will recommence in Merlin Park Hospital, Galway; when two operating theatres will be operating there again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28284/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 516 together.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Mental Health Services Provision

83. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the model he is planning for the crisis text line service for mental health; the other models this is based on; the rationale for choosing this model; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27650/19]

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 Car Parks

84. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the moneys raised through public hospital car parking charges; the amount of this paid to the private companies that operate hospital car parks; the amount retained by the hospital; the way in which it is used; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27805/19]

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 Remuneration

85. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the outstanding issues with regard to pay and conditions across the health service in order that the shortages of staff can be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27849/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Staff employed in the public health service are in receipt of a series of pay increases under the Public Service Stability Agreement. This will see public servants receiving an average 7% increase in their salary over the lifetime of the Agreement. By the end of 2020, the commitment is there to restore 90% of the pay reductions experienced under the FEMPI legislation. Public health sector employees also benefit from a pension which is highly valuable to the employee as well as other benefits such as flexible working, sick-leave and maternity leave.

In terms of recruitment to and retention of health service grades, the Public Service Pay Commission is continuing its work on assessing roles in the public service which have been identified as experiencing recruitment and retention issues. The Commission has already made recommendations in relation to nurses, consultants and NCHDs and the Government has ac-

cepted these findings.

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 between serving and new entrant consultants. 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. While pay has a significant impact in recruitment and retention of consultants, a number of other factors are also important, including, *inter alia*, opportunities for career development, training opportunities and location. The Commission stated it was strongly supportive of the full implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of Medical Training and Career Structures, the 'MacCraith' recommendations.

Concerning Nurses, the recent nursing agreement and the new Enhanced Practice Nurse/Midwife contract will see the financial position of nurses and midwives improve and should help to both recruit and retain nurses in the public health service. In relation to pay, the new Enhanced Practice Nurse and Midwife contract will deliver salary improvements for those that migrate to this new role ranging from between 2% - 11%. The Enhanced Nurse/Midwife Practice salary scale ranges between €35,806 to €47,201. The agreement will see improvements to a range of allowances, their extension to additional nurses and midwives, and a new allowance for those in medical surgical wards up to the maximum full year cost of €10m. It also includes a commitment to increase the number of Advanced Nurse Practitioners to a minimum of 2% of the nursing workforce. The HSE is currently working on a plan to deliver the implementation of the agreement.

Finally, in relation to the industrial action which took place on 26 June 2019 by SIPTU support staff grades, I was pleased that talks between the parties resumed at the Workplace Relations Commission last Thursday. While some progress was made, it was not possible to reach agreement on all issues. As a result, the matter has now been referred to the Labour Court for an hearing on Wednesday, 3 July 2019.

Hospital Services

86. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement 24-7 cardiac care services for those living in the south east; his views on whether there is an equal provision of cardiac services in the region in comparison to the rest of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27983/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2016, the Herity Report concluded that the needs of the effective catchment population of University Hospital Waterford (UHW) could be accommodated from a single cath lab and recommended that the operating hours of the existing cath lab should be extended. Approval and funding has been provided for the additional staff required to facilitate this service and recruitment is progressing.

A mobile cath lab has been deployed at UHW since October 2017 to conduct diagnostic cardiac procedures pending the recruitment of the additional staff required to extend the opening hours of the existing cath lab.

I remain committed to the provision of a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford and I asked the HSE to consider the cost of progressing the project to design, planning and construction stages in the context of the HSE's Capital Plan for 2019.

The HSE has confirmed that this project has now been included in the HSE's Capital Pro-

gramme 2019 and that it is expected that the Planning Permission application will be lodged by the end of this year.

The Herity Report also recommended that the current 9 to 5 provision of emergency pPCI services should cease to allow the hospital focus on the much larger volume of planned work. I asked his Department to address the implications of this recommendation by arranging for a National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services, which is underway.

The aim of this Review is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive by establishing the need for an optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service.

Drafting of the report will continue over the summer and it is expected that this work to be finalised in early September.

Abortion Legislation

87. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if a definitive date will be provided for the introduction of exclusion safe zones for persons accessing abortion services at general practitioner surgeries or hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27804/19]

462. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the legislation for exclusion zones will be ready. [28040/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 87 and 462 together.

It was my original intention to provide for safe access to termination of pregnancy services in the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018. However, a number of legal issues were identified which necessitated further consideration and advice.

In order to allow full consideration of these issues, Government approved the drafting of a separate piece of legislation.

Officials in the Department of Health are working with the Office of the Attorney General to examine the issue of safe access, including the current situation, and national and international rights and obligations in this area, and will be making a further submission to me in the coming weeks.

I will be happy to provide the Deputies with a further update as soon as one is available.

Hospitals Capital Programme

88. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health if a capital budget for three Donegal community hospitals (details supplied) will be confirmed; when works will commence for the hospitals; if all works will be completed within the timeframe of the existing capital plan of his Department and the HSE; if budgets for the necessary works to guarantee the long stay accommodation units and residential care units in all three community hospitals are combined and the necessary investment is ring-fenced for these projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27715/19]

113. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the status of St. Jo-

seph's Community Hospital, Ramelton Community Hospital and Lifford Community Hospital, County Donegal; the budgets in place to bring the hospitals up to HIQA standards and to future guarantee the residential care units of same; if all works will be completed within the lifetime of the existing capital plan 2016-2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27716/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 and 113 together.

The overarching policy of the Government is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. The standard of care delivered to residents in public units is generally very high, but we recognise that many of our community hospitals are housed in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. It is important therefore that we upgrade our public bed stock and this is the aim of the Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units.

The HSE is responsible for the delivery of health and personal social services, including the facilities at St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar, Ramelton Community Hospital and Lifford Community Hospital, Donegal. The HSE has advised the following in relation to these facilities.

The Community Nursing Unit programme provides for the retention of services at St. Joseph's Community Hospital, Stranorlar and Ramelton Community Hospital with a requirement for refurbishment of both centres.

In the short term the HSE will invest minor capital in both units in 2019 and 2020 in order to deal with HIQA compliance issues and an agreed schedule of works is being finalised with HIQA.

The redevelopment of the Lifford unit on the existing site is not deemed viable. The need for additional beds and the potential to develop a new facility on a greenfield site will be reviewed further post 2021. The existing unit at Lifford will continue to operate in the intervening period.

Abortion Services Provision

89. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals in which abortion care is available; the hospitals in which it is unavailable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27660/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 was passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 December 2018 and signed into law by the President on 20 December 2018.

Services for termination of pregnancy have been available since 1 January 2019.

Additional resources have been allocated to provide for termination of pregnancy services this year. In total €12 million was allocated in the budget for the provision of termination of pregnancy services in 2019.

I have made it clear to the HSE that termination of pregnancy services, under the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018, should be provided in all nineteen maternity hospitals.

All hospitals are providing terminations in emergency situations (when a woman's life or health is at risk). Terminations in cases of fatal foetal abnormality are, generally, available in the

larger tertiary hospitals, as in such cases particular expertise, only available in those hospitals, may be required.

Terminations up to 12 weeks of pregnancy are currently being provided in 10 maternity hospitals/units in the following Hospital Groups:

Ireland East Hospital Group

1. National Maternity Hospital - Holles Street
2. Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar

RCSI Hospital Group

3. Rotunda Hospital
4. Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda

Dublin Midlands Hospital Group

5. Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital

Saolta Hospital Group

6. University Hospital Galway
7. Mayo University Hospital

University of Limerick Hospitals

8. University Maternity Hospital Limerick

South/South West Hospital Group

9. Cork University Maternity Hospital
10. University Hospital Waterford

There is regular ongoing engagement between the Department of Health and the HSE to facilitate the smooth running of the service and to resolve any issues that may arise.

The HSE has advised that additional maternity units are expected to begin providing termination of pregnancy services in the coming months.

Primary Care Centres Administration

90. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if scanning facilities will be provided for the primary care centre in Balbriggan, County Dublin. [27656/19]

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.

Home Help Service Provision

91. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to reduce the waiting list and waiting time for home support services in community healthcare organisation area 7, CHO 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27646/19]

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.

Hospitals Policy

92. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason he has not made public the De Buitléir report on private practice in public hospitals; when he plans to do so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27891/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals (the “De Buitléir Report”) has been received and is being examined in my Department. It is a comprehensive examination of private activity in public hospitals and contains a small number of recommendations.

Detailed consideration of the Report by my Department officials is ongoing and covers a range of issues, which have also been discussed in engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of the Taoiseach. It is intended that the De Buitléir Report will be published when this consideration is complete.

Mental Health Services Provision

93. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve mental health services in the west County Cork local health office area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27896/19]

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.

HSE Expenditure

94. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the amount the HSE budget is overspent as at the end of quarter 2 of 2019; the projection for the full-year overspend; the additional spending commitments he has made during 2019; his plans to seek a supplementary budget or bring full-year healthcare expenditure in on budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27888/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE’s latest income and expenditure position at 30 April 2019 shows a revenue deficit of €116.2m which represents 2.3% of the available budget. The main drivers of the deficit are acute hospitals, PCRS and demand-led schemes, disability services and the treatment abroad scheme. Current gross expenditure on the Health Vote, year to date, is 8.8% higher than the same period in 2018. This percentage varies on a monthly basis during the year depending on spending under various headings but is, nonetheless, a matter of concern.

Significant savings are profiled later in the year in line with the targets set out in the National Service Plan. However, on present trends, taking account of the pressure in certain areas, the HSE would have a deficit at the end of 2019. This is a matter of concern for the Government. My Department is working with the HSE to gain further clarity on the projected year end position and working to mitigate the deficit in so far as is possible, in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I have emphasised to the Executive the need to address health spending urgently by means of the following measures;

- Steps to ensure compliance with the staffing limits for 2019;
- A reporting and monitoring structure around agreed savings targets in the National Service Plan, with responsible managers providing a monthly report from Quarter 1;
- A mid-year review of the Health Service Executives performance on savings and staffing limits, with further interventions as necessary.

In addition, 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 newly-appointed CEO to the Health Service Executive has also committed to strengthening the HSE's leadership and focus on performance, in line with my own identification of an effective performance management and accountability system for the HSE as one of the priority issues for the new Board.

In addition, outside of the National Service Plan there are other financial commitments, including costs associated with contingency Brexit planning; costs of the Cervical Check *ex-gratia* scheme; and the recent nursing agreement.

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. I have emphasised the need for the Executive to meet its service targets in line with the National Service Plan.

Health Screening Programmes

95. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the corrective and preventative actions put in place to ensure the diabetic retina screening programme delivers accurate and timely results to service users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27984/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Diabetic RetinaScreen, the National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme is a government funded screening programme in Ireland that offers free, regular diabetic retinopathy screening to people with diabetes aged 12 years and older.

Diabetic RetinaScreen uses specialised digital photography to look for changes that could affect sight. Results are delivered in compliance with quality standards as outlined in the 'Standards for Quality Assurance in Diabetic Retinopathy Screening'. As with other national screening programmes, quality assurance is paramount and all essential elements are in place to ensure risks to patients are minimised and that the best clinical outcomes for patients are maximised.

Hospital Services

96. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health his plans for Belmullet District Hospital and a nursing unit (details supplied); the way in which it is planned to address concerns in relation to staffing and bed numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27751/19]

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 Staff

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the action being taken to address the fact that four of the seven permanent radiation oncology posts at Cork University Hospital are either vacant or filled on a temporary basis while one of the five medical oncology posts is also vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27808/19]

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 Capital Programme

98. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the status of upgrades to a number of community hospitals (details supplied) in County Cork; the timeframe for the completion of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27897/19]

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.

National Maternity Strategy Implementation

99. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if relevant parties will be informed that the new maternity hospitals are to have no dedicated facilities for private patients further to an unanimous adoption of a Private Members' motion on maternity care by Dáil Éireann; if the relevant parties will commence the planning and design phases for the Coombe hospital, Rotunda Hospital and University Maternity Hospital, Limerick; the capital spend by year allocated for the building of these maternity hospitals and centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27892/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Project Ireland 2040 provides €10.9 billion for health capital developments across the country. This unprecedented health capital investment will support existing Government priority projects and policies, including funding to support implementation of the National Maternity Strategy. The funding which will be made available over the next decade will enable us to provide an appropriate environment within all our maternity hospitals/units to facilitate the delivery of a modern, safe, quality service where the woman's need for privacy and dignity is respected.

It is important that we carefully plan all projects to meet population health needs and achieve

value for money. This work is ongoing. While I am not in position to outline the year on year provisions for the the individual maternity hospital projects at this stage, this will be considered through the process of the determination of service priorities and in the context of the finalisation of the Health Capital Plan.

The first new maternity hospital will be built on the St Vincent's University Hospital campus. I can assure the Deputy that the vast majority of services in the new hospital will be public services. However, as part of the National Consultants' Contract, negotiated in 2008, some consultants holding specific contracts are entitled to engage in private outpatient practice outside of their public commitment; this commitment must be conducted on site, in the hospital where the consultant holds his/her contract. As a result, private outpatient clinics may be undertaken on a public hospital campus, however, these clinics must be held outside contracted hours. There is an obligation to provide such facilities for consultants holding such contracts, but it is proposed that the consultants will be required to pay a fee for the use of the rooms and other operational costs.

Finally, I should perhaps also confirm that there will be no designated private in-patient bedrooms in the new maternity hospital.

Hospital Waiting Lists

100. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce outpatient waiting times; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the number of patients waiting more than 18 months in Tallaght Hospital has increased by 7,676, 676.9%, since May 2016 and stood at 8,810 at the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27766/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the NTPF, who will supply additional to HSE activity, in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals and to date in 2019, Tallaght Hospital has received approval for NTPF funding for a number of Outpatient initiatives:

Outpatient appointments	Patient Nos.
Vascular Diagnostic	100
Urology	400
Rheumatology	192
Orthopaedics	120
Neurology	437
Gynaecology	400
General Surgery	160
ENT	1,020
Dermatology	200
Pain Medicine(See & treat)	150

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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.

With regard to overall measures being implemented at Tallaght Hospital to address Outpatient Waiting Lists, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy Directly.

National Cervical Screening Programme Inquiry

101. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the date a person (details supplied) found out that a laboratory in Manchester was not accredited to perform cervical cancer screening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27724/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the Supplementary Report of the Scoping Inquiry, which was published on 11 June, Dr. Scally confirmed that the number of laboratories involved in CervicalCheck work was greater than was originally thought, 16 in total, and the use of many of these laboratories was not approved in advance by CervicalCheck, nor was it known to it. The report also finds that, on the basis of the information available to the Inquiry, the use of additional laboratories did not result in a reduction of the quality of the screening provided to Irish women and there is no evidence to suggest deficiencies in screening quality in any laboratory.

As the Deputy is aware, Dr. Scally expressed concern about accreditation in relation to one laboratory in Salford, UK. This is ancillary to the main MedLab facility in Dublin. The performance data of this ancillary lab was included in that reviewed by the Inquiry in mid-2018, when it concluded that there was no reason, on quality grounds, why existing contracts for laboratory services should not continue. The Inquiry notes this lab has also been subject to a quality assurance visit by HSE staff. The provision of screening by this laboratory is being phased out, noting that MedLab is now focused on clearing its backlog of slides, and all new slides being read by either Quest Diagnostics or the Coombe. Accreditation is one important element in providing assurance about quality, of course, but notwithstanding that there is a concern about accreditation, the key issue is whether there was any deficiency in screening quality. Dr. Scally says there is no evidence of any such deficiency.

I am not aware of the specific dates involved in relation to the accreditation of the labora-

tory in Manchester and I would emphasise the independence of Dr Scally's work in this regard. However, when the Deputy raised this issue at Dáil statements on 19 June, I undertook to follow up with Dr Scally on the Deputy's behalf. I have been advised that Dr. Scally wrote to the Deputy on 23 June to provide an answer to his queries.

National Children's Hospital

102. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will revise his plan to allow a private section in the new children's hospital further to his comments to a newspaper on 23 June 2019 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27848/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The vast majority of services in the new children's hospital will be public services. However, as part of the National Contract for Consultants negotiated in 2008, some consultants holding specific contracts are entitled to engage in private outpatient practice outside of their public commitment and this commitment must be conducted on site, that is, in the hospital they are contracted with. As a result, private outpatient clinics may be held on the public hospital campus but these clinics must be held outside contracted hours. The new children's hospital is obliged to provide such facilities for consultants holding such contracts. The proposal is for consultants to pay a fee for use of the rooms and other operational costs.

The Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals has been received and is being examined in my Department. It is a comprehensive examination of private activity in public hospitals and contains a small number of recommendations. When the recommendations have been examined and considered in my Department and by other relevant Government Departments, it is intended to bring proposals to Government and to publish the Report thereafter.

National Cervical Screening Programme Inquiry

103. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the laboratories from which the 221 false readings came in the CervicalCheck screening programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27925/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware from previous responses on this issue, the HSE has advised that analysis was required in order to make the requested data available.

The requirement for analysis reflected the complexities involved in this work. For example, some women may have had multiple smears, not necessarily read in the same lab; slides may have changed by one grade or multiple grades which is a complexity that would not be shown by a simple breakdown across labs; labs dealt with different regional populations and in the early years of the programme it was dealing with an unscreened population, which is a further complexity.

An expert was identified to carry out this work in late 2018, and I understand that the report is nearing finalisation, including through engagement between the HSE and patient representatives.

Home Help Service

104. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied that information indicating that there is no person waiting for home support hours in the north Cork local health office area is accurate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27773/19]

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 Waiting Lists Action Plans

105. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures in place to reduce waiting times for orthopaedic assessments and procedures for patients in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27812/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has provided my Department with data on the number of patients resident in Cavan and Monaghan who were present on an Inpatient/Daycase and Outpatient Orthopaedics waiting list, broken down by hospital.

The data shows that there are 76 patients from Cavan/Monaghan on the IPDC Orthopaedics waiting list, which represents 0.8% of the National orthopaedics waiting list. 43% of the patients from Cavan & Monaghan are listed on the Cappagh Hospital IPDC orthopaedics Waiting list. The Cappagh Hospital IPDC Orthopaedic waiting list has decreased by 5% when compared to the same period last year and 96% of patients are waiting 9 months or less.

The NTPF data also shows that there are 2,122 patients from Cavan/Monaghan on the Outpatient Orthopaedic waiting list, which represents 3% of the National orthopaedics waiting list. 73% of the patients from Cavan/Monaghan are on the Cavan General Hospital Outpatient Orthopaedics waiting list, and of these 61% of patients are waiting 12 months or less.

More broadly, Budget 2019 announced that the Government has further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments. The plan places a strong focus on ten high-volume Inpatient/Day Case procedures, including hip/knee replacements. When combined with HSE activity, it is projected that the NTPF will be in a position to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 6 months for one of these high-volume procedures.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. While the NTPF have already approved over 38,000 outpatient appointments, they advise that

the impact of these initiatives may not be seen until the end of the year. Approximately 75% of outpatient appointments approved to date relate to 4 high-volume specialities, specifically Ophthalmology, ENT, Orthopaedics, and Dermatology.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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.

Ambulance Service

106. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the status of the review of ambulance services in Arklow and west County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27759/19]

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

Disability Services Provision

107. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the waiting times for disability services for children in south County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27966/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital

108. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to ensure both the new children's hospital and new national maternity hospital will be operated as public hospitals only in view of his recent comments regarding his support for a universal healthcare service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27803/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can assure the Deputy that the vast majority of services in the new children's hospital and the new maternity hospital will be public services. However, as part of the National Consultants' Contract, negotiated in 2008, some consultants holding specific contracts are entitled to engage in private outpatient practice outside of their public commitment; this commitment must be conducted on site, in the hospital where the consultant holds his/her contract. As a result, private outpatient clinics may be undertaken

on a public hospital campus, however, these clinics must be held outside contracted hours. The new hospitals will be obliged to provide such facilities for consultants holding such contracts, but it is proposed that the consultants will be required to pay a fee for the use of the rooms and other operational costs.

The Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals (the De Buitléir Report) has been received and is being examined in the Department. It is a comprehensive examination of private activity in public hospitals and contains a small number of recommendations.

Detailed consideration of the Report by Department officials is ongoing and covers a range of issues, which have also been discussed in engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of the Taoiseach. It is intended that the De Buitléir Report will be published when this consideration is complete.

Disabilities Assessments

109. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to address the increase in CHO 3 of the number of overdue first assessments under the Disability Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27752/19]

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.

Primary Care Centres Provision

110. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the long delays in the delivery of primary healthcare centres in Lucan and Clondalkin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27645/19]

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.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 53.

Hospital Waiting Lists

112. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide enough resources to eliminate the long waiting lists for treatment at pain management clinics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27449/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the NTPF, who will supply additionality to HSE activity in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

Furthermore, the Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 which was published by my Department, includes a specific workstream on Access and Waiting Lists. Sláintecare emphasises the need to invest in increased capacity while also shifting the balance of care from hospitals to community services for better health outcomes and a more sustainable health service. In addition, many of the other service reforms and enhancements included in Sláintecare will support timely access to care for patients in the coming years.

In line with Sláintecare objectives, my Department is working with the HSE and the NTPF, to develop 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. The HSE advise that one such example is a pilot scheme which commenced in January 2019 in Sligo University Hospital: the eight-week “Pain Management Education Programme” (PMEP) involves physiotherapy, psychology, and Pain Nurse-delivered education.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. To date in 2019, the NTPF have approved funding for pain management appointments in Tallaght, the Mater and St. Vincent’s hospitals, and welcomes proposals from all acute hospitals for initiatives to improve access for patients awaiting outpatient appointments.

Question No. 113 answered with Question No. 88.

Community Care Provision

114. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the reason 176 persons are waiting for home support for more than 12 months and a further 80 persons waiting for an increase in home support hours in County Galway as at 31 May 2019; the longest period of time a person is waiting for home support services in County Galway; the steps being taken to address the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27936/19]

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.

Pharmaceutical Sector

115. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health when financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, cuts for pharmacists will be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27811/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In accordance with the provisions of Part 5 and Part 6 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, the Government is committed to developing a statutory basis for payments to primary care contractors, to replace FEMPI legislation, which expires at the end of this year.

This new statutory basis will enable the determination of payments to contractors based on a range of considerations, including affordability and value for money.

Preparatory work is underway in my Department on the development of that new statutory basis.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

116. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health if the report from an organisation (details supplied) submitted in April 2019, will be considered as part of the HSE review into the extension of the FreeStyle Libre device to all persons with type 1 diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27450/19]

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 Services

117. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health if the options appraisal for the model 4 hospital at Merlin Park, Galway will be completed by the end of July 2019; the cost to date of the options appraisal process; the anticipated overall cost of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27933/19]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

118. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce outpatient waiting times; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the number of patients waiting more than 18 months in University Hospital Limerick has increased by 7,776, 1,709%, since May 2016 and stood at 8,231 at the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27754/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and

procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for NTPF, who will supply additionality to HSE activity, in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. The NTPF has advised that to date in 2019, University Hospital Limerick has received approval for NTPF funding for additional Dermatology outpatient appointments for 1,400 long-waiting patients.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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.

With regard to overall measures being implemented at University Hospital Limerick to address Outpatient Waiting Lists, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy Directly.

Hospital Services

119. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the plans to develop a medical rehabilitation unit at Roscommon University Hospital; the stage of the project; if the project has been included in the capital plan of the HSE for 2020; the timeframe for completion of works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27967/19]

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.

Hospital Services

120. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the alternative arrangements in place to treat patients of Merlin Park Hospital for orthopaedic procedures, including University Hospital Galway and other hospitals; the number of persons on the waiting list for orthopaedic surgeries by length of time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27935/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hos-

pital 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 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.

The latest NTPF figures show that there 1,301 patients on the Galway University Hospital (GUH) IPDC Orthopaedics waiting list. Of these, 81% (1,053) are waiting 12 months or less.

The GUH Orthopaedics IPDC Waiting List is contained in the following table.

*Please note that patients listed for surgery at Merlin Park Hospital are captured under the GUH waiting list.

In relation to the alternative arrangements in place to treat patients of Merlin Park Hospital for orthopaedic procedures, including Galway University Hospital and other hospitals, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Galway University Hospitals IPDC Orthopaedics 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	48+ mths	Total
406	245	240	162	108	43	64	26	6	1	1301

Maternity Services

121. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the review of maternity services in Portiuncula Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27814/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Walker Report, which was the report of an external review into maternity services in Portiuncula University Hospital, was published on 3 May 2018. The report made 35 key recommendations under five themes: Environment, Training, Clinical Care, Staffing, and Communication issues. The HSE established an Implementation Group to progress these recommendations and I understand that to date significant progress has been made to implement these 35 recommendations. I am advised that as of March 2019, 95% of the recommendations were complete or nearly completed.

I have asked the HSE to reply directly to you with regard to the current status of the implementation of the recommendations.

Community Care Provision

122. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase investment in home care and home care packages in order that those that choose to be cared for at home will have adequate supports; his further plans to introduce legislation ensuring a legislative right to homecare in circumstances in which it is necessary and is the best option in terms of patient outcome and choice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27448/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Improving access to home support remains a priority for Government. Over the past four years we have seen a considerable increase of nearly €140 million in the budget which has grown from €306 million in 2015 to almost €446 million this year. In 2019, the HSE intends to provide 17.9 million home support hours to 53,000 people and intensive home care packages to 235 people, equating to a further 0.36m hours.

Despite this significant level of service provision, the demand for home support continues to grow. The allocation of funding for home supports across the system, though significant, is finite and services must be delivered within the funding available. The HSE is required to deliver the service within the available budget, and this means ensuring the hours allocated to the service are affordable. This requires the HSE to manage the budget and service provision throughout the year to ensure a balanced budget for 2019.

The development of a new, standalone statutory scheme and system of regulation for home-support services is a long-standing objective of the Government. This is currently progressing in line with the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy which commits to the introduction of the new scheme in 2021. It is intended that the new statutory scheme will improve access to adult home support services on an affordable and sustainable basis while the introduction of a system of regulation will ensure public confidence in these services.

Building on a review of the home care systems in 4 EU countries which was published in April 2017, the Department is currently engaged in a review of the policy goals, objectives and guiding principles of adult home support service provision in ten countries. This review will assist in identifying international good practices, the learning from which will be incorporated into the development of the new statutory scheme.

Community Care Provision

123. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for introducing a statutory right to home care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27757/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Department of Health is currently engaged in the development of a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home-support services. In preparation for the development of the statutory scheme, the Department commissioned the Health Research Board to carry out a review of the home-care systems in four European countries. In addition, the Department conducted a public consultation on home-care services, on which a report was published in 2018. These reports are available on the Department's website and will help to ensure that the new scheme is informed both by international experience and by the views of stakeholders, including service-users.

Work is currently being progressed in relation to a review of the management, operation and funding of current home care services in Ireland. This will provide a baseline for the design of an effective, sustainable service as part of the development of a statutory home care scheme. This review, which will be completed by the end of the year, will provide a baseline for the design of an effective, sustainable service as part of the development of a statutory home care scheme.

Work is on-going to determine the optimal approach to the development of the statutory scheme within the broader context of the Sláintecare reforms. The Department's Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the statutory scheme in 2021. In 2019 work will focus on the design of the scheme, the options for regulation and a review of existing services. Further consultation will also be undertaken in 2019 (with key stakeholders and service-users) and will continue throughout the process of developing the new scheme.

Hospital Waiting Lists

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he is satisfied that issues affecting long waiting lists for various procedures in public hospitals, overcrowding at accident and emergency services and other contributory factors affecting the fast, efficient and effective delivery of public health services are fully addressed or are in the course of so being; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27941/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am committed to tackling the key challenges our health service faces in relation to long waiting times and hospital overcrowding. Improving timely access for patients to scheduled and unscheduled care is at the heart of Sláintecare. The Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 which was published by my Department, includes a specific workstream on Access and Waiting Lists. Sláintecare emphasises the need to invest in increased capacity while also shifting the balance of care from hospitals to community services for better health outcomes and a more sustainable health service. In addition, many of the other service reforms and enhancements included in Sláintecare will support timely access to care for patients in the coming years.

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 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 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 accordance with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges at a value of €1.4 billion in 2019. The Scheduled Care Access Plan also 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 will aim to deliver 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which approximately 1 million will be first appointments.

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.

With regard to unscheduled care, Ireland is seeing a growing demand, which is evident from the increased pressures on hospital Emergency Departments (EDs), particularly during peak periods such as winter. This is a very busy period for our health services, with many hospitals reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. For the first five months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital EDs increased by 4.9%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 3.3% compared to the same period last year.

Despite the significant increase in demand, our health services have managed better for the first five months of 2019 than in the previous year, and the numbers of patients waiting on trolleys nationally were 6.8% lower than the same period last year.

The HSE are undertaking a review of performance across all Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations over the winter period, which has now been extended 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. The terms of reference and membership of the group have been agreed and are now published on the HSE website.

The Health Service Capacity Review published last year was crystal clear on the need for a major investment in additional capacity in both hospital and community – combined with a widescale reform of the manner and the location of where health services are provided.

Increasing capacity is a priority for Government. Since 2017, an additional 241 acute hospital beds opened, and the National Service Plan for 2019 provides for a comprehensive capacity programme. The number of available inpatient beds is expected to increase to above 11,000 following the investment planned in the National Service Plan 2019.

Hospital Waiting Lists

125. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health the action he is taking to reduce outpatient waiting times; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the number of patients waiting more than 18 months in Sligo University Hospital has increased by 1,901, 2,924.6%, since May 2016 and stood at 1,966 at the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27747/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the NTPF, who will supply additionality to HSE activity, in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals. The NTPF has advised that to date in 2019, Sligo University Hospital has received approval for NTPF funding for 224 additional Neurology Outpatient appointments and 864 additional ENT Outpatient appointments.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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.

With regard to overall measures being implemented at Sligo University Hospital to address Outpatient Waiting Lists, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy Directly.

Mental Health Services Staff

126. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans in place to increase psychiatry of later life staffing levels in CHO 4 which are currently at barely a third of the

level recommended under A Vision For Change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27809/19]

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.

Question No. 127 answered with Question No. 80.

Medicinal Products

128. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which Ireland was represented at the meeting of the 72nd World Health Assembly held on 20 to 28 May 2019 in Geneva; the stance Ireland took on an issue (details supplied); the policy Ireland will continue to pursue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27956/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am informed that the Irish delegation to the 72nd session of the World Health Assembly was led by the Irish Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other International Organisations at Geneva. The delegation included officials from the Department of Health and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Securing affordable and sustainable access to new and innovative medicines is a challenge that is not unique to Ireland. Many countries are battling with the same issues. Ireland has been at the forefront of international engagement on this critical issue, trying to build consensus with our EU partners across a number of forums.

In March 2019, Italy presented a draft resolution on improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines and other health related technologies. This proposed a number of actions relating to pharmaceutical policy, including that the World Health Organisation would support member states in collecting, analysing and creating standards for information on prices, reimbursement costs, clinical trials outcome data and costs of relevant policy developments.

On 28 May 2019, the resolution was adopted by consensus at the 72nd session of the World Health Assembly, with Germany, Hungary and the UK abstaining.

I welcome Italy’s commitment to addressing the challenges which exist in accessing new and innovative medicines. Mutual cooperation between member states represents one of the best opportunities we have to tackle medicine expenditure and to deliver new and innovative treatments to our patients.

The Programme for Government is committed to “drive down costs to provide new treatments, drugs etc” and to “look at opportunities for leveraging purchasing power either through national or European initiatives”.

Ireland has been actively involved in international collaboration for the last number of years, working to build consensus at a European level on this key issue. In particular, Ireland’s membership of the Beneluxa Initiative offers an important platform from which to deliver the shared objective of securing access to high cost, innovative treatments.

Health Screening Programmes

129. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if he will request a review

on the way in which the diabetic retina screening programme delivers results to service users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27985/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Diabetic RetinaScreen, the National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme is a government funded screening programme in Ireland that offers free, regular diabetic retinopathy screening to people with diabetes aged 12 years and older.

Diabetic RetinaScreen uses specialised digital photography to look for changes that could affect sight. Results are delivered in compliance with quality standards as outlined in the ‘Standards for Quality Assurance in Diabetic Retinopathy Screening’. As with other national screening programmes, quality assurance is paramount and all essential elements are in place to ensure risks to patients are minimised and that the best clinical outcomes for patients are maximised.

In accordance with Part 9 of the Health Act 2004, should any individual with a complaint in relation to the operation of the programme should in the first instance make their complaint known directly to the service itself to ensure that it can be investigated appropriately.

Home Care Packages Provision

130. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which home care packages are being made available to persons that might otherwise need hospitalisation; the number approved in each of the regions in the past three years to date; the extent of the funding required or pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27942/19]

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.

Departmental Expenditure

131. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach the breakdown of costs to his Department for the visit of President Donald Trump. [27468/19]

The Taoiseach: The breakdown of costs paid to date by my Department for the visit of President Trump, in June of this year, are as set out below:

Staff travel and subsistence €4,556.72

Hotel costs (staff) €1,000.00

Gifts presented €344.10

Further invoices are expected in relation to this visit, which include provision of media facilities at Shannon Airport, catering and additional hotel costs.

Several state agencies and Departments were involved in the preparations for the visit and costs are borne by each of them in respect of services provided.

Central Statistics Office Data

132. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach his plans to extend the key economic and social metrics employed by the CSO to indicate all aspects of the well-being of persons, along the lines being pursued in New Zealand and other jurisdictions. [27469/19]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Central Statistics Office (CSO) compiles a wide range of statistics and indicators related to well-being, and aims to deliver these results in thematic reports and formats which promote good use of relevant statistics. The CSO appreciates that Government and policy-makers need to know how Ireland is performing in a general sense; need data to assess economic, social and environmental conditions; and require evidence to evaluate policy outcomes.

Well-being, in its broadest sense, can be viewed as a measure of how people feel about their lives as a whole and as a measure of all aspects of life. As a result, it is a complex multi-dimensional issue influenced by factors such as the state of the environment, the educational levels of the population, economic performance, public safety, and the health of the population, amongst other factors.

The most prominent report on this topic published by the CSO is The Wellbeing of the Nation 2017. This report was published in January 2018 and provides a series of indicators across eight domains. The domains were selected based on their importance to well-being and they encompass many aspects of people's everyday life. They have also been selected to be in line with international best practice where possible, whilst also remaining relevant to Irish information needs. The table below shows the domains and corresponding indicators.

Domains and corresponding indicators featured in The Wellbeing of the Nation 2017

Domain	Indicators
Economy	Average debt per household Modified Gross National Income (GNI*) Average total annual earnings Consumer price index
Work	Unemployment rate Long-term unemployment rate Employment rate of those with a disability Percentage working greater than 48 hours per week Enforced job instability Discrimination in the workplace
Education	Educational attainment Early school leavers indicator Digital skills of those aged 16-74 Programme for international student assessment (PISA) mathematics score
Housing and natural Environment	Homelessness Air quality River water quality Recovered packaging recycling rates
Governance and Equality	Female representation in Dáil Éireann Consistent poverty rate Equality of income distribution Percentage that experienced discrimination
Health	Self-perceived health Healthy life years at birth Overweight/obesity- Binge drinking at least once a week Deaths by suicide
Public Safety	Self-reported victimisation Worry about becoming a victim of personal crime or theft and damage Perception of seriousness of crime in Ireland- Number of injuries or fatalities from road traffic accidents
Time Use	Volunteering Participation in sport Average weekly household expenditure on sports and leisure Commuting time

Other related work undertaken by the CSO includes the presentation, in co-operation with Ordnance Survey Ireland, of geospatial information on the EU and UN Sustainable Development Goals (see <https://www.cso.ie/en/unsdgs/>). Further work is under way this year on a CSO thematic report on the SDGs; and the CSO is also developing a set of energy poverty indicators.

To aid with communicating statistics and indicators on well-being, the CSO has also begun work on an interactive well-being dashboard, which will be similar to the Key Short-term

Economic Indicators dashboard on the CSO website (<https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/keyeconomicindicators/>). The aim of the dashboard will be to present up-to-date statistics on well-being in an easily accessible way.

Departmental Reviews

133. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is sched

Year	Annual Revenue
2018	€134,185,000
2017	€130,410,000
2016	€131,766,000
2015	€130,380,000
2014	€121,337,000
2013	€123,420,257
2012	€122,755,088
2011	€129,664,352
2010	€139,711,142
2009	€93,327,372
2008	€81,367,837
2007	€46,708,092

Department.

The Deputy may wish to be made aware that the National Economic and Social Council is an independent statutory agency operating under the aegis of my Department. The Council analyses and reports on strategic policy matters relevant to Ireland's economic, social, environmental and sustainable development and on occasion commissions research in this regard. Details of the Council's work programme are available on www.nesc.ie.

Defence Forces

134. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 69 to 71, inclusive, of 29 May 2019 and Question No. 84 of 19 June 2019, the list of athletes that will be sent to participate in the seventh CISM World Games in Wuhan, China in October 2019; if triathletes will be included; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27473/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that the Defence Forces will participate in the 7th CISM World Games in Wuhan, China and that the number of athletes being sent CISM World Games is thirty two. These thirty-two athletes make up four teams that will participate in the following disciplines, Soccer, Boxing, Shooting and

Lifesaving. There will be no triathletes travelling to these CISM World Games.

Defence Forces Training

135. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the swimming pool in the Curragh Camp will be opened to residents in the area; and if not, the action required to make the pool accessible to residents and groups in the area. [27478/19]

137. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to invest in the swimming pool facility in the Curragh Camp; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27480/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 and 137 together.

I am advised that while the swimming pool in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp is primarily for Defence Forces related activity and training, my Department positively engages with local schools and club communities in allowing the use of this facility. Currently a total of 18 local schools and 7 local swimming clubs have been given permission to use the swimming pool in the Curragh Camp on a regular basis. Occasional requests from organisations are also considered on a case by case basis. Permission for the use of the pool is subject at all times to Defence Forces requirements and signed conditions, which includes the requirement for the schools, clubs and organisations to have appropriate insurance.

I am further advised that as the swimming pool in the Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp is a relatively modern facility, which was completed and first taken into use in July 2001, there are no immediate plans or requirement for capital investment in this facility. However, there is provision to spend in the order of €113,000 this year for the ongoing maintenance of the pool.

Defence Forces Personnel

136. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the swimming pool in the Curragh Camp is fully staffed; if it has sufficient lifeguards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27479/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In the case of the swimming pool in the Curragh Camp, my Department currently employs two civilian lifeguards in order to facilitate the use of the pool outside of Defence Forces' requirements. These lifeguards cover the following hours: 5.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays.

Recruitment of Civilian Employees in military installations is an ongoing process and vacancies are identified and filled on a priority basis.

Question No. 137 answered with Question No. 135.

Naval Service Vessels

138. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans

to replace the LÉ Orla; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27781/19]

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. This is primarily to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government as set out in the White Paper on Defence. Equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment planning process.

In this context the principal aim over the period of the White Paper is to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements at home and overseas. In accordance with the National Development Plan, the capital allocation for Defence has been increased to €106 million for 2019, an increase of €29 million. The Defence Capital envelope for the period 2018-2021 is €416m, and this will enable investment in major equipment platforms, including the continuing replacement and refurbishment of Naval Service Vessels.

The White Paper underpins the ongoing replacement of the Naval Service fleet. A significant investment over recent years has been on the procurement of new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) for the Naval Service. The fourth ship in the programme, LÉ George Bernard Shaw, was commissioned into service in May 2019 reflecting an investment by the Government of over €250 million in the new ships programme since 2010. The four ships are performing well in operational service.

Despite the recent acquisitions to the Naval Service fleet, three ships in the current flotilla are over 30 years old (LÉ Eithne and LÉ Ciara were built in 1984 and LÉ Orla was built in 1985). The White Paper provides for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel (MRV) which will be enabled for helicopter operations and will also have a freight carrying capacity. It is the intention to hold a public tender competition in due course to cover the supply of the MRV subject to the availability of funding within the overall Defence capital funding envelope. The cost of the MRV will only be known once the tender competition is concluded.

Future Naval Service capabilities are being planned as part of the White Paper project planning process which will determine the Defence Organisation's maritime capability requirements.

Defence Forces Remuneration

139. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated cost of restoring military allowances to pre-FEMPI levels. [27842/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): It is estimated that the cost of restoring Defence Forces allowances (excluding Military Service Allowance) to pre-FEMPI levels could cost in the region of €7 million. This figure is based on estimates for 2019. As many of the duties are demand led and the number of duties can fluctuate year on year, this variable must be taken into consideration in comparing any actual figures with speculative amounts.

Defence Forces Pensions

140. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated cost of restoring the supplementary pension for post-2013 entrants to the Defence Forces. [27843/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The occupational pension scheme terms of post-1 January 2013 new entrants to the public service, including the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), are governed by the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. All first-time new entrants to pensionable public service employment on or after that date are members of the ‘Single Scheme’.

The terms and rules of the Single Scheme, which are fundamentally different to previous superannuation public service arrangements, make no provision for the concept or award of supplementary pensions for any new entrants joining any public service group from 1st January 2013 onwards.

As there is no provision for supplementary pensions in the Single Scheme, for example, in terms of its scope, qualifying criteria, methodology etc., there is no basis upon which to calculate the estimated cost of introducing the measure in question for post-1 January 2013 new entrants to the PDF.

Under the 2012 Act, overall statutory responsibility for the Single Scheme pension terms and rules rests with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Defence Forces Recruitment

141. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the estimated cost of bringing Defence Forces personnel numbers up to 10,500 across all ranks and formations services. [27844/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Department does not maintain costings for increasing the strength of the PDF to those outlined by the Deputy. This would require detailed consideration of the capability requirements underpinning such an increase and consideration of associated personnel issues, including organisational structures as well as equipment, infrastructure and other additional requirements and associated costs.

Departmental Projects

142. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27879/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by the Taoiseach as Minister for Defence and myself as Minister with Responsibility for Defence are set out in the following table setting out when they are scheduled to be completed.

Name	Scheduled to be completed by
Annual Report 2018	To be published in July 2019
Peer Review of Factory Site (Haulbowline) Report	To be published in July 2019

Name	Scheduled to be completed by
Review of the current roles and activities of Civil Defence, with the intention of publishing a policy document “Towards 2030” which will set out a roadmap for the development of the organisation over the next 10 – 15 years.	To be completed in 2019
Report on the Feasibility of an Institute for Peace Support and Leadership Training	To be completed in 2019

Departmental Reports

143. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27903/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In accordance with the provisions of the Public Service Management Act 1997, the current Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement, covering the period 2017–2020, was approved by the Taoiseach, as Minister for Defence, on 17th December 2017 and published in January 2018. Development of the Strategy Statement followed consultation with staff throughout the Defence Organisation, the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, as well as with the Defence Forces’ Representative Associations.

The Government Task Force (GTF) on Emergency Planning provides strategic direction and coordination of national-level emergency planning. It comprises Ministers and/or senior officials from all government departments and key public bodies. As part of the work of the GTF, a review of the existing national-level structures and processes was initiated in 2014 and this culminated in the production of the “Strategic Emergency Management (SEM): National Structures and Framework” document, which was published following Government approval in July 2017 with associated guideline documents developed in 2018 and 2019. The aim of the SEM document and its associated annexes is to ensure that all state bodies can react quickly and efficiently to any large-scale emergency. It provides strategic guidance and direction on various elements of emergency management at a national-level to government departments and agencies under their aegis.

As the Minister with responsibility for Defence, and as Chair of the GTF on Emergency Planning, I also submitted the *National Risk Assessment (NRA) for Ireland 2017* to Government on 21 November 2017 and it was subsequently published on the Office of Emergency Planning website (July 2018). The purpose of the NRA for Ireland 2017 is to identify hazards facing the State across a broad range of emergencies, to assess the likelihood and impact of these hazards and to inform actions at national level aimed at mitigating such risks, including the allocation of resources.

	Policy Document/Strategy	Year published
1.	Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2017-2020	2017
2.	Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework	2017
3.	A National Risk Assessment for Ireland	2017
4.	Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework - Emergency Communications	2018
5.	Strategic Emergency Management National Structures and Framework - Critical Infrastructure Resilience	2019

Defence Forces Recruitment

144. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a recruitment campaign for dentists and nurses for the Defence Forces medical corps will occur in the third quarter of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27932/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There are currently no plans to conduct a recruitment campaign for dentists and nurses for the Defence Forces medical corps in 2019.

Defence Forces Medical Services

145. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 46 of 20 June 2019, if the State does not cover the treatment costs of ex-servicemen and women suffering from post traumatic stress disorder; if ex-servicemen and women suffering with the condition are granted medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27977/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As outlined in my previous reply to PQ 25904/19, to which the Deputy refers, former members of the Permanent Defence Forces have access to the range of supports available to all citizens of the State. Medical cards are granted by the Health Service Executive based on an individual's personal and family circumstances and are not a matter within the remit of my Department.

Defence Forces Data

146. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 34 of 13 June 2019, the reason all personal injury claims finalised by the State Claims Agency on his behalf did not have subsequent disability benefits and pensions reduced under section 13(2) of the Army Pensions Act 1923 (as amended); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28009/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Army Pensions Acts 1923-1980 provide for the grant of pensions and gratuities to former members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) in respect of permanent disablement due to a wound or injury attributable to military service (whether at home or abroad) or due to disease attributable to or aggravated by overseas service with the United Nations.

The award of a disability pension or of a disablement gratuity is considered under Section 13(2) of the Army Pensions Act 1923 (as amended) in situations where civil action compensation is received in respect of the same injury (or injuries).

Not all claimants whose personal injuries claims are finalised by the State Claims Agency on my behalf are eligible for consideration for an award under the Army Pensions Acts. However, where the individuals concerned are eligible for an award under those Acts the terms of Section 13(2) are applicable.

In advance of consideration by the Minister under Section 13(2), the person or his/her solicitor is advised of the statutory provisions and of the potential implications for his/her application. The person is invited to put forward a case setting out their circumstances, details of the compensation actually received, and whether there are any special or extenuating circumstances involved. Each case is considered on the basis of its own individual circumstances by the Minister.

Defence Forces Recruitment

147. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a new recruitment campaign for the Defence Forces School of Music will take place in the second half of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28130/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am informed by the military authorities that a recruitment competition for the Defence Forces School of Music in 2018 resulted in 20 personnel being recruited, which brought the School to full strength.

There are currently no plans to run a similar recruitment competition in 2019.

Defence Forces Reserve

148. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Reserve Defence Forces personnel inducted or assigned since the reorganisation in 2012 into corps (details supplied), by individual unit, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28136/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The re-organisation of the Army Reserve (AR) and Naval Service Reserve (NSR) was implemented in 2013. The AR and NSR has an establishment of 4,069 personnel. The military authorities have provided the following table, which sets out the information requested.

Year	Engineer	Transport	CIS	Medical	MP
2019 (as of 21st June)		2	1		
2018					
2017		3		1	
2016	7	2			
2015	1	4	1		
2014	10	1	2	2	1
2013		1			1
2012	11	19	13	5	1

Defence Forces Expenditure

149. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount provided in each of the years since 2012 for payment for Reserve Defence Forces first line and separately for the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve; the actual amount expended in those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28137/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The budget for the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) has been maintained for a number of years at a constant €2.150m of which some €2.068m (96%) is dedicated to paid training.

The amounts provided, and expended, in each year since 2012 for payment for First Line Reserve (FLR), Army Reserve (AR) and Naval Service Reserve (NSR) are as set out below. The figures for 2019 are as of the 30th June.

Amounts Expended for Reserve Defence Forces Pay

Year	Budget	FLR	AR	NSR
2019	€2.150m (€2.068m allocated to paid training)	215*	512,051	42,602
2018	€2.150m (€2.068m allocated to paid training)	24,085	1,444,917	104,983
2017	€2.150m (€2.068m allocated to paid training)	451**	1,287,525	94,732
2016	€2.150m (€2.068m allocated to paid training)	18,925	1,449,571	98,988
2015	€2.150m (€2.068m allocated to paid training)	21,733	1,625,230	88,910
2014	€3.150m (€3.110m allocated to paid training)	24,965	1,705,310	127,701
2013	€3.325m (€3.243m allocated to paid training)	27,106	1,787,398	94,447
2012***	€4.386m (€3.500m allocated to paid training)	33,477	3,512,906	58,050

*The majority of FLR payments are made in Q4.

**Due to accelerated end of year payroll deadlines in 2017, approximately €17,400 of 2018 FLR payments relate to 2017.

***An additional amount of €74,344 was paid from the Reserve Pay Vote in relation to Grant to Unit Funds in 2012.

Defence Forces Medical Services

150. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if members of the Army Medical Corps in the Permanent Defence Forces and Reserve Defence Forces are subject to PHECC certification and are fully compliant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28138/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that all Defence Forces pre-hospital emergency care practitioners (i.e. EMTs, paramedics and advanced paramedics) are subject to PHECC certification and are fully compliant.

Civil Defence

151. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on reports that the Civil Defence could be prevented from assisting at community events due to issues relating to the licence from the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council and assurances from his Department; if all steps are being taken to avoid same taking place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28152/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Civil Defence is a volunteer based organisation of approximately 3,500 volunteers who give generously of their time and expertise for their community and in support of the Principal Response Agencies.

As outlined in the 2015 White Paper on Defence, Civil Defence policy is set down by the Minister for Defence through the Civil Defence Branch of my Department. The Department also provides up to a maximum of 70% grant aid to each Local Authority Civil Defence unit, as well as other supports such as training for local volunteer instructors. It also supplies vehicles, equipment, uniforms and personal protective equipment

The White Paper also recognises the important role of Local Government in the manage-

ment of Civil Defence. The Civil Defence Officer who is an employee of the Local Authority is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of Civil Defence in their Local Authority area.

When Civil Defence's current PHECC operating licence was up for renewal in November 2018, my officials reviewed the current Statutory Declaration which must be signed by organisations who wish to provide emergency medical services. That review identified that some assurances and details required as part of the licensing process are not within the control or remit of my Department as responsibility for operations rests with Local Authorities.

Since January 2019, my officials have been working closely with senior officials in both PHECC and Local Authorities in order to find a satisfactory solution to this issue, while conscious of the unique structure of Civil Defence.

Following recent engagement between officials from my Department and from the County and City Management Association, it has been agreed that Local Authorities will provide some of the assurances required as part of the signing of the Statutory Declaration. In order to put in place the necessary processes and collate the required assurances, my officials applied for a further extension to its existing licence which currently expires on 30 July 2019. Upon considering that request, PHECC agreed to give a further month's extension, up to 31 August 2019 subject to a satisfactory progress report at the next PHECC Council meeting on 11 July 2019.

I can assure you, I am committed to ensuring the excellent service Civil Defence volunteers provide in terms of emergency medical services continues beyond the 30 July 2019. My officials continue to engage constructively to resolve the issue.

Defence Forces Remuneration

152. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will report on the Public Sector Pay Commission report on the Defence Forces. [27993/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC) is an independent body established to advise Government in relation to public service pay. The Commission has presented a report on Recruitment & Retention Challenges in the Defence Forces to Mr. Paschal Donohoe TD, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, who has responsibility for public service pay policy. The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is due to bring the report to Government shortly.

EU Meetings

153. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the matters discussed under the specific foreign policy issues agenda item at the June 2019 Foreign Affairs Council meeting; and if Iran, Israel and Palestine were included in the discussions. [28006/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): At the June EU Foreign Affairs Council, Foreign Ministers discussed the EU Global Strategy, CFSP Effectiveness and Sudan. Minister of State for European Affairs, Helen McEntee TD, participated in the meeting.

Ministers also had a productive exchange of views on 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.

At the Council, Ministers 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. Enhancing our effectiveness will allow us to respond to future foreign and security challenges in a more flexible and strategic way.

Ministers discussed the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, following the publication of a report assessing the progress made since its launch three years ago. Ireland looks forward to continuing to advance all five strands of the Strategy.

Finally, Foreign Ministers welcomed the EU Statement on Sudan. The Council condemned the use of violence against civilians and reiterated strong 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.

Maritime Jurisdiction

154. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the maritime baseline on the east coast is a straight baseline or a low water baseline; and if he will provide a map of the baseline. [28139/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Except in three places, on the east coast the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea and the other maritime zones of the State is measured is the 'normal' baseline, being the low-water line along the coast of the mainland and of offshore islands, and the low-water line on any low-tide elevation located within 12 nautical miles of the mainland or of any off-shore island. The islands and low tide elevations concerned are Rockabill, Lambay Island, Ireland's Eye, Blackwater Bank and Tuskar Rock.

The three exceptions to the use of the normal baseline on the east coast are bay closing lines drawn between the natural entrance points to Dundalk and Dublin Bays and Wexford Harbour, which serve as the baselines in the places concerned. These closing lines have operated at common law since the foundation of the State. For the avoidance of doubt the Government recently prescribed them by Order under s. 85 of the 2006 Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act (S.I. No. 155/2019 - Maritime Jurisdiction (Bay Closing Lines) Order 2019).

In international law, where a coastline is deeply indented and cut into, or if there is a fringe of islands along the coast in its immediate vicinity, a State may draw straight baselines joining appropriate headlands or islands. This has been done for the west and south coasts, which meet the relevant criteria.

I will arrange for an illustrative map of the State's baselines, together with the outer limits of the territorial sea from which they are measured, to be furnished to the Deputy.

EU Bodies

155. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the process leading to the future Commissioner for Ireland. [28208/19]

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

nomination of the Irish Commissioner to serve as a member of the next College of Commissioners will be taken by the Taoiseach and Government in due course.

The European Council will propose a candidate for President of the Commission who will then be elected by the European Parliament. I would expect the new President of the Commission to begin working with Member States who will designate Commission nominees from their countries.

I expect this process of consultation will take place over the Summer months in order for the new President to build up a team and for all the Commissioners-designate to attend hearings in the European Parliament in September/October, prior to the Parliament's own vote of consent.

Foreign Conflicts

156. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the situation in Ethiopia; the response of the European Union to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27590/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): On the evening of 22 June, targeted attacks were carried out in Ethiopia against senior Government officials in Bahir Dar, the capital of the northern Amhara region, and the capital, Addis Ababa. The Amhara Regional President Ambachew Mekonnen and two of his advisors were killed, and the perpetrator has been identified as the Amhara Region security chief, Asaminew Tsige. Some hours later, a bodyguard killed General Seare Mekonnen, Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian Defence Forces, and a retired officer, at the general's home in Addis Ababa.

Following the attacks, the Federal Government imposed an internet blackout across the country. State media announced that Asaminew was killed by the military in a firefight on 24 June. Asaminew, an Amhara nationalist, had been imprisoned under the premiership of former Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi for insubordination and plotting a coup attempt, and was released last year by current Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as part of a large-scale release of political prisoners. The internet has now been restored.

The EU issued a statement condemning the killings, calling for restraint from all sides of the Ethiopian political spectrum, and reiterating the need for continued peaceful and democratic reforms in Ethiopia. It also reiterated the EU's support for the efforts of Prime Minister Abiy and his Government in this context. During a visit to Ethiopia in January, the Taoiseach met with Prime Minister Abiy and expressed Ireland's support for Ethiopia's ongoing reforms, as well as raising concerns regarding the high levels of internal displacement.

Ireland's travel advice for Ethiopia has been updated following the events of 22 June, and our Embassy in Addis Ababa is in contact with Irish citizens registered in Ethiopia. Ireland's Ambassador to Ethiopia has been briefed on the events by the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office. The Embassy continues to closely monitor the political and security situation, in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Addis Ababa.

Ireland continues to support the political and economic reform process underway in Ethiopia, including through the Irish Aid programme: Ethiopia is Ireland's most significant bilateral development partner with a budget this year of €32 million.

EU Programmes

157. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on reports that an operation (details supplied) was involved in spreading fake news regarding Northern Ireland amongst others; the actions he will take following this report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27591/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the recent report by the Digital Forensics Research Lab (DFRLab), a reputable organisation, part of the Atlantic Council, an independent US based Think Tank. The report concerns possible evidence of a disinformation campaign partly aimed at exacerbating divisions in Northern Ireland and is an issue which the relevant security services here will be appraising.

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, and with which Ireland is fully engaged.

Measures adopted to date by the European Council - the EU Joint Action Plan against Disinformation and the dedicated Elections Package – have already helped to deter attacks and expose disinformation. Within the framework of these actions, increased public awareness has 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.

The EU also works 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. Further proposals to strengthen our collective action in response to this ever-evolving threat are likely and Ireland will fully support any such actions once they align with our fundamental values, notably the right to freedom of expression.

Middle East Issues

158. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the attempts by the European Union to seek compensation from the Israeli authorities for the demolition of EU-funded structures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27592/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The issue of confiscation or demolition of donor-funded structures, included those funded by the EU, is of great concern to me. The demolition of Palestinian homes, and demolition or seizure of related structures such as water tanks, wells, solar panels, schools and animal housing, are cruel and unjust actions. The only possible conclusion we can draw from the systematic nature of these policies, especially in areas where illegal Israeli settlements have already been constructed, is that they are aimed at forcing Palestinians off their land.

Ireland joined the European Commission-led West Bank Protection Consortium in 2017 at my instigation, during my first visit to Israel and Palestine as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Consortium plays a leading role in supporting threatened communities and coordinating the provision of essential services to them, including material assistance and legal aid. Ireland's membership of the Consortium underlines our commitment to reducing the vulnerability of Palestinian communities living in Area C of the West Bank.

My primary concern is the hardship and injustice that demolitions and confiscations cause for Palestinian families. But it is right that the question of recompense for humanitarian relief funded by our taxpayers should also be pursued. Ireland is part of a group of EU Member States which pursue this issue consistently through the West Bank Protection Consortium. It is the practice of the Consortium to raise this directly with the Israeli authorities and to date, the donors to the Consortium have sought compensation in the amount of over €121,000 in respect of confiscated or demolished assets.

In October 2018, seven donor-funded humanitarian structures were confiscated by the Israeli authorities from two vulnerable Palestinian communities located in Area C of the occupied West Bank. The structures were co-funded by the EU and the West Bank Protection Consortium, and were provided in order to address the basic needs of the population and to support children's right to education in a safe environment as part of a humanitarian response mechanism.

There were worrying reports that the confiscated humanitarian assets were to be auctioned by the Israeli Civil Administration earlier this month, but I understand that the auction has since been postponed. Irish diplomats based in Ramallah and in Tel Aviv are following this matter closely and are working with other members of the Consortium to determine how best to pursue this issue.

The practice of demolition and confiscation of humanitarian assets, including education infrastructure, is contrary to Israel's obligations under International Law, including provisions of international humanitarian law, and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention. These practices also cause suffering to ordinary Palestinians, and impinge on the right of children to an education.

Ireland regularly conveys our views on these actions to the Israeli authorities, both directly and through the EU. I have done so myself on my visits to the region.

Emigrant Support Services

159. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the emigrant support programme; the estimated full-year cost of increasing the expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27593/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) provides funding to non-profit organisations and projects to support our most vulnerable emigrants overseas, to strengthen Irish communities abroad and to facilitate the development of closer and more strategic links between Ireland and the global Irish.

I refer the Deputy to PQ 15083/19 which was answered on 2 April 2019 and note the position remains as outlined below.

The budget for the Emigrant Support Programme in 2019 is €12.595 million. This repre-

sents an increase of €1 million in the allocation for the ESP in 2019, from €11.595 million last year, and is a demonstration of the Government's continuing commitment to our people abroad.

An increase of 5% on the 2019 budget would cost €629,750.

An increase of 10% on the 2019 budget would cost €1,259,500.

An increase of 15% on the 2019 budget would cost €1,889,250.

An increase of 20% on the 2019 budget would cost €2,519,000.

EU Funding

160. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the Trust Fund for Africa; the estimated full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27594/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The *European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa* is part of a comprehensive package of EU initiatives to support stability across North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel/Lake Chad region. The Trust Fund contributes to tackling the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration. It was launched in 2015 at the Valletta EU-Africa Summit on migration, and will run to 2020.

The Trust Fund is financed by the EU institutions, and EU Member States together with Norway and Switzerland. Collectively, they have committed €4.2 billion to the Trust Fund to date, with approximately 88% (€3.7 billion) coming from EU institutions and €500 million from bilateral pledges.

Ireland's total commitment to the Trust Fund for the period 2016-2020 is €15 million. €600,000 was paid to the Trust Fund in 2016, €1,000,000 in 2017 and €7.3 million in 2018. Ireland's total bilateral contribution to the Trust Fund to date therefore stands at €8.9 million. The remaining €6.1 million is to be disbursed during 2019 and 2020.

Incremental increases of the type set out in the Deputy's question are not planned. However, the effect such increases would have are set out in the table:

-	Percentage increase	Additional Cost
Current Commitment		€15,000,000
Total additional cost to 2020 if commitment increased by...	5%	€750,000
	10%	€1,500,000
	15%	€2,250,000
	20%	€3,000,000

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

161. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the peace and reconciliation fund; the estimated full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27595/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Reconciliation Fund has been in operation since 1982 and awards grants to organisations working to build better relations within and between traditions in Northern Ireland, between North and South, and between Ireland and Britain.

The annual budget for the Fund was €2.7 million in 2018. In May 2018, on the 20th Anniversary of the referendums on the Good Friday Agreement, I announced that it would be increased to €3.7 million from 2019 onwards, reflecting the Government's unwavering commitment to the Agreement and to supporting the vital work of reconciliation being carried out by civil society and groups in Northern Ireland and across this island. This additional €1 million in funding represented an increase of 37%.

If the budget were further increased by the percentages indicated by the Deputy, the additional cost would amount to:

Percentage Increase	Additional Cost
5%	€185,000
10%	€370,000
15%	€555,000
20%	€740,000

Any further increases in the budget for the Reconciliation Fund would also need to take account of the level of staffing resources required to ensure the continued effective operation of the Fund.

More information on the Reconciliation Fund and lists of grants issued previously are available on my Department's website at: <https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/funding/reconciliation-fund/>.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

162. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on overseas development aid; the estimated cost of reaching the 0.7% of gross national product for overseas development aid target from its current base of approximately 0.3%, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27596/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Budget 2019 saw the highest increase in funding available to Official Development Assistance (ODA) in over a decade, with the Government allocating just over €817 million for ODA. This represents an increase of approximately €110 million, or 16%, on the allocation announced in budget 2018.

Sustained, managed increments in ODA will be required to deliver 0.7% of Gross National Income to ODA by 2030 in line with the Government's commitment. A steady and phased approach to growth will be required, taking into consideration the range of demands across Government and the capacity of the public finances to meet them. This will also need ongoing careful planning and consultation with other Government Departments and stakeholders.

The table below sets out indicative allocations to ODA, based on current economic growth forecasts, which show a possible phased path to reaching the 0.7% target by 2030. Allocations will be made annually as part of the normal budgetary process.

Year	ODA level € Million	Expected ODA/GNI % Target
2019	817	0.30%
2023	1,400	0.50%
2025	1,800	0.57%
2027	2,100	0.62%
2030	2500	0.70%

Diplomatic Representation

163. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the nature of diplomatic ties between Ireland and Vietnam; his plans to further develop the links; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27610/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland established diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1996 and opened an Embassy in Hanoi in 2005. Vietnam is accredited to Ireland on a non-resident basis through its Embassy in London. Vietnam has been an Irish Aid key partner country since 2005 and the bilateral relationship has been underpinned and strengthened by this development cooperation programme which focuses on ethnic minority empowerment and development, civil society support and on institutional exchange and capacity building.

Bilateral relations between Ireland and Vietnam are positive and President Michael D. Higgins paid a State Visit to Vietnam in November 2016. Most recently, Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Patrick O'Donovan TD, visited Vietnam in March of this year while Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development, Ciaran Cannon TD, visited Hanoi in November 2018.

A strategy for Ireland's continued engagement in Vietnam and the Mekong sub-region (2017-2020) was approved in 2017. The strategy has three high-level objectives: i) Ireland's People in the region are well served, better protected and more closely linked; ii) Ireland's Prosperity is enhanced through trade, investment, EU and people-to-people engagement and institutional exchange; and, iii) Ireland's Values and Influence contribute to a more stable and secure rules-based international environment, the protection of human rights, reduced inequalities and the empowerment of people to participate in their own development.

The Department works closely with State Agencies and other relevant Government Departments to advance trade and investment relations with Vietnam which is an emerging priority market for Ireland in a number of sectors including agri-food, medical technology, education, aviation, renewable energy, and ICT services.

United Nations

164. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions regarding the murder of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27668/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The recent report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Agnes Callamard, into the death of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi makes for horrific

and shocking reading.

An Interactive Dialogue with Ms. Callamard took place at the UN Human Rights Council on 26 June, covering all issues within her mandate. Ireland supported an EU statement at that session welcoming Ms. Callamard's report, condemning the killing in the strongest possible terms, and stressing that full accountability must be achieved. The EU statement called on Saudi Arabia to disclose all information available and to fully cooperate with all investigations into the killing.

Ireland also took the opportunity to make a national statement in this dialogue, emphasising that the protection of journalists and media workers is essential in protecting and promoting the freedom of expression. Specifically on the death of Mr. Khashoggi, Ireland supported the report's focus on accountability, and joined calls that those responsible for the killing must be held to account.

Ireland, from the beginning, has supported calls for thorough, credible and transparent investigation into the killing of Mr Khashoggi, which must get to the facts of the case and ensure full accountability for all those responsible. During the last Universal Periodic Review of Saudi Arabia's human rights record at the HRC in November 2018, Ireland raised concerns regarding the case. In March 2019 Ireland signed a joint statement at the HRC condemning the killing, and calling on Saudi Arabia to disclose all information available and to fully cooperate with all investigations into the killing, including the inquiry by the Special Rapporteur.

I met with the Saudi Ambassador in October 2018 and February 2019 and stressed the need for a full and transparent investigation to establish the truth.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right under international human rights law and journalists play a vital role in holding governments to account. In September 2018, Ireland co-sponsored a resolution on 'Safety of Journalists' at the HRC, condemning all violence against journalists and urging all states to ensure accountability for such attacks.

Data Protection

165. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to an article regarding surveillance (details supplied); his views on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27741/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have been made aware of the article in question regarding surveillance technology being supplied to assist with the development of facial recognition software in Serbia. The internal security of any State is a national competence. Ireland considers it important that in safeguarding internal security, States take account of fundamental rights. In this instance, the merits of facial recognition technologies must be weighed against the cost to privacy and freedom.

While evolutions in technology bring with it innumerable benefits in advancing our societies, the development of such technologies should work for, rather than against citizens, with full respect for international law and human rights. The use of any technology that collects biometric or personal data, whether used for security purposes or otherwise, should be preceded by a full data protection risk assessment.

Serbia is a candidate to join the EU. Becoming a member of the Union entails fully adopting the *acquis*, including in the areas of justice, freedom and security. Candidate countries' use of such technology should align with European standards.

Departmental Projects

166. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27883/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no such live projects scheduled to be completed in my Department.

Departmental Information

167. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27914/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for two votes - Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Cooperation).

My Department has published a wide range of policy documents and strategies since 2016 and these are routinely posted to our website, so that citizens and stakeholders are kept informed about the work of my Department.

Some of the key policy documents and strategies published by my Department since 1 January 2016 are set out in the following table.

Publication Date	Policy Document/Strategy
2016 (first published)	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 'Corporate Governance Framework'
2016	The European Union's Strategic Agenda agreed at the June European Council.
2016	Vietnam Country Strategy Programme 2011-2015 Evaluation Report
2016	Audit Committee Annual Report 2015
2016	The Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023
2016	Malawi Country Strategy Programme 2016-2020
2016	Uganda Country Strategy Programme 2016-2020
2016	Tanzania Country Strategy Programme 2017-2021
2016	South Africa Country Strategy Programme 2017-2021
2016	Vietnam Mission Strategy 2017-2020
2016	Zambia Country Strategy Programmes 2018-2022
2016	Mozambique Country Strategy Programme 2018-2019
2017 (launch date)	National Plan on Business and Human Rights, 2017-2020
2017	Midterm review of Ireland's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
2017	A Focused Policy Review of Ireland's Bilateral Diplomatic Mission Network in the USA
2017	Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World (published along with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)
2017	Audit Committee Annual Report 2016
2017	Irish Aid Social Protection Strategy 2017
2017	Evaluation of Irish Aid's Provincial Programme in Inhambane and Nassa, Mozambique 2007-2016
2018 (update published)	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Corporate Governance Framework

Publication Date	Policy Document/Strategy
2018	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Statement of Strategy 2017-2020
2018	Audit Committee Annual Report 2017
2018	Ireland in Germany: A Wider Deeper Footprint.
2018	Women as Agents of Change: Towards A Climate and Gender Justice Approach
2019	Global Ireland, Ireland's Strategy for the US and Canada 2019-2025.
2019	TravelWise: Staying safe and informed while travelling abroad. Ireland's Consular Strategy 2019-2022.
2019	National Statement on the European Union to inform Ireland's contribution to the European Union's Strategic Agenda 2019 -2024.
2019	Final review of Ireland's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
2019	Ireland's third National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions
2019	Ireland's Policy for International Development 'A Better World'
2019	Ireland's Strategy for Partnership with Small Island Developing States
2019	The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022

Working Holiday Visas

168. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of working holiday authorisations granted to citizens of the United States of America that have applied through the Irish Embassy and consulates in the USA in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27931/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2008, Ireland and the US signed a Memorandum of Understanding on an Intern Work and Travel Pilot Programme (a.k.a. the Working Holiday Agreement) that enables Irish and US citizens to work and travel in each other's country for up to 12 months. The agreement reflects not only the close historical and cultural links between Ireland and the US, but also the vibrancy of the modern economic and commercial relationship between our countries.

These Working Holiday Authorisations (WHAs) are intended to facilitate US citizens who wish to travel for an extended period in Ireland and to engage in employment as an incidental aspect of their holiday.

In 2017, 528 WHAs were granted to US citizens through the Government's Embassy and Consulate network in the US. In 2018, 466 were granted and to date in 2019, 203 have been granted, with 37 pending and in the system.

Earlier in the year, the Government launched a new strategy for the US and Canada. In this ambitious Strategy, the Government has committed to doubling Ireland's impact and footprint in the US over the period to 2025. Underpinning this, and indeed underpinning the overall Ireland-US bilateral relationship, are the close people-to-people links between our two countries.

Along with academic exchanges and our long term support for the diaspora in the US, WHAs help foster these people-to-people links and the Government's strategy for the US and Canada commits to promoting these valuable exchange opportunities and specifically increasing the uptake of WHAs. This action will create new champions for the transatlantic relationship and will foster ever closer links between Irish and US citizens.

Human Rights

169. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on reports that tuberculosis is widespread in detention centres in Libya; his further views on the treatment of detainees and the conditions which they are subjected to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28032/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The situation in Libya has deteriorated significantly in recent months, with an outbreak of conflict which has put civilians, including migrants and refugees in danger. I am concerned by persistent reports of desperate conditions and mistreatment of migrants and refugees in detention centres. Recent reports of an outbreak of tuberculosis in some detention centres, with a number of people confirmed to have died of the disease in one detention centre, are a matter of particular concern. Ireland and the EU believe that detention centres are not a suitable place for migrants in Libya, and should be closed. This outbreak further underlines that this is the case.

Political fragmentation and the fragile security situation in Libya limit the capacity of the international community to access all areas where migrants are located, or to influence the situation on the ground. The EU provides support to the work of the UNHCR and IOM in Libya, which have staff on the ground there, and who are best placed to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants and refugees in detention centres and elsewhere. They are also working on relocating migrants and refugees to safer places, both inside Libya, and where voluntary return is possible, to their countries of origin.

Ultimately, ensuring adequate treatment of migrants and refugees will require restoration of political stability, and a fully functioning Government. Ireland and the EU continue to support the efforts of the UN Special Representative, Ghassan Salamé, to bring this about. All Libyans, and all international parties, should give their full support to the UN-led political efforts, and parties should ensure that they follow through on commitments made during the talks. All EU Member States have called on the parties to the conflict in Libya to immediately implement a ceasefire, and to re-engage in the UN-led process for an inclusive political settlement. This is the only way to ensure that civilians in Libya, including migrants and refugees, will no longer have to endure the mistreatment and desperate conditions that have been reported.

EU Issues

170. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position of the European Union on the status of US-Iran relations including sanctions imposed by the United States of America; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28033/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Growing tensions between the United States and Iran which have escalated in recent months and weeks, are a worrying development. Following US withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) last year, the EU conveyed our great regret at the decision to the US Government. The EU believes that there is no credible alternative to the JCPOA, which was a significant diplomatic achievement. We remain fully committed to its preservation and full implementation, which is in the security interest of all. We share the US view that Iran's ballistic missile activities should be curtailed, and that its regional activities have exacerbated and prolonged conflicts. However, we believe that the best way to achieve an end to these is to show that diplomatic problem-solving can work, by holding to the gains from the nuclear agreement.

Following the recent ratcheting up of tensions, High Representative/Vice President Federica

Mogherini made a statement on 13 May 2019, which called on both parties to show maximum restraint and to avoid any escalation on a military side. This view was also directly shared with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo by HR/VP Mogherini in her consultations with him in May. The EU has expressed deep regret at the continuing US efforts to tighten general economic sanctions on Iran, and also at Iran's subsequent decision to partially suspend its operation of some commitments under the JCPOA, including limitations on its stocks of nuclear materials. We are also very concerned about the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, for which there can be no excuse. No party has yet claimed responsibility for these. The European Union will continue to monitor tensions between the US and Iran, and where the opportunity arises with both Governments and relevant interlocutors, will encourage a return to diplomatic dialogue and constructive communication.

The EU strongly urges Iran to continue to implement its commitments under the JCPOA in full and to refrain from any escalatory steps. Ireland and the EU will continue to endeavour to ensure the effective fulfilment of the JCPOA and adherence to its commitments by all remaining parties. All parties to the JCPOA, including Iran, Russia and China, met in Vienna on 28 June to discuss continuing implementation of the agreement.

Northern Ireland

171. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of talks to restore the Executive in Northern Ireland; the progress made to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28034/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The absence of vital institutions of the Good Friday Agreement is of grave concern for the Government, as it is for the British Government.

Inclusive multi-party talks are continuing in Belfast involving all five main parties and the two Governments, with a view to reaching agreement which would secure the operation of all the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity.

I have been engaging extensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to encourage the parties to reach an accommodation on outstanding issues and engage substantively on the shape of a final agreement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I believe that there remains a genuine but narrow window of opportunity to reach agreement in the period immediately ahead and intensive talks are continuing to this end.

There has been constructive engagement in the process and it is clear that the parties want to see the institutions of the Agreement operating again on a sustainable basis. There has been broad consensus on some issues, but also key issues are still to be resolved.

The awful murder of Lyra McKee and the outpouring of public feeling that followed demands a serious response at political level. People want to see real progress made. There is no patience for anything except urgent and determined progress, and an openness to new thinking.

Ultimately the challenge is for the parties to find an agreement. This will be difficult, but the two Governments believe that this can, and must, be achieved to get the devolved, power-sharing Assembly and Executive and the NSMC functioning again.

The Government will continue to do everything in its power, in accordance with its respon-

sibilities as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions.

Citizenship Applications

172. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status and timeline for a citizenship application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28073/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Foreign Births Registration, by its nature, can be a detailed and complex process, generally involving official documentation related to three generations and issued by several jurisdictions. Due to the complex nature of Foreign Births Registration, it takes on average between 6 to 12 months to process an application.

With regard to the specific application the Deputy has enquired about, I am advised that the application in question has been received. A member of the Foreign Births Registration Team will contact the applicant directly if any further documents or clarifications are required to process the application

Brexit Preparations

173. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if there will be more Getting Brexit Ready roadshows in 2019; the cost of running each of these roadshows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26959/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government has overseen and co-ordinated a sustained intensification of Brexit preparedness. As part of these efforts, my Department organised “Getting Ireland Brexit Ready” public information events in Cork, Galway, Monaghan, Dublin, Limerick and Donegal throughout autumn 2018 to inform and advise citizens and businesses about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures and resources that the Government has put in place.

These events brought together over a dozen Agencies and their parent Departments – the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - under one roof and were attended by approximately 2,500 people over the October-November period.

While I am currently not yet in a position to confirm any specific plans to hold further events in this particular format in 2019, other Brexit preparedness-related public information activities and events continue to be organised across Ireland by Government Departments and State Agencies on an ongoing basis. Since September 2018, there have been over 100 such events run across 22 counties and more will follow over the coming months. Relevant details on all these activities and events and on Brexit preparedness more generally can be found via the gov.ie/brexit website and the @BrexitReadyIRL Twitter account.

Ministerial Meetings

174. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to have a bilateral meeting with his Portuguese counterpart; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [28160/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I met bilaterally with Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Augusto Santos Silva when he visited Dublin in April 2018 and we are both regular attendees at meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council, which has responsibility for the EU's external affairs.

While I have no plans to have another bilateral meeting with Minister Santos Silva in the immediate future, I will continue to engage regularly with him at EU-level and we will have further bilateral meetings where appropriate.

Consular Services

175. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when the new consulate general offices in Frankfurt and Los Angeles will open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28161/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The new Consulates General in Frankfurt and Los Angeles will open later this year with the first staff arriving at the end of August and the formal openings taking place a short time later once the office set-up is complete.

Working closely with the Embassy in Berlin, the new Consulate General in Frankfurt will focus on strengthening Ireland's relationship with Germany, both bilaterally and in the context of our shared EU membership. The office will allow Ireland to build on our existing presence in this economic and financial powerhouse. The primary focus of the Mission will be on trade and economic issues, alongside political engagement with the federal authorities. Significant numbers of Irish companies operate in Hesse and there is potential to grow our engagement in areas such as FinTech. Frankfurt is also home to the European Central Bank and the Single Supervisory Mechanism, making it the financial capital of the Euro area, vitally important to Ireland's economic interests. The office will also undertake an intensive public diplomacy programme, with a media and cultural promotion focus, to develop Ireland's profile and image in Hesse and the neighbouring states Rheinland-Pflaz and Saarland.

The new Consulate General in Los Angeles will facilitate the development of high level business, community and political contacts, and will maximise the economic opportunities on offer in the fifth largest economy in the world, particularly in relation to tech and the creative industries, but also in finance, bio-tech, healthcare, aerospace and aviation. The office will have a strong economic focus, with forty percent of the foreign direct investment to Ireland already coming from the west coast region of the US. The office will also strengthen our presence on the ground by opening up new opportunities for investment and job creation. The new Consulate General will focus on building networks and supporting the 140 Irish companies operating in California, several of whom have large operations in Southern California. It will also take a lead role in coordinating cultural and artistic linkages to Ireland, initially with a focus on Los Angeles but eventually California and Western US.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Data

176. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons in County Mayo that have availed of the help to buy scheme in 2018 and to date in 2019. [27673/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Revenue statistics on the Help to Buy incentive are published at the following link:

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

As the Deputy will note, there were 79 Help to Buy claims in Mayo in 2018 and 46 between January and May so far this year.

National Economic Dialogue

177. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the National Economic Dialogue Conference in June 2019. [27994/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware the fifth National Economic Dialogue took place on June 26th and 27th this year. This dialogue plays an integral part in the preparations for Budget 2020 and provided an opportunity to consider how best to optimise available resources in the interests of all citizens.

The aim is to foster discussion on how to best sustain and strengthen the recovery while taking account of the many competing economic and social priorities within the limited available resources.

As with previous years, this year's Dialogue had representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders, including from community, voluntary and environmental groups, businesses, unions, and the academic community. In addition a number of members of the Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight also contributed to the event.

My opening remarks on "Understanding the Context: Economic Perspectives" and my closing remarks at the Dialogue are available at www.budget.gov.ie along with the paper presented at the NED. When the Chair's report is finalised it and the reports of the six rapporteurs will also be made available on that website.

I believe the National Economic Dialogue is a very constructive exercise. The Dialogues of previous years have had a material affect on the choices made in the budget. I intend to reflect on this year's discussion when formulating Budget 2020.

VAT Exemptions

178. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide for the removal of VAT for low emission slurry spreading equipment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27861/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In accordance with Irish VAT legislation, slurry spreading equipment is liable to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%, and there is no discretion, under the Directive, to exempt these goods from VAT.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that farmers may elect to register for VAT or be treated as flat-rate farmers for VAT purposes. Farmers that are registered for VAT have an entitlement to reclaim VAT charged on costs incurred in relation to the farm business, including VAT borne on the purchase of agricultural equipment. Farmers that are not registered for VAT

are compensated for the VAT incurred on goods and services used in the course of their farming business, including purchases of agricultural machinery, through the flat rate addition they receive on payments for their supplies of agricultural produce and services.

Tax Code

179. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is paying the correct tax on their pension. [27496/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed that the person in question is in receipt of a pension from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and receives a private occupational pension.

Revenue has confirmed that where a person is in receipt of both a State pension and a private pension, any income tax that may be due in respect of the State pension is collected by reducing the income tax credits applied to the private pension.

For example, where a person in receipt of both a State pension and a private pension receives an increase of €5 per week (€260 per year) in the State pension, an additional tax liability of €1 per week falls due from his/her private pension, i.e. (€260 x 20% standard rate/52 weeks).

Revenue has also advised me that it has examined the tax record of the person concerned and is satisfied that the correct amount of tax is being deducted. Revenue has contacted the person and clarified the position with them.

Financial Services Regulation

180. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the criteria for the industry fund levy for the Central Bank was devised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27504/19]

181. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance the proposed breakdown for each contributor of the industry fund levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27505/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 181 together.

The Central Bank's total funding requirement for financial regulation activity is determined on an annual basis by the resources required to discharge its legal responsibilities under domestic and EU law. Section 32D and 32E of the Central Bank Act 1942, as amended, provide that the Central Bank Commission may make regulations relating to the imposition of levies and fees on the financial services sector in respect of the recoupment of the costs of financial regulation.

As it stands, the financial services industry currently funds 80% of the costs incurred by the Central Bank for financial regulation, with certain exceptions. [Banks which had participated in the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee (ELG) Scheme, namely AIB, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB, which are required to fund 100% of the Central Bank's regulatory costs. The levies for Credit Unions are currently capped at 0.01% of total assets as at 30 September in the previous year. As a result, the Credit Union sector currently funds approximately 9% of the cost of their regulation.] This means that the subvention from the Central Bank amounts to approximately 20% of the total cost. What this translates to in monetary terms will be determined by the re-

sources required by the Bank to discharge its legal responsibilities during a given year.

As until now, levies were based on estimates, at the end of each year, budgeted income and expenses are compared with actual income and expenses by the Central Bank, on a category by category basis, in order to arrive at the amount over (surplus) or under (deficit) recovered from Industry. Deficits are added to the amount to be raised from Industry in the following year while surpluses are deducted.

In 2018, the cost of financial regulation activities was funded by levies of approximately €128 million and subvention of €66 million. However, there was a deficit carried forward from 2017, which meant that the actual amount of Levy income raised from industry for 2018 was approximately €137 million.

Table 1: 2018 Levy Income by sector (extracted from Note 40, 2018 Financial Statements of the Central Bank)

Sector	2018 Levy Amount	2018 Levy Income including deficit from 2017 Levy Amount	% of total 2018 Levy Income
	€000	€000	
Credit Institutions	54,751	59,753	43.7%
Insurance Undertakings	35,647	35,002	25.6%
Intermediaries & Debt Management Firms	6,098	5,925	4.3%
Securities & Investment Firms	19,894	23,594	17.3%
Investment Funds	5,508	5,418	4.0%
Credit Unions	1,665	1,665	1.2%
Moneylenders	887	741	0.5%
Approved Professional Bodies	34	18	0.0%
Bureaux de Change	11	4	0.0%
Home Reversion, Retail Credit & Credit Servicing Firms	1,371	2,601	1.9%
Payment Services & E-Money Institutions	1,270	1,875	1.4%
Total Funding	127,136	136,596	100.0%

More information on the 2018 levies and levy income, and a more detailed version of Table 1, can be found in the Central Bank's 2018 Annual Report, available at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/corporate-reports/annual-reports/2018-central-bank-annual-report.pdf?sfvrsn=11>

If industry was fully charged, there would be no subvention, however, there are certain costs (e.g. markets supervision) which it may be appropriate to continue to subvent on an ongoing basis where the costs cannot be attributed to specific firms but do relate to the orderly function of markets and the financial stability agenda.

In 2015, the Department of Finance and Central Bank of Ireland issued a joint public consultation on 'Funding the cost of Financial Regulation' (CP95).

In response to that consultation, my predecessor as Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan, agreed to a phased movement towards 100 per cent Industry Funding in order to eliminate sub-

vention, by the taxpayer, of regulatory costs. Since then, recovery rates have increased in stages across most industry sectors, determined on a yearly basis. Now, in order to give greater clarity to industry, I have approved the trajectory to bring the recovery rate of levies across sectors to 100 per cent over the coming years. This change in policy will apply the user pays principle to the regulation of financial services.

The following table shows the planned trajectory for levy rates across all sectors. Credit Union recovery rates from 2022 onwards will be subject to review and a public consultation to guide strategy once 50% recovery rates have been achieved. The Central Bank published this trajectory on 14 June 2019 and it is available on the Central Bank website at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/news/article/press-release-funding-the-cost-of-financial-regulation-14-june-2019>

Table 2: Trajectory of recovery rates to fund the cost of Financial Regulation

Levy Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Levied in	2017	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
ELG Banks	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Banks	65%	80%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Insurance Undertakings	65%	80%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Investment Firms & Fund Service Providers	65%	80%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Funds	65%	65%	80%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Retail Intermediaries & Debt Management Co's	50%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%
Moneylenders	65%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%
Approved Professional Bodies	65%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%
Bureau de Change/Money Transmitters	65%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%
Retail Credit / Home Reversion / Credit Servicing Firms	65%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%
Payment & EMoney Institutions	65%	65%	70%	75%	80%	90%	100%	100%

Invoices for 2019 levies will issue on an arrears basis in Quarter 3 2020 as the Central Bank implements its strategy to move from levies based on budgeted to levies based on actual costs. This is to address an aspect of volatility in response to industry feedback by eliminating large balancing surpluses and deficits (as identified above) in favour of levies based on the Central Bank's audited financial statements. While businesses should accrue for 2019 costs in their financial statements, many will welcome the cashflow effect arising from this change.

Further information can be found in the Funding Strategy and Guide to the 2018 Industry Funding Regulation, where the Central Bank set out its 3-year funding strategy. The Strategy document is available on the Central Bank website at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/regulation/how-we-regulate/fees-levies/industry-funding-levy/guidance/funding-strategy-and-guide-to-the-2018-industry-funding-regulations.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

Living City Initiative

182. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of successful applicants by city or town under the living city initiative since its introduction; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [27526/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that applications for the Living City Initiative are only required to be made to the relevant local authority under the owner-occupier and rented residential elements of the scheme. Applications are not required to be made under the commercial element of the scheme.

Based on the most recent information received by Revenue from the City and County Councils, the number of successful applications per eligible city since the introduction of the scheme is as follows:

City	Applications Received
Dublin	78
Cork	64
Limerick	17
Waterford	32
Kilkenny	11
Galway	3

Budget Measures

183. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the pre-committed expenditure for Budget 2020; the demographics, capital commitments and other pre-committed expenditure including the nominal equivalent for each component; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27616/19]

184. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of non-voted expenditure carried over for Budget 2020; the other general Government commitments that will impact Budget 2020; the GEC increases and negative DRMs that will impact Budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27617/19]

185. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the discretionary revenue raising measures that will impact Budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27618/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 to 185, inclusive, together.

The Deputy's questions relate to the difference between gross and net fiscal space.

As I have noted on many occasions, undue focus on the concept of fiscal space, which is calculated based on 'one size fits all' European rules, is inappropriate. Government budgetary policy is formulated based on what is right for the economy given our position in the economic cycle, not by a narrow, literal interpretation of what is permissible under the fiscal rules.

Table A1 of the Summer Economic Statement 2019 sets out an itemised 'walk' from the gross fiscal space permitted within the expenditure benchmark pillar of the European fiscal rules to net fiscal space.

This difference between gross and net fiscal space takes account of the measures that have already been provided for within the fiscal projections. The residual - net fiscal space - represents an additional amount on top of the existing budgetary increases that a literal application of the fiscal rules would allow. Using net fiscal space therefore worsens the headline general government balance.

The breakdown of pre-committed voted expenditure is shown in block *j*. The table details amounts that have been budgeted for in relation to demographics, the Public Service Stability Agreement and the carryover of Budget 2019 measures. As these all relate to current expenditure measures the nominal and fiscal space cost is the same.

However, as this table relates to fiscal space the amount shown for voted capital expenditure represents the smoothing over a four-year period in accordance with European fiscal rules. The corresponding nominal increase for 2020 is €0.7 billion, as noted elsewhere in the Summer Economic Statement.

Row *k* delineates the movement related to ‘other expenditure’. As the assessment of fiscal space under the expenditure benchmark is carried out within the statistical framework of the European System of Accounts (ESA) 2010, this block of data also includes non-voted expenditure movements within the wider general government expenditure aggregate (subject to a number of technical adjustments).

Also shown are the expenditure increases budgeted for, but not committed to any measure, as well as the assumed tax reductions within the fiscal projections. The final row in this block is a residual between the corrected expenditure aggregate movement and all of the items detailed thus far. As such, this item cannot be further disaggregated as it relates to a number of moving parts.

Details of the discretionary tax policy measures that form part of the current set of fiscal projections were set out in the Budget 2019 Tax Policy Changes document, published as part of Budget 2019.

It is not the practice of the Minister for Finance to discuss the details of future discretionary revenue measures which may be under consideration as part of the Budget and Finance Bill.

Extract from Table A1: expenditure benchmark approach to fiscal space for 2020, € billions

-	Fiscal space amount	Nominal increase
j. Pre-committed fiscal space for Voted expenditure	2.3	1.9
demographics	0.5	0.5
public service stability agreement	0.4	0.4
carryover of Budget 2019 measures	0.3	0.3
capital/NDP (smoothed)	1.1	0.7
k. Other	1.1	1.1
unallocated current expenditure (within GEC)	0.3	0.3
expenditure reserve for 2020	-0.2	-0.2
tax reductions	0.6	0.6
other (non-voted and gg)	0.3	0.3

Insurance Costs

186. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence from a person (details supplied) regarding young driver insurance; and his further views on points raised in same. [27620/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the outset, the Deputy should note that I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can interfere in the provision or pricing of

insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the price or the level of cover to be provided to motorists, including young motorists.

I understand that motor insurers use a combination of rating factors in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply. Factors include those such as the age of the driver and the relevant driving experience, as well as the age and type of vehicle, how the vehicle is used, the claims record, and the number of drivers. Insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices vary across the market. In addition, insurance companies also price in accordance with their own past claims experience. I acknowledge the point that it would be helpful if insurers provided appropriately anonymised actuarial data to support their case with regard to pricing policy for younger motorists, however insurers argue that such information is commercially sensitive and unfortunately I am not in a position to compel them to disclose such information.

Notwithstanding the above, the Cost of Insurance Working Group was established in July 2016 and undertook an examination of the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance in order to identify what short, medium and long-term measures could be introduced to help reduce the cost of insurance for consumers and businesses. The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and as part of that exercise, there was and has been extensive interaction with the insurance industry and its representative bodies. The *Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance* was published in January 2017 and makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan. In January 2018, the Working Group published the *Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance*. This Report makes a further 15 Recommendations with 29 associated actions. While this Report is focussed on addressing issues linked to business insurance, the implementation of recommendations from both reports will have a positive impact for all consumers and businesses including young motorists.

There has been significant work to date in implementing the recommendations of the two aforementioned reports, including the following:

- the establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission, and its subsequent recommendations relating to addressing award levels for soft tissue injuries – this has provided the objective evidence we need to be able to address award levels;
- the establishment of the National Claims Information Database in the Central Bank to increase transparency around the future cost of private motor insurance;
- reforms to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board through the *Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Act 2019* ;
- amendments to Sections 8 and 14 of the *Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004* to make it easier for businesses and insurers to challenge cases where fraud or exaggeration is suspected;
- the reform of the Insurance Compensation Fund to provide certainty to policyholders and insurers; and,
- various reforms of how fraud is reported to and dealt with by An Garda Síochána, including increased co-ordination with the insurance industry, as well as the recent decision by the

Garda Commissioner to develop a divisional focus on insurance fraud which will be guided by the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) which will also train Gardaí all over the country on investigating insurance fraud, and the recent success under *Operation Coatee*, which targets insurance-related criminality.

I believe that these reforms are having a significant impact with regard to private motor insurance (CSO figures from May 2019 show that the price of motor insurance is now 24.5% lower than the July 2016 peak).

Undoubtedly the single most essential challenge which must be overcome if there is to be a further sustainable reduction in insurance costs for motorists is to bring the levels of personal injury damages awarded in this country more in line with those awarded in other jurisdictions. In this regard, the Personal Injuries Commission has highlighted the significant differential between award levels in Ireland and other jurisdictions, and has made a number of recommendations to address this issue, in particular the establishment of a Judicial Council to compile guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury. In this regard, relevant amendments were agreed to the Judicial Council Bill at Report Stage in the Seanad two weeks ago and I am pleased that the Bill subsequently completed its consideration by the Seanad. This is a significant step and both I and Minister of State D'Arcy are hopeful that the Bill can now complete its consideration by Dáil Éireann and be enacted before the summer recess.

Finally, I would advise younger drivers who are quoted increased premiums to consult the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website (<https://www.ccpc.ie/>), which has an informative section regarding the purchase of car insurance generally. One of the key tips listed to help cut costs is to “shop around” and “always get quotes from several insurance providers when you need to get or renew insurance”. Insurance Ireland also operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Insurance Ireland can be contacted at feedback@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761914.

Employment Investment Incentive Scheme

187. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the status of an employment investment incentive scheme application submitted to the Revenue Commissioners in February 2019 by a company (details supplied); and when a response will issue in respect of same. [27625/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that all Employment and Investment Incentive applications received by Revenue are processed by the date order in which they are received.

Revenue advise me that the application in question has been received and examined, and that contact was made with the taxpayer's representatives by Revenue on 26 June 2019 regarding the outcome of this examination.

Irish Collective Asset Management Vehicles

188. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of listed undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities, UCITS, registered as Irish collective asset-management vehicle, ICAVs; the percentage this comprises of total UCITS; the gross value of the UCITS that are registered as ICAVs; and the percentage of this value of UCITS

value. [27627/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities (UCITS) were first introduced in 1985. The UCITS Directive sets out a common set of rules for the cross-border distribution of collective investment schemes via the European Passport. UCITS were designed with the retail consumer in mind, ensuring appropriate levels of protection for investors. The key common aspects of UCITS funds are that they must be open-ended and liquid. The Central Bank of Ireland is the competent authority in Ireland for UCITS.

The Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicle (ICAV), which was introduced in 2015, is a corporate vehicle designed specifically for Irish domiciled and regulated investment funds. The Central Bank of Ireland is the registrar for ICAVs. All ICAVs must be registered and authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland.

I been informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that UCITS, including UCITS which are registered as ICAVs, are not required to list on regulated markets and the Central Bank does not track the number of listed UCITS. Thus in the time available, my officials have not been able to determine if this information is available publicly from alternative sources. My officials will continue to examine the issue and will revert to the Deputy if it is possible to source the number of listed UCITS registered as ICAVs.

In relation to ICAVs that are UCITS, I have been informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that:

- Number of UCITS ICAVs (including sub-funds and standalone funds) = 613
- UCITS ICAVs as a percentage of total UCITS = 13.23%
- UCITS ICAVs total NAV = €61.9 billion (rounded)
- UCITS ICAVs total NAV as a percentage of UCITS total NAV = 3.13%

Irish Real Estate Fund

189. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the value of the property and real estate investment held by all funds domiciled here; and the gross value and proportion of the total asset value figures of the amount that relates to residential and commercial properties. [27628/19]

190. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the value of all assets held by IREFs; and the gross value terms and proportion of the total asset value terms of the amount that relates to residential and commercial properties. [27629/19]

191. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of IREFs domiciled here; the number registered as ICAV structures, QIAIFs, RIAIFs and UCITS, respectively, in tabular form; and the percentage share of IREFs in each of the fund categories or corporate structures listed. [27630/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 to 191, inclusive, together.

I am advised by Revenue that, with regard to the information included on tax returns filed with Revenue, it is not possible to identify the value of property and real estate investments held

by all funds domiciled in the State.

The Deputy will be aware that an IREF is an investment undertaking, or a sub-fund, which derives 25% or more of its market value from assets deriving their value directly or indirectly from real estate in the State. The Irish Real Estate Funds (IREF) regime was introduced in Finance Act 2016 in response to concerns raised regarding the use of certain collective investment vehicles to invest in Irish property. Investors had been using the structures to minimise their exposure to Irish tax on Irish property transactions. The regime provides, with some exceptions, that where a unit holder receives value from the IREF, an IREF withholding tax of 20% will generally apply.

In respect of the value of assets held by Irish Real Estate Funds (IREFs), only partial information is available from the IREF tax returns filed with Revenue for the years 2017 and 2018. In this regard, IREFs are required to file an IREF tax return only where they have a taxable event in a particular year and therefore not all IREFs will have made returns for these years. The initial information in relation to IREFs that have made a return is available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/ct-analysis-2019.pdf>.

IREFs were required by regulation to file annual financial statements on or before 30 January 2019 with Revenue for accounting periods which ended during 2017 and accounting periods which ended on or before 30 June 2018. The information contained on the financial statements is currently being reviewed and analysed by Revenue. Once this analysis is completed, Revenue will be in a position to provide more detail on the value of Irish real estate held by IREFs.

In relation to the Deputy's question different types of funds, authorised investment funds in Ireland are established as either Undertakings for Collective Investment in Transferable Securities (UCITS) or Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). The IREF regime does not apply to UCITS funds as UCITS are widely-held retail funds with diversification requirements. AIFs are authorised by the Central Bank as either a Qualifying Investor AIF (QIAIF) or a Retail Investor AIF (RIAIF). IREFs are generally structured as unit trusts, Irish collective asset-management vehicles (ICAVs) or as a designated investment company. I am advised by Revenue that, as previously stated, as the analysis of IREF financial statements has not yet completed, Revenue is not currently in a position to provide the information requested by the Deputy. I expect this analysis to conclude, and to be in a position to provide the resulting data to Deputies, in the near future.

Irish Collective Asset Management Vehicles

192. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of qualifying investor alternative investment funds QIAIFs registered as ICAVs; the percentage this comprises of total QIAIFs; the gross value of the QIAIFs that are registered as ICAVs; and the percentage of this value of total QIAIFs value. [27631/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicle (ICAV), which was introduced in 2015, is a corporate vehicle designed specifically for Irish domiciled and regulated investment funds. All ICAVs must be registered and authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland.

Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) are subject to the requirements of the Alternative Investment Funds Directive (AIFMD), which are (AIFs - regulated by the AIFMD Directive). In Ireland the Central Bank of Ireland is the competent authority for the purposes of AIFMD.

I have been informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that AIFs can be split into two types:

2 July 2019

- Retail Investor AIFs (“RIAIF”) which are marketed to retail investors; and
- Qualifying Investor AIFs (“QIAIF”) which are marketed to Qualifying Investors.

The Qualifying Investor AIF is a regulated investment fund suitable for well-informed and professional investors. As the QIAIF is not subject to any investment or borrowing restrictions, it can be used for the widest range of investment purposes. In Ireland the vast majority of AIFs are QIAIFs, with only a small minority approved as RIAIFs.

As at 31st May of 2019:

- Number of QIAIFs registered as ICAVs (including sub-funds and standalone funds) = 968
- QIAIF ICAVs as a percentage of total QIAIFs = 38.01%
- QIAIF ICAVs total NAV = €170.2 billion (rounded)
- QIAIF ICAVs total NAV as % of QIAIF total NAV = 26.95%.

Irish Collective Asset Management Vehicles

193. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of alternative investment funds, AIFs, registered as ICAVs; the percentage this comprises of total AIFs; the gross value of the AIFs that are registered as ICAVs; and the percentage of this value of total AIFs value. [27632/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicle (ICAV), which was introduced in 2015, is a corporate vehicle designed specifically for Irish domiciled and regulated investment funds. The Central Bank of Ireland is the national competent authority for investment funds in Ireland and in addition acts as the registrar for ICAVs. All ICAVs must be registered and authorised by the Central Bank of Ireland.

I have been informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that in relation to AIF ICAVs, as at 31st of May 2019 the position is as follows:

- Number of AIF ICAVs (including sub-funds and standalone funds) = 998
- AIF ICAVs as % of total AIFs = 34.85%
- AIF ICAVs total NAV = €178.6 billion (rounded)
- AIF ICAVs total NAV as % of AIF total NAV = 26.39%

Credit Union Regulation

194. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the policy of his Department and the Central Bank in relation to credit union loans and savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27691/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Credit unions in Ireland are regulated and supervised under a specific piece of legislation - the Credit Union Act, 1997 and regulations issued by the Central Bank, which set out the framework for the registration, regulation and operation of credit unions including detailed governance requirements and prudential requirements on items including reserves, liquidity, member savings and lending.

The Central Bank has developed and published the Credit Union Handbook to assist credit unions by bringing together in one place the legal and regulatory requirements, and guidance that apply to credit unions, arising from their authorisation as credit unions. The Central Bank has included specific chapters within the Credit Union Handbook which deal with Lending and Savings, Chapters 13 and 19 respectively. The Credit Union Handbook is available at the following link: <https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/industry-market-sectors/credit-unions/credit-union-handbook>

In relation to lending, on 24 October 2018 the Central Bank published Consultation Paper (CP125) on potential changes to the lending framework for credit unions. The proposals contained in CP125 include the removal of the existing lending maturity limits which cap the percentage of credit union lending which may be outstanding for periods of greater than 5 and 10 years, and the introduction of concentration limits, on a tiered basis, for home mortgage and commercial loans expressed as a percentage of total assets.

The consultation period closed on 9 January 2019. Following its review of feedback received, in accordance with statutory requirements, the Central Bank will be undertaking consultations with myself, the Credit Union Advisory Committee and credit union representative bodies on proposed draft regulations. Following this the Central Bank expects to publish a feedback statement and final regulations in the latter half of 2019.

In terms of savings, the Credit Union Act 1997 (Regulatory Requirements) Regulations 2016 (the 2016 Regulations) set an individual savings limit of €100,000 that applies on a per member basis. The 2016 Regulations also provided that credit unions could apply to the Central Bank to retain individual members' savings in excess of €100,000, which were held at commencement of the Regulations and that credit unions with total assets in excess of €100 million can apply to the Central Bank for approval to increase individual member savings in excess of €100,000.

The introduction of the savings limit by the Central Bank followed a public consultation, CP88 - *Consultation on Regulations for Credit Unions on commencement of the remaining sections of the 2012 Act*. In the feedback statement to CP88, the Central Bank outlined that having considered the feedback received the Central Bank was of the view that an individual members savings limit of €100,000 is appropriate given the stage of development of the sector and the Central Bank's mandate to ensure the protection of members' funds by credit unions and safeguarding the stability of the sector.

The Deputy might also be interested to note that I will be bringing forward the Credit Union Interest on Loans Bill 2019 shortly. This bill will amend the current one per cent per month interest rate ceiling for credit unions, permitting credit unions to charge up to two per cent per month. This amendment will provide credit unions with greater flexibility to risk price loan products and in so doing may create an opportunity for credit unions to provide new product offerings.

Fiscal Policy

195. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of reducing a tax by percentage points (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27697/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that cost of reducing the rate of Capital Gains Tax (CGT) can be found in Revenue's

Ready Reckoner at the following link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/ready-reckoner/index.aspx>.

For the Deputy's convenience, the following table presents this information.

Reduction in the CGT Rate	Full Year € Million
From 33% to 32%	37
From 33% to 31%	73
From 33% to 28%	183

Fiscal Policy

196. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of reducing a tax by percentage points (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27698/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the cost of reducing the rate of DIRT can be found in Revenue's Ready Reckoner at link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/ready-reckoner/index.aspx>.

For the Deputy's convenience, the following table presents this information.

Reduction in the standard rate of DIRT	Full Year € Million
From 33% to 31%	5
From 33% to 29%	10
From 33% to 27%	14

Carbon Tax Yield

197. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the solid fuel carbon tax collected in 2017 and 2018, by categories (details supplied). [27778/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that the solid fuel carbon tax collected in 2017 and 2018, by the supplied categories, is provided in the following table.

Details	2017 Millions €	2018 Millions €
Coal to Greenhouse Gas emissions permit holders	1.13	1.39
All other taxable coal	13.55	17.91
Peat Briquettes	4.32	5.96
Milled Peat	0.01	0.01
Other Peat	0.08	0.07
Total	19.09	25.34

Revenue Commissioners Staff

198. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost to recruit 40 additional audit and compliance staff at AO level for the Revenue Commissioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27785/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It is estimated that the full year cost of recruiting 40 additional audit and compliance staff at Administrative Officer (AO) level would be approximately €2.6 million.

This figure is calculated based on the mid-point of the current Administrative Officer salary scale, which is €41,791 per annum; and in line with guidance on the calculation of staff costs including the estimation of attributable overheads, as outlined in ‘*The Public Spending Code: E. Technical References: E-01*’, prepared by the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which can be viewed at the following link: <https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/e-01-calculation-of-staff-costs/>.

Help-To-Buy Scheme

199. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if the help to buy scheme will be extended beyond the end of 2019 or terminated at this point; if the scheme is to be terminated; if a replacement scheme will be brought into force; and the assistance which will be available to assist first-time buyers. [27835/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Help to Buy incentive (HTB) is scheduled to expire on 31 December 2019. This is provided for in Section 477C of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. As is normal practice, the role and operation of the incentive will be examined in the context of the forthcoming Budget and Finance Bill process. It would be premature at this point to anticipate the outcome of that examination.

Financial Services Regulation

200. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number and value of charge-back refunds requested by customers of regulated entities; the amount of refunds issued by those entities in respect of transactions not authorised by the cardholder (details supplied); the policy in terms of the person or body responsible for the disputed transaction; the role of the debit and credit card provider in that regard; the timeframes within which customers must seek a charge-back for a disputed transaction; the views of the Central Bank on the issue of disputed transactions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27867/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Central Bank that it does not collect the data on these in the way the Deputy requests. The term charge-back can cover many circumstances. Requests for refunds may be handled by the card issuer in accordance with rules established by industry.

It may be helpful, however, to outline the legal position in respect of unauthorised and incorrectly executed payments. The European Union (Payment Services) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 6 of 2018), transposed the Payment Services Directive (“PSD2”) into Irish law and establish common rules for certain types of electronic payments, including card payments. Under these rules, a payment service user is entitled to rectification of an unauthorised or incorrectly executed payment transaction from a payment service provider where the payment service user notifies the payment service provider. The payment service user must make this notification without undue delay, and no later than 13 months after the debit date. The payer’s payment service provider must refund the amount of any unauthorised payment transaction immediately and in any event not later than the end of the following business day, except where fraud is suspected.

I would advise any person who is not satisfied with the actions of a card issuer in respect of an unauthorised or incorrectly executed payment transaction to make a complaint under the company's internal complaint resolution process. If they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can make a complaint to the independent Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman. Investigations by the Ombudsman are free of charge to the complainant.

Departmental Reviews

201. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27882/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, the following table sets out the live studies, reviews and research currently being undertaken by my Department, including the date by which each is scheduled to be completed.

Live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned	Date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed
Department of Finance History Fellowship	2022
Residential Construction and Aggregate Bank Funding	Q4 2019 (December)
IGEES Joint Research project - Opinions and aspirations of the over 55s towards housing	Q4 2019 (December)
Purchasing and Selling Activity of Institutional Investors	Q4 2019 (December)
Studying the reasons for the decline of the labour share of national income across Europe	Q4 2019 (December)
2019 Review of the Research and Development Tax Credit	Q4 2019 (October)
Second Section 227 Review into NAMA's achievement of its objectives.	Q4 2019
Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) currently undertaking Research with Directors of Credit Unions.	Q4 2019
ESRI Joint Research Programme - The effects of an incremental increase in the Irish carbon tax towards 2030	Q4 2019
ESRI Joint Research Programme - Corporation Tax Elasticities	Q4 2019
ESRI Joint Research Programme - Growth Enhancing Fiscal Policies	Q4 2019
Report of the Tax Forecasting Methodology Review Group 2019	Q4 2019
Economic evaluation by Indecon consulting to consider how the objectives of community banking and how the local provision of banking and financial services could be furthered.	Q4 2019
Department of Finance to consider the establishment of a Central Bank stakeholder engagement group (Action measure no. 2 as part of the 2019 actions under the "Ireland for Finance: The strategy for the development of Ireland's international financial services sector to 2025" which is available here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/209a77-ifs2020-strategy/)	Q4 2019
Department of Finance will work with the CSO and others towards further collection and analysis of data on the IFS sector (Action measure no. 12 as part of the 2019 actions under the "Ireland for Finance: The strategy for the development of Ireland's international financial services sector to 2025" which is available here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/209a77-ifs2020-strategy/)	Q4 2019
Review of the Home Carer Tax Credit	Q4 2019

Questions - Written Answers

Live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned	Date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed
Department of Finance/ESRI joint research paper on SME Investment Patterns	Q4 2019
Review of Capital Gains Tax Entrepreneur Relief (Section 597AA TCA 1997)	Q3/Q4 2019
Review of Capital Gains Tax Farm Restructuring Relief (Section 604B TCA 1997)	Q3/Q4 2019
Review of the Special Assignee Relief Programme and the Foreign Earnings Deduction	Q3 2019 (August)
Research paper on the Balance of Payments in Ireland (conducted internally)	Q3 2019 (July/August)
Tax Strategy Group Paper - Real Estate Investment Trusts, Irish Real Estate Funds and Section 110 Companies as they invest in the Irish Property Market	Q3 2019 (July)
SME Credit Demand Survey October 2018 – March 2019	Q3 2019
Research into capping the cost of licensed moneylenders and other regulatory matters	Q3 2019
Developing a nowcasting model for underlying economic activity in Ireland	Q3 2019
Review of Government Bank Remuneration Policy	2019
Fiscal Vulnerabilities Scoping Paper	Q3 2019

Departmental Reports

202. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Finance the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27906/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, the following table sets out the policy documents and strategies published by my Department since 1 January 2016.

Policy documents and strategies	Year published
Ireland for Finance: The strategy for the development of Ireland's international financial services sector to 2025	2019
Guidance Note on Transfer of Banking Business	2019
Revision National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing in Ireland	2019
New Technologies Risk Assessment	2019
IFS 2020 Action Plan 2019: A strategy for Ireland's international financial services sector 2015 - 2020	2019
The Review of Local Property Tax, the report of the Interdepartmental Group	2019
Department's FOI Publication Scheme 2019	2019
Department's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020	2018
Department's Governance Framework (Sept 2018)	2018
Review of Regulation of Personal Contract Plans	2018
Department's Irish Language Scheme 2018-2021	2018

Policy documents and strategies	Year published
Local Public Banking in Ireland - An analysis of a model for developing a system of local public banking in Ireland	2018
Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) Regulatory Impact Assessment	2018
Irish Gambling Sector Risk Assessment	2018
A review on the comparisons and tax treatment of DIRT and LAET	2018
IFS 2020 Action Plan 2018: A strategy for Ireland's international financial services sector 2015 – 2020	2018
Indecon Vacant Property Tax Report	2018
Tax Strategy Group 2018 papers – includes 10 papers relating to tax/social welfare issues	2018
The use of intermediary-type structures and self-employment arrangements: Implications for Social Insurance and Tax Revenues	2018
Quality Customer Service 2018 – 2020 Customer Charter, Customer Service Action Plan, Complaints Procedure	2018
ATAD Implementation Controlled Foreign Company (CFC) Rules – Feedback Statement	2018
Ireland's Corporation Tax Roadmap Incorporating implementation of the Anti-Tax Avoidance Directives and recommendations of the Coffey Review	2018
Independent Review of the Workload and Operations of the Tax Appeals Commission	2018
Review of the 9% VAT Rate – Analysis of Economic and Sectoral Developments	2018
Tax Expenditure Review of Three Year Start-Up Relief	2018
Department's Governance Framework (November 2017)	2017
Department's Governance Framework (May 2017)	2017
Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) Policy Paper – Common Bond	2017
Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) Policy Paper – Alternative Means of Voting by Members	2017
Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) Policy Paper – Loan Interest Rate Cap	2017
Rainy Day Fund Consultation Paper	2017
IFS 2020 Action Plan 2017: A strategy for Ireland's international financial services sector 2015 - 2020	2017
Tax Strategy Group 2017 papers – includes 13 papers relating to tax/social welfare issues	2017
Review of Ireland's Corporation Tax Code (The Coffey Review)	2017
Update on Ireland's International Tax Strategy 2017	2017
Review of the Accelerated Capital Allowances Scheme for Energy Efficient Equipment	2017
VAT Compensation Scheme for Charities	2017
Department's Statement of Strategy 2016-2019	2016
Department's Governance Framework (October 2016)	2016
National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing in Ireland	2016
Tax Strategy Group 2016 papers – includes 10 papers relating to tax/social welfare issues	2016
Update on Ireland's International Tax Strategy 2016	2016
Economic Evaluation of the R&D Tax Credit	2016
Annual Budget and related documents are available at http://budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2020/2020.aspx	

Summer Economic Statement

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €600 million for discretionary revenue-raising measures in the summer economic statement, including, in the case of non-indexation, the revenue associated with each tax credit or threshold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27909/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The carryover to 2020 of tax measures introduced in Budget 2019 is estimated to be in the region of €0.05 billion.

As part of the preparations for Budget 2019, it was estimated that the Exchequer yield from non-indexation of the income tax system would be in the region of €0.57 billion on a full year basis. In light of the publication of the Revenue Commissioners *Post-Budget 2019 Income Tax Ready Reckoner* this estimate has not changed materially.

In total, these measures come to approximately €0.6 billion.

Brexit Preparations

204. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated nominal general Government balance in each of the years 2020 to 2024 in a disorderly Brexit scenario; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27945/19]

209. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the projected Exchequer borrowing requirements in each year between 2020 and 2024 under the orderly and the disorderly Brexit scenarios, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27958/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 204 and 209 together.

Due to the unprecedented nature of Brexit there is considerable uncertainty regarding what will be its precise impact on the economy as a whole, and on particular sectors. As a result it is challenging to accurately estimate the effect of a disorderly Brexit on the Exchequer borrowing requirement and, consequently, on the general government balance.

Accordingly, the effect of a disorderly Brexit on the public finances is presented in a potential range, reflecting this unusual level of uncertainty.

As outlined in Table 5 of the Summer Economic Statement 2019, a disorderly Brexit may lead to an indicative nominal deterioration in the general government balance in the order of approximately €6 billion annually, on average, in each year 2020-2024.

More precise nominal projections are, given the uncertainty in the forecasts, not available and would be of limited illustrative use.

Summer Economic Statement

205. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason €600 million is included in annexe 1 of the summer economic statement for tax reductions; the tax head or tax heads the €600 million falls under; the reason apparent budgetary decisions would be included in the calculation for net fiscal space; his views on whether net fiscal space as outlined in annexe 1 is the appropriate budgetary policy over the coming years; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [27946/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2019 sets out a medium term strategy involving an illustrative €0.6 billion in tax reductions each year to 2024. This is a technical assumption embedded in the projections.

The origin of the technical tax reductions dates back to the full application of net fiscal space, with the indicative allocation set out in the SES 2016 (table 2). In line with the Programme for Partnership Government this was distributed on a 2:1 basis between spending and tax to present an illustrative budgetary package. This assumption is carried forward within the extended range of fiscal forecasts.

The indicative nominal budgetary package in table 6 of the SES 2019 is consistent with this.

As the Deputy is aware, the exact amounts and distribution between revenue and expenditure is a matter for Government and will be announced at the time of the respective Budget. Such decisions will take into account the economic and social circumstances at that time and also the desired objectives.

National Broadband Plan Expenditure

206. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the projected cost of the national broadband plan included in the pre-committed expenditure in each of the years 2021 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27947/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As I indicated in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 134 on 21 May, the National Broadband Plan (NBP) is currently expected to require an additional c. €0.2 billion in each of 2021 and 2022 and c. €0.3 billion in each of 2023 and 2024.

Table 4 of the Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2019 notes that the expenditure developments include the impact of the NBP.

The expenditure benchmark table (table A1 in Annex 1 of the SES) is based on the assumptions in table 4, therefore reflecting the amounts outlined above.

As the Deputy is aware, table A1 is presented in fiscal space terms. As the NBP is a capital project, the nominal amounts are therefore subject to the four-year smoothing.

Brexit Preparations

207. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the meaning of the phrases “automatic stabilisers” and “temporary, targeted support for the sectors most affected”; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27951/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The ‘twin track’ approach proposed in the Summer Economic Statement allows the maximum flexibility in terms of preparing for Budget 2020. It covers the ‘orderly’ Brexit scenario but alternatively should a ‘disorderly’ Brexit arise, this would present the baseline for any additional support required.

In terms of the fiscal impact of a no-deal Brexit, it should be noted that the current plans provide for a package totalling €2.8 billion in 2020, of which a quarter remains to be speci-

cally allocated. This represents a substantial starting point.

On top of that, the so-called automatic stabilisers will kick in which will help cushion the economy. The automatic stabilisers refer to the counter-cyclical support that the public finances provide to the economy through social protection payments occasioned by higher unemployment and on the revenue side, lower tax collections which help cushion aggregate demand.

In addition, supports providing temporary targeted funding for the most affected sectors will be deployed as appropriate.

The initial analysis is that the overall impact on the public finances of a disorderly Brexit would be a reduction in the General Government Balance of an illustrative order of €6½ billion.

Summer Economic Statement

208. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the €600 million outlined in annexe 1 of the summer economic statement is incorporated in the indicative nominal budgetary package in table 6 of the statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27952/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The calculation of the available 2020 budgetary package in the Summer Economic Statement 2019, based on projections as set out in the Stability Programme Update 2019, is consistent with a:

€0.7 billion increase in capital expenditure;

€1.5 billion increase in current expenditure; and

€0.6 billion allocated for taxation measures.

This amounts to an overall nominal budgetary package of €2.8 billion for 2020, as set out in Table 6.

The table in Annexe 1 is consistent with this package but presents the amounts in fiscal space rather than nominal terms. This means that care must be taken when comparing capital expenditure amounts.

Question No. 209 answered with Question No. 204.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

210. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is no longer exempt from car tax under the disabled drivers and passengers scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28026/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the person in question, is registered on the Drivers and Passengers with Disabilities Scheme as a passenger in his spouse's vehicle.

The vehicle's exempted status was recently removed in error due to a malfunction between the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Revenue's IT systems. The malfunction arose when the person applied to have the exempted status switched to a new vehicle inside the two-year timeframe that the Drivers and Passengers with Disabilities Scheme requires. The

current vehicle came onto the Scheme on 12 July 2017 and the new vehicle cannot be 'registered' until 12 July 2019.

Revenue is continuing to investigate why the error arose and has contacted the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport requesting that the exempted status be immediately restored to the current vehicle. Revenue has also contacted the person to apologise for the error and to explain the remedial action taken.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

211. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the level of recruitment planned by the Revenue Commissioners in 2019 at each grade level separate from recruitment that will be required to deal with Brexit issues; the number of persons expected to retire; if recruitment will be sufficient to replace persons who are retiring in each county by grade, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28093/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Revenue multi-annual budget for 2019 provides for a whole time equivalent (WTE) permanent staffing level of 6,384.

Revenue have appointed over 600 staff from open and interdepartmental competitions since the start of 2019. Revenue is an integrated tax and customs administration. In 2019 almost 400 of staff recruited from open or interdepartmental competitions have been assigned to customs roles or to backfill staff transferring to customs roles in preparation for Brexit. The balance of around 200 were assigned to other Revenue functions.

Revenue estimates that 120 staff will retire between now and the end of 2019, it is not possible to be precise at this point about the exact retirement numbers in terms of grade and location.

During 2018 Revenue realigned its operational structure into a national segmented structure which allows agility in filling posts throughout the organisation while providing a consistent approach in the treatment of tax payers and risk.

Revenue fills critical posts based on business requirements across all grades and functional areas. Revenue undertakes workforce planning and recruitment as an iterative process. Recruitment plans are currently in place to fill all critical posts taking on board projected retirements and business requirements in 2019.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

212. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the conditions to qualify for a primary medical certificate under the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994 are perceived to be very narrow and are being interpreted very strictly; his plans to widen the application criteria; the cost of the concession in 2017 and 2018; the projected cost in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28096/19]

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 Certifi-

cate. 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. As the scheme is demand led, the cost of the concession in 2019 is uncertain at this stage. However, the indications so far are that costs may be higher than the cost in 2018.

I understand and fully sympathise with any person who suffers from a serious physical disability and cannot 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.

Summer Economic Statement

213. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if annexe 1 on page 38 of the summer economic statement is a hypothetical scenario; if he plans to introduce the measures outlined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28147/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Table A1 of the Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2019 outlines the calculation of the available fiscal space from 2020 to 2024. This is based on 'Scenario A' of the Summer Economic Statement, i.e. an 'orderly' Brexit in October.

As discussed in the SES, Scenario A is consistent with the projections as set out in the Stability Programme Update 2019, accounting for adjustments to expenditure projections.

Decisions on which measures will be introduced will be announced on Budget Day. As the Deputy will be aware, it has not been the practice of the Minister for Finance to discuss the de-

tails of measures which may be under consideration as part of the Budget and the Finance Bill.

Finally, as I have stated on numerous occasions, it is important to understand that formulating budgetary policy based solely on what is permissible under the EU fiscal rules is no longer appropriate. Government fiscal policy will be based on what is right for the economy at this point in the cycle, in order to ensure a continued steady and sustainable improvement in living standards and our public finances.

General Government Debt

214. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a discrepancy exists in the statement of the general Government balance between table 6 on page 27 of the summer economic statement, in which the nominal general Government balance is listed as €1.4 billion, and the stability programme update 2019 which states the general Government balance as €1.235 billion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28148/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department produces a full set of economic and fiscal forecasts on a bi-annual basis, in the spring Stability Programme Update (SPU) and in the autumn Budget.

The scenarios outlined in the Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2019 are based on the forecasts set out in the SPU published in April, at which time a general government surplus of 0.4 per cent of GDP, or, in nominal terms, €1.235 billion was projected for next year. The tables set out in the SES are calculated from a high level, aggregate approach, rather than the granular, ‘bottom-up’ detail of the bi-annual forecasts, intended to provide an illustration of the fiscal parameters for the preparation of Budget 2020. The figure of 0.4 per cent of GDP was stated incorrectly as €1.4 billion in presenting the fiscal baseline in the hypothetical ‘orderly Brexit’ scenario presented in the Statement.

The official projection for the 2020 general government balance is that set out in the SPU - €1.235 billion.

The economic and fiscal forecasts will be updated in full as part of Budget 2020 in October.

Stability Programme Data

215. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €605 million resources not allocated which are listed in table 10 of the stability programme update 2019; and if there has been a change regarding this unallocated spend in the summer economic statement. [28149/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The resources not allocated in table 10 of the Stability Programme Update 2019 is comprised of approximately €0.3 billion related to carry-over costs of Budget 2019 measures and a €0.3 billion unallocated increase in current expenditure.

These are unchanged in the Summer Economic Statement as indicated in table A1 (Annexe 1) items j. (iii) and k. (i).

Employment Investment Incentive Scheme Data

216. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount he expects to be raised by the various EII schemes in 2019 and 2020; the expected tax cost; the likely additional jobs that will be created, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28285/19]

217. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance his views in relation to Part 16 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as amended, on whether the EII scheme offers reasonable value for money despite the poor take-up in previous years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28286/19]

218. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if a rigorous value-for-money analysis was prepared in advance of the changes in relation to Part 16 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as amended, introduced in respect of EII schemes with effect from 1 January 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28287/19]

219. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the further changes that may be required to make the scheme in relation to Part 16 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as amended, more effective at raising share capital, rather than debt, for investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28288/19]

220. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number by the Revenue Commissioners of additional jobs created by the EII scheme in each of the years 2012 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28289/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 to 220, inclusive, together.

I am informed by Revenue that it is not possible to estimate of the amount to be raised by the various EII schemes in 2019 and 2020 nor is it possible to provide a figure in respect of the likely tax cost in those years. Revenue will not have the relevant information until after the relief has been applied for. Furthermore, it is not possible to estimate the number of additional jobs likely to be created in the two years under the schemes.

However, the Exchequer costs and amounts of investment raised from the start of the incentive until 2017 are as follows:

Year	1st Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	2nd Tranche Exchequer Cost €m	Amount Invested €m
2017	18.6	N/A	62.1
2016	31	N/A	103.1
2015	28	N/A	93.4
2014	23.3	2	77.8
2013	17.3	2.9	57.6
2011/2012	15.7	3.2	52.2

A statistical report on the Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) is available on the Revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/eii.aspx>

In relation to value for money and as the Deputy may be aware, in 2018 I commissioned Indecon Economic Consultants to carry out a review which included an examination of the impact and cost effectiveness of EII (Chapter 5). The report is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/10b64f-indecon-evaluation-of-eii-and-sure/>.

The review found that the EII “should continue to be provided in order to facilitate funding for Irish based SMEs and start-ups”.

The review also made a number of proposals for changes to the incentive to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness and, in Finance Act 2018, I brought forward a priority package of measures to address the main shortcomings identified with the scheme.

The changes made put in place an amended applications process incorporating a move to a largely self-certification model as well as a substantially revised, simplified and updated legislative text in Part 16 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. In addition, they included the introduction of a new Start-up Capital Incentive to facilitate investment in very small enterprises. Finally, the operation of the EII and SURE schemes was extended for a further year to the end of 2021

The move to self-certification has brought EII in line with other similar tax reliefs. While Revenue will still offer some guidance where requested, it is now within the control of the company to determine their qualification under the incentive and avail of the relief as they deem appropriate.

Subject to further analysis which is currently being undertaken, it is possible that further legislative changes may be brought forward in the context of this year’s Budget and Finance Bill process with the aim of ensuring that the EII schemes operate as intended in an efficient and effective manner. In this regard, the Deputy may wish to note that my Department recently carried out a public consultation process on tax incentives aimed at the SME sector across a number of tax heads. The EII schemes were included in that process.

With respect to the debt vs. equity nature and form of the investment, the Indecon report suggested that all shares would be new ordinary shares. However, consideration was given to the fact that investors would not necessarily want these new ordinary shares and would therefore not invest. As such, I decided that other forms of share capital could be allowable under the scheme. The scheme was amended to allow redeemable, cumulative, preference share capital, provided that, it is not possible to amend the terms of those shares, for example, through side agreements that would otherwise reduce the risk.

Finally Revenue has also advised me that it is not possible to identify the number of additional jobs created by the EII from 2012 to 2017. However, in its 2018 review, Indecon found strong overall growth in employment of firms who received EII.

Departmental Staff Data

221. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated yield from an annual charge of €250 per parking space on all car parking spaces provided for Civil Service and publicly funded positions, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28291/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy’s question my Department is not responsible for the provision of car parking spaces to Civil Servants or other Government officials. Parking in respect of staff of the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is organised via the Office of Public Works. Some 42 spaces have been allocated to the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform by the Office of Public Works in the leased car park at the rear of 42 Merrion Square Dublin 2. The spaces are occupied on a first come first served basis and currently there are 113 people with access to these spaces. In addition the Department of Finance and Depart-

ment of Public Expenditure and Reform have access to a further 24 spaces in other locations such as Miesian Plaza, Agriculture House and the Taoiseach's Office Car park.

Officials in my Department have been informed by the Office of Public works that while they can if requested by the Deputy provide figures on the number of parking spaces at office buildings provided by OPW through leases/licences etc., they cannot say how these spaces are allocated to staff within each organisation nor do they hold details in respect of staff who may require car parking in order for them to carry out their official duties.

In relation to my own Department we have active participation of staff both in the TaxSaver Travel Pass and the Cycle to Work schemes as alternatives to car usage as a means of attending their work place.

Government Expenditure

222. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the commentary by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council on page 74 of its fiscal assessment that the expenditure forecasts for 2020-2023 are not credible and that the technical assumptions used imply an implausible slowdown in expenditure; his views on whether the observation is correct regarding expenditure forecasts; if he is of the view that the observation is correct, his reason for that view; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27953/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2016 outlined annual average current expenditure increases of 2½ per cent for the period 2017 to 2021. The fiscal projections in Budget 2019 were extended out to 2023, with a technical assumption being applied of an annual increase in current expenditure of 2 ½ per cent for both 2022 and 2023. The Stability Programme Update, published in April this year, followed the same approach in respect of current expenditure growth.

In setting out expenditure projections, a consideration that needs to be taken into account is the risk that such projections create increased expectations in relation to available expenditure and become a floor for budgetary discussions. In addition, at Budget time each year, it is also possible to increase the growth rate in expenditure by deciding to allocate additional resources for spending increases by either introducing revenue raising measures and/or redistributing resources allocated for taxation measures.

Taking into account the analysis of our current expenditure projections offered by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, and my experience of managing current expenditure, I have decided in the Summer Economic Statement, published last week, to increase the rate of current expenditure growth post 2020 to 3 ¼ per cent. Taking into account projected capital expenditure growth, this allows for an annual increase in gross total expenditure of c. 3 ½ per cent over the period 2021 to 2024. This is an appropriate level of growth, given the uncertainties arising in the external environment and the current position in the economic cycle.

Budget 2019

223. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Christmas bonus has been incorporated in the forecast of the general Government balance for 2019; his views on the IFAC observation that it is not; the amount the Christmas bonus is projected to be for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27954/19]

231. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the cost of the Christmas bonus for 2019 is in the base and therefore provided for in his budgetary arithmetic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27850/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 and 231 together.

The Stability Programme Update, published in April of this year, set out budgetary projections for the period to 2023 from a starting baseline of the 2018 fiscal outturn. These projections also formed the basis for the Summer Economic Statement. The 2018 outturn figures reflect the expenditure incurred in respect of the Social Protection Christmas Bonus for 2018.

Payment in respect of a Christmas Bonus commenced again in 2014, initially at a rate of 25%. The percentage rate has increased each year since 2014 and reached 100% in 2018. In line with the practice that such payments are funded based on the fiscal position for the year, in each of the years 2014 to 2019, the Revised Estimates Volume did not include a specific allocation in respect of a Social Welfare Christmas Bonus. This reflects the fact that the decision on paying a bonus, including the rate of that bonus, takes into account the overall fiscal position each year. Given that the decision to pay a Christmas Bonus this year relates to 2019 expenditure, it would not impact on the unallocated resources of €700 million available for 2020 outlined in the Summer Economic Statement.

The Christmas Bonus is paid both from funds voted by the Dáil and from the Social Insurance Fund. At the end of May, the surplus on the Social Insurance Fund was €120 million ahead of profile, driven by strong growth in PRSI receipts, and net voted expenditure of the Social Protection Vote was €19 million below profile. A continuation of these trends in receipts and expenditure would see such upside being available as an offset against the impact on the General Government Balance of any budgetary decision in respect of a Christmas Bonus payment for 2019.

On the broader question of making our multi-year current expenditure projections more robust, both in the light of the analysis offered by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, and of my experience of managing current expenditure, I have decided in the Summer Economic Statement, published last week, to increase the rate of current expenditure growth post 2020 to 3 ¼ per cent. Taking into account projected capital expenditure growth, this allows for an annual increase in gross total expenditure of c. 3 ½ per cent over the period 2021 to 2024. This is an appropriate level of growth, given the uncertainties arising in the external environment and the current position in the economic cycle. It is in this context that the scope for annual resource allocations, including the question of an annual Christmas bonus, will fall to be determined.

Summer Economic Statement

224. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his understanding of the format and function of an expenditure reserve, that is, if this is simply unallocated spending included in the base; if not, if it is placed in a separate fund and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28144/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As outlined in the Summer Economic Statement (SES), the Budget 2020 framework involves a budgetary package of €2.8 billion for next year. Current expenditure pre-commitments relating to demographics, the Public Service Stability Agreement, and the carryover of Budget 2019 measures amount to €1.2 billion with €0.7 billion for additional investment on capital programmes as set

out in the NDP. As set out in the SES, as part of the Budget 2020 estimates process, consideration will be given to the funding of additional costs in relation to the National Children's Hospital and the National Broadband Plan reflecting the most up-to-date position relating to capital spending at the time. Given these potential additional costs, the SES includes an expenditure reserve of up to €0.2 billion for 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the National Broadband Plan and the National Children's Hospital. This expenditure reserve represents the potential additional funding that may need to be met for these projects next year from within the overall budgetary package of €2.8 billion. Consequently, after taking account of the expenditure pre-commitments of €1.9 billion and the expenditure reserve of up to €0.2 billion this leaves €0.7 billion to be specifically allocated as part of Budget 2020. To the extent that the full reserve of €0.2 billion is not required, the amount not utilised from this reserve would increase, from €0.7 billion, the amount available to be specifically allocated as part of the Budget 2020 process.

Summer Economic Statement

225. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason annex 1 on page 38 of the summer economic statement lists €1.1 billion in pre-committed capital spending and is listed elsewhere as €0.7 billion. [28145/19]

226. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the portion of the €1.1 billion that is smoothed; and the impact or size of this spending before it was smoothed as per annex 1 on page 38 of the summer economic statement in pre-committed capital spending. [28146/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 225 and 226 together.

Table 6 of the Summer Economic Statement sets out a budgetary package of €2.8 billion and outlines pre-committed expenditure of €1.9 billion. Inclusive in this pre-committed expenditure is an increase in capital expenditure of €0.7 billion as set out in the National Development Plan. Further to this, there is an expenditure reserve of up to €0.2 billion to be established in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the National Broadband Plan and National Children's Hospital. This expenditure reserve relates to capital expenditure and consequently, this would result in an overall nominal increase in capital expenditure of up to €0.9 billion. After taking account of the expenditure pre-commitments and the expenditure reserve, this leaves €0.7 billion of unallocated funding available in 2020.

Table 7 and Annex 1 of the Summer Economic Statement set out indicative estimates of 'fiscal space' out to 2024. The amount of €1.1 billion shown in respect of capital/NDP expenditure in Annex 1 takes into account the smoothing over a four-year period in accordance with the Expenditure Benchmark methodology. Consequently, as this calculation reflects the significant increases in Gross Fixed Capital Formation since 2016, the capital expenditure impact on the fiscal space calculation exceeds the nominal increase in capital expenditure outlined above.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

227. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he received costed proposals from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in relation to the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27522/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government's Climate Action Plan puts Ireland on a pathway to the achievement of the country's 2030 climate and energy targets that is consistent with a net zero emissions target by 2050.

The plan sets out ambitious emissions savings targets for sectors of the economy. The Departments responsible for the achievement of these targets will, over the coming months, be developing the policies and measures required to reach these targets. These policies and measures will incorporate a blend of expenditure, taxation, regulation and behavioural change initiatives that will encourage the investment decisions required across the public and private sectors, as well as by individual citizens, to achieve these targets.

Much of the Exchequer investment required to support these policies and measures was already anticipated and provided for through the commitments included in the National Development Plan (NDP), which includes over €30bn in investment to fund the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society and initiatives in sustainable mobility.

The Government has agreed that the cumulative Exchequer costs of the commitments included in the Climate Action Plan will be delivered within existing multi-annual ceilings and the funding commitments made in the NDP.

Protected Disclosures

228. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the protected disclosure policy of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27544/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is strongly committed to ensuring that the culture and working environment of the Department encourage, facilitate and support any employee of the Department to "speak up" on any issue that could impinge on the Department's ability to carry out its roles and responsibilities to the high standard expected.

The Department has formal procedures in place for the making of protected disclosures in the Department. These procedures were developed in line with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and agreed upon by the Department's Management Board. The procedures are made available to all staff and detail how staff members can make a protected disclosure; what happens when a protected disclosures is made; and what the Department will to protect disclosers.

Protected Disclosures Data

229. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of protected disclosures made to date under the whistle-blower legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27608/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 provides robust statutory protections for workers in the public and private sectors against retaliation for speaking up about wrongdoing in the workplace. The Act provides a "stepped disclosure regime" that allows workers to report wrongdoing internally to their employer or externally to a competent authority or, subject to certain conditions, to make a public disclosure. Workers in public bodies also have the option of making a disclosure to the relevant Government Minister. Protections against retaliation take the form of civil remedies

available through the Workplace Relations Commission or the courts.

Most protected disclosures are made by workers to their employers and, in the majority of cases, are dealt with internally by the employer. In addition, it is not necessary for a worker to explicitly state they are making a protected disclosure in the course of reporting a wrongdoing. Accordingly, it is not possible to accurately determine how many reports of wrongdoing that would be covered by the Protected Disclosures Act have been made in total since the Act came into force.

The Deputy may, however, wish to note that research by Transparency International Ireland, published in the Speak Up Report 2017, found that one in ten workers will make a report of wrongdoing during the course of their careers. Furthermore, Section 22 of the Act requires public bodies to report each year on the number of protected disclosures made to them. While this information is not normally collated centrally, my Department compiled the data published by public bodies as part of the Statutory Review of the Act, published last year, and found that 370 protected disclosures were made to public bodies between 2014 and 2016. There is no equivalent obligation on the private sector to report on the numbers of disclosures made so a complete picture of the overall numbers of disclosures is not available.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

230. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the works which have been completed on the Clare river flood relief scheme encompassing Claregalway, Carnmore, Lisheenavalla and Caherlea; the flood alleviation works outstanding in the area; when the works will be completed in its entirety; the amount spent on the project to the end of May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27619/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The implementation of the Clare River (Claregalway) Flood Relief Scheme has been ongoing over the last three years with the works being progressed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) direct labour force.

However, in recognition of the significant flooding problems in the area it was agreed to proceed with advance interim measures to reduce flood risk and by 2012 the following remedial works were successfully completed in advance of the main scheme works:

- Construction of flood eye at Claregalway Bridge
- Construction of new bridge at Crusheeney.

Construction of the main scheme then commenced in June 2016 and works completed to date are as follows:

Clare River - Selective Channel Maintenance

- Selective channel maintenance along the Clare River from Lough Corrib towards Cregmore Bridge, has been substantially completed.

Claregalway Village:

- The second stage channel upstream of Claregalway Bridge was regraded, extended and widened as part of in-stream deepening works in 2016. Bank protection in the form of rock armour was installed along the widened second stage channel bank and along the castle bank also in 2016.

- Some outstanding rock removal from the channel bed downstream was completed in 2018.

Lakeview:

- Works on constructing a 1.65km surface water outfall pipeline between Claregalway Corporate Park and the Clare River, upstream of the Claregalway Bridge, were completed in 2016.

- Final reinstatement of agricultural land along the route of the pipeline has now been completed.

Kiniska:

- Works on the Kiniska (Cin Uisce) tributary comprising channel maintenance, bank protection and bridge upgrade works have now been completed.

- Final reinstatement of agricultural land along the route of the drainage channel is substantially complete.

Montiagh South:

- Final road raising and tarring of the new road footprint in Montiagh South is now complete and the road has been formally handed back to Galway County Council.

- Works on the formation of a new drainage network and the construction of new accommodation/access bridges, along the field entrances adjacent to the roadway are now complete.

Caherlea / Lisheenavalla:

- Channel widening from 1.3km upstream of Crusheeney Bridge to immediately downstream of Crusheeney Bridge to form a two-stage channel have been completed.

- Formation of the second stage channel on both sides of the Clare River, in Crusheeney and Cregmore is now fully complete.

- Construction of an embankment along the southern bank of the Clare River from 1.3 km upstream of Crusheeney Bridge to the Islandmore Drain.

- In-stream Environmental River Enhancement Works upstream/downstream of Crusheeney Bridge are now fully complete.

- Works on the formation of a new drainage network and the construction of new accommodation/access bridges, along the field entrances adjacent to the roadway in Cregmore are now complete.

Montiagh North:

- Road C - Work on raising and tarring of a local road is now complete.

Carnmore/Cashla:

- Works on the construction of a 1.9km flood alleviation pipeline in Carnmore/Cashla are almost completed.

- Work on the installation of 2 no. pipe culverts across the R339 road network is now complete. 2 no. intake manholes, located either side of the R339 road network are constructed and in position.

- Works on the upgrading of a road culvert along the Lydican Road in Lisheenavalla, together with Bridge upgrade and bank protection works are now completed.

The major civil works for the flood relief measures are now completed. The cost of the scheme up to the end of May 2019 is estimated to be €9.37 million. Substantial completion of the Scheme is expected by end 2019. Some minor civil works remain to be completed and these along with Environmental Reinstatement Enhancement Programme works and other reinstatement and accommodation works are due to be all fully completed by mid-2020.

Question No. 231 answered with Question No. 223.

Departmental Reports

232. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27887/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy may wish to note that, as part of the Spending Review 2019, it is expected that up to 35 analytical papers will be published covering a range of areas. Much of this analysis will be published alongside the Mid-Year Expenditure Report in July, with a further set of publications due to be released with the Budget in October.

All other current information requested by the Deputy, and as clarified by the Deputy's office, is set out in the following table.

Title	End Date
Additional Research on the findings of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey Report	Quarter 3 2019
Irish Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2019	Quarter 3 2019
Focused Policy Assessment on Prevention and Early Interventions supporting Health and Well-Being of Older People	Quarter 4 2019
Focused Policy Assessment on Programmatic Interventions for Children, Young People and their Parents	Quarter 4 2019
Focused Policy Assessment on Cancer Screening Services	Quarter 4 2019
Focused Policy Assessment on Family Services Supporting Children and their Families	Quarter 4 2019
Working Paper on Understanding Prevention and Early Interventions	Quarter 4 2019
OECD Review of the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service	Quarter 3 2019
Medium Term Strategy Review of Procurement Policy for Public Works Projects (MTS)	Quarter 4 2020*

** It is proposed to publish a range of position papers throughout 2019 and 2020 on a broad range of issues that are impacting on the successful and timely delivery of projects and invite submissions from interested parties. Upon conclusion of the consultation process recommendations will be prepared by the GCCC on the measures necessary to address any shortcomings identified.*

Departmental Reports

233. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the

documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27918/19]

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

Document Title	Year Published
Corporate Governance Framework	2016
Statement of Strategy 2016 -2019	2016
Business Plan 2016	2016
Public Service ICT Strategy Action Plan	2016
Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives	2016
Further Revised Estimates	2016
Supplementary Estimates for Public Services 2016	2016
Revised Estimates for Public Services	2016
Expenditure Report – Budget 2017	2016
Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2016	2016
Risk Management Guidance for Government Departments and Offices	2016
Guidance Manual for the Preparation of Appropriation Accounts 2015	2016
Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	2016
Business Plan 2017	2017
Our Public Service 2020: Development and Innovation Framework	2017
eGovernment Strategy 2017-2020	2017
First Review of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015	2017
Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) Medium Term Strategy 2016-2019	2017
Guidance Manual for the Preparation of Appropriation Accounts 2016	2017
Supplementary Estimates for Public Services 2017	2017
Revised Estimates for Public Services 2017	2017
Expenditure Report – Budget 2018	2017
Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2017	2017
Summer Economic Statement 2017	2017
Further Revised Estimates for Public Services 2017	2017
Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018	2017
Mid-Term review of the Capital Plan: Building on Recovery 2016- 2021	2017
Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	2017
Expenditure Report	2017
National Public Procurement Policy Framework	2017
GCCC Position Paper: A Public Sector BIM Adoption Strategy	2017
Business Plan 2018	2018
Obligations under the Children First Act 2015	2018
General Scheme of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill	2018
Regulatory Impact Analysis for the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill	2018
Civil Service ICT HR Professionalism Strategy	2018
Data Strategy 2019-2023	2018
Supplementary Estimates for Public Services 2018	2018
Further Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019	2018
Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019	2018
Expenditure Report – Budget 2019	2018
Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2018	2018

Document Title	Year Published
Summer Economic Statement 2018	2018
Further revised Estimates for Public Services 2018	2018
National Development Plan	2018
Report of the Expert Group on Public Private Partnerships	2018
Internal Audit Standards for Government Departments and Offices 2018	2018
Guidance Manual for the Preparation of Appropriation Accounts 2017	2018
Advice Note: Considering Information Security Management	2018
Business Plan 2019	2019
Summer Economic Statement	2019
Guidance Manual for the Preparation of the Appropriation Accounts 2018	2019

Public Procurement Regulations

234. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which he has reformed the procurement process since weaknesses were exposed on same in the building of the national children’s hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27969/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As part of the ongoing reform of Ireland’s capital management systems, the Office of Government Procurement is conducting a review of construction procurement and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is reviewing the Public Spending Code. The purpose of these reviews is to strengthen the existing guidance to better align with the realities of project delivery and with a particular focus on improved financial appraisal, cost estimation and management.

The following reforms will be considered and implemented as part of the Public Spending Code review:

- Strengthen and harmonise capital appraisal guidance;
- Greater clarity on governance and roles and responsibilities, particular in terms of who is the Sanctioning Authority and who is the Sponsoring Agency for major projects;
- Introduce new mechanisms to improve the accuracy of cost estimates;
- Improve project life cycle to better reflect the realities of project delivery; and
- Complement the Project Ireland 2040 Capital Tracker in monitoring projects and costs.

The revised central elements of the Public Spending Code relating to the appraisal and management of public capital projects will be published this summer. Further technical guidance building upon these central elements will follow in the second half of 2019 and in 2020.

Procurement legislation is established on an EU wide basis through the suite of procurement directives. The most recent directives were issued in 2014 and have all been transposed into Irish law by means of Statutory Instrument.

The Capital Works Management Framework (“CWMF”) is the structure that has been developed to deliver the Government’s objectives in relation to public sector construction procurement reform. It consists of a suite of best practice guidance, standard contracts and generic template documents that must be used on all projects that are to be delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the National Development Plan (“NDP”). It is managed by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) in consultation with the Government Contracts Committee

for Construction (GCCC).

The performance of a key component of the CWMF; the public works contract, was reviewed in 2014 and a series of recommendations that apply to the conditions of contract have been implemented since 2016.

That review prompted the OGP to undertake a broader review of the procurement of public works projects in order to develop the next generation of the CWMF.

A set of objectives have been developed to manage the review process which will permit a progressive refinement of the CWMF rather than awaiting the completion of the entire work programme prior to implementation. Enhanced risk management throughout a project's life cycle and quality of information will inform all aspects of the work programme.

Consultation has already commenced with industry and the public bodies charged with the delivery of public works projects on a broad range of issues that are impacting on the successful and timely delivery of projects. These are wide ranging and warrant careful consideration and cover areas such as:

- price variation;
- risk management;
- creating a better quality : price balance in the award of contracts;
- adoption of BIM on public works projects;
- liability, indemnity and insurance requirements;
- performance evaluation;
- encouraging collaborative working.

It is proposed to publish a range of position papers throughout 2019 and 2020 on these and other issues and invite submissions from interested parties. Upon conclusion of the consultation process recommendations will be prepared by the GCCC on the measures necessary to address any shortcomings identified.

The programme commenced with a focus on the early stages of a project's development with the publication of a position paper on the engagement of the consultant technical professionals upon which submissions have been received. The paper focusses on improving the manner in which consultants are engaged to provide expert advice to contracting authorities on matters such as design, cost estimating, project management, procurement and contract administration.

National Broadband Plan

235. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when his attention was first drawn to correspondence between Eir and the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment dated 30 January 2018 claiming that the policy objectives for the national broadband plan could be delivered at a fraction of the prospective subsidy; his views on the correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27987/19]

236. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he is assessing the submission from Eir on the national broadband plan; if he or his officials have met with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in relation to the

submission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28017/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 235 and 236 together.

Responsibility for the National Broadband Plan rests with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. His Department is the Sponsoring Agency for the project, while Government is the Sanctioning Authority.

The Public Spending Code is the set of rules and procedures that are in place to support public bodies in achieving value for money as they implement all projects, including major projects, through the course of the project's lifecycle. Each project works through a lifecycle from project identification, appraisal/business case, planning & design, procurement and implementation, to review. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has responsibility for the Public Spending Code, including the current review of the Code. However, responsibility for complying with all of the requirements of the Public Spending Code is a matter for each Sponsoring Agency and Sanctioning Authority.

I was informed about Eir withdrawing from the procurement process for the National Broadband Plan, and the correspondence from Eir's Chief Executive Officer to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, when this happened in 2018.

In terms of engaging with Eir on their recent statements on the National Broadband Plan, these are matters, in the first instance, for the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, as the Minister responsible for the procurement process on the National Broadband Plan. However, officials from my Department will, of course, be liaising with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the issue, and will seek to be kept informed in relation to that Department's engagement with Eir and any developments that may emerge from that process.

Civil Service Staff Data

237. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of temporary summer Civil Service positions filled from applicants on the summer and the all year panel, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28273/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Appointments Service is an independent, statutory body which provides professional recruitment and selection services to the Civil and Public Service. Vacancies are filled as and when required by employing Departments. Please see breakdown below.

	All Year	Summer
Donegal	73	14

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

238. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if interviews for applicants on the summer panel took place in Dublin for temporary vacant Civil Service positions in County Donegal; if so, the reason they did not take place in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28274/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Appointments Service is an independent, statutory body which provides professional recruitment and selection services to the Civil and Public Service. Interviews for the Donegal summer panel took place in Dublin in May 2019 due to logistical reasons and board member availability.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

239. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if interviews for applicants on the all year panel took place in County Donegal for temporary Civil Service vacant positions in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Welfare in the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28275/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Appointments Service is an independent, statutory body which provides professional recruitment and selection services to the Civil and Public Service. Interviews for the Donegal all year panel took place in Donegal in March 2019 and vacancies were filled as and when required by employing Departments.

State Properties

240. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has carried out an audit in relation to the number of public buildings that may require retrofitting; if so, the expected cost to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28292/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Commissioners of Public Works carry out refurbishment works on State property on a regular basis to meet new requirements as they arise. Also, as building services and fit outs reach end of life, properties are targeted for refurbishment. This form of retrofitting would also upgrade the property to meet modern standards in terms of the Building Regulations and energy efficiency. The number and costs of such projects undertaken in any given year varies depending on availability of funding.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

241. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the arrangements which will be made for a child (details supplied) that is due to start primary school and has no place in an ASD unit locally. [27477/19]

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.

The NCSE 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 an application to the NCSE to establish a special class. 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. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

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

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 approximately 156 new ASD special classes nationally for 2019/20 school year to meet currently identified need.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available by county on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie.

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.

As the matter raised by the Deputy refers to an individual child, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be forwarded to the National Council for Special Education for direct reply.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

242. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) will be provided with a SNA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27634/19]

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, 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 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.

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, 27 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.

Schools Building Projects

243. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he is taking to ensure that overcrowding of primary and secondary schools in Kilkenny city and county is ended; his plans for the provision of new schools in the county and updated facilities where needed in existing schools; if another secondary school will be provided for eastern areas (details supplied); if audits have been conducted to establish future enrolment numbers for both levels and to inform capital funding needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27453/19]

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.

In April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 16 classroom primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Kilkenny school planning area/Western Environs. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country.

While the announcement did not include a new post-primary school for Kilkenny City, the requirement for new schools in Kilkenny is being kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Officials from my Department recently met with personnel from Kilkenny County Council where the Council's plans for housing in the Kilkenny area in the coming years were outlined, and further engagement is planned in this regard.

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.

Schools Building Projects Status

244. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 212 of 11 June 2019, the length of time the design team has been completing the pre-qualification process; and the timeline for completion of this stage. [27475/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): This project was authorised to complete pre-qualification in April 2019. The final pre-qualification report was submitted to my Department on 23 May. Final confirmations have been sought while the final pre-qualification report is reviewed.

Schools Building Projects Status

245. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 213 of 11 June 2019, the length of time the design team has been completing the pre-qualification process; and the timeline for completion of this stage. [27476/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): This project was authorised to complete pre-qualification in April 2019. The final pre-qualification report was submitted to my Department on 23 May. Final confirmations have been sought while the final pre-qualification report is reviewed.

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

246. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of national schools implementing the Gaeltacht education policy, Polasaí Thumoideachas, that are in danger of losing a teacher in the coming academic year 2019-2020; the number in the Gaeltacht areas of County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27484/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): 105 primary schools are currently participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to strengthen the provision of Irish-medium education in these schools. 14 of the primary schools are located in Co Kerry Gaeltacht areas and while one of these schools was due to lose a classroom teacher for the 2019/20 school year due to falling enrolments, the school have successfully appealed this loss and have been approved to retain the teacher on a provisional basis, pending confirmation of enrolments in September.

Schools participating in the Scheme are allocated additional Irish-language support hours relative to pupil enrolment.

Physical Education Facilities

247. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his policy on playing pitches and other recreational facilities at schools. [27539/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that the provision of play space, where site conditions and circumstances allow, is one of the

issues considered in the architectural design of new schools and major extensions.

My Department's design guidelines for schools include guidance in the provision of P.E. Halls, general purpose rooms and outdoor hard play areas such as basketball courts. Other P.E. facilities e.g. pitches are provided, where appropriate and in the context of available resources and site conditions, under my Department's school building programme to be delivered as part of the National Development Plan. The provision of playing pitches is not part of the specification for primary schools. However, in certain circumstances and where the site conditions allow, the project scope may include the levelling and grassing of an area which schools may decide to use for playing fields. At post primary level, an area may be developed as a practice playing field where site conditions and resources permit.

As the Deputy is aware my Department is committed to a PE Hall build and modernisation programme, starting in the second half of the Project Ireland 2040 period (2018 -2027), that ensures that students in all post-primary schools have access to state of the art facilities to support PE provision, particularly also in the context of the roll-out of P.E. as a leaving certificate subject.

Physical Education Facilities

248. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to develop playing pitches at a school (details supplied). [27540/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a playing pitch is being provided at the education campus in question.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

249. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grant support available to persons seeking to commence a course outside the State that is postgraduate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27541/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The main support available to students is the statutory based SUSI grant scheme. The scheme supported circa 78,000 students in 2018/19. Under the terms of the Student Grant Scheme funding outside of the State is only available at undergraduate level.

Details regarding the student grant scheme can be accessed at www.susi.ie.

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU Member States. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners at www.revenue.ie.

Education Costs

250. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the provision of free primary education to children, including the provision of free school-books and learning aids; if he will consider moving towards a free primary school system in the context of budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27564/19]

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 this Government.

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.

Student Data

251. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of third-level students in each of the past ten years by the number of students born here; the number of EU, Swiss, EEA students and others; the percentage of each nationality in each of the years total student population in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27573/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the Deputy's information I set out in the following link disaggregated data for the period 2008/2009 - 2017/2018 as collated by the Higher Education Authority on the composition by nationality of the third level student population in the State, including both full time and part time students. HEA data is compiled by reference to the student's domicile of origin and permanent address prior to entry onto a programme of study, rather than by country of birth. The data does not include international students who enrol in Irish higher education institutions for semester programmes such as Erasmus+.

[2008/2009 - 2017/2018]

Schools Building Projects Status

252. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a project

(details supplied). [27575/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that a project to deliver a permanent building for the school to which the Deputy refers is included on my Department's capital programme and the acquisition of a site is required to facilitate this project.

Officials in my Department have been working closely with officials from the relevant Local Authority under the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable permanent location for the school in question.

The Department is currently considering a shortlist of site options and is engaging with relevant landowners in this regard. Given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally I am not in a position to comment further at this time.

The acquisition of a suitable site for the school is very active on the programme of site acquisitions and every effort is being made to secure the suitable site for the school as expeditiously as possible.

Teachers' Remuneration

253. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of a proposal (details supplied). [27601/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As a consequence of the economic crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure so as to stabilise the country's public finances.

The Government approved a number of measures relating to public service allowances following a public service-wide review of allowances and premium payments conducted by the then Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. As a result of the Government decision, certain allowances were withdrawn for new beneficiaries with effect from 1 February 2012. The details are set out in my Department Circular 08/2013.

Any person who was in receipt of the relevant allowances on 31 January 2012 will continue to be paid that allowance except where that teacher ceases that job role or changes school or employer on or after 1 February 2012. Where a teacher is redeployed under the agreed redeployment scheme, this will not be regarded as a cessation.

The annual cost of restoring the Island allowance from a current date to new entry teachers in Primary, schools would be approximately €20,000 annually.

This information relates to the teachers paid on payrolls operated by my Department. I will arrange to obtain the information relating to the cost of the restoration of the allowance for teachers employed in Education and Training Boards and forward it direct to you.

Oireachtas Joint Committee Reports

254. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the recommendations in the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills report on challenges facing island schools published in February 2018; and the details of each recommendation implemented and not implemented to date in tabular form. [27602/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Following the submission to the Department of Education and Skills of correspondence outlining the challenges facing island schools, including the *Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools* published in February 2018 by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, an intra departmental working group was established within the Department to consider the matters raised. The challenges identified included matters relating to teacher allocation, the curriculum, recruitment of staff, travel and independent and DEIS status for island schools.

As a result of its deliberations, including meetings with representatives from Galway/Roscommon ETB and Donegal ETB, under whose auspices the five post-primary schools located on the islands operate, the working group recommended the provision of an additional package of supports for island post-primary schools from September 2018.

This ring-fenced package of supports for island post-primary schools, which is additional to the supports which are being provided under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in which all of the 5 island post-primary schools are participating, is set out in the following table.

In relation to the recruitment of teachers by island schools, as part of the overall implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, my Department has made arrangements and provided funding for the commencement of two new Irish medium teacher education programmes to increase the supply of teachers who can deliver high quality Irish-medium education. These programmes include a 2 year part-time Irish-medium M.Ed. in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education, which commenced in Mary Immaculate College in September 2018 and a 4 year full-time B.Ed Irish-medium initial teacher education programme, which will commence in Marino Institute of Education from September 2019. Funding is being provided for 30 new places per annum on each of the two new programmes. In addition, provision has been made for the secondment of two teaching posts to the Irish-medium Professional Masters in Education at NUIG to work towards increasing the number of teachers who can teach a range of subjects through the medium of Irish.

Another initiative, which is being implemented under the Policy on Gaeltacht Education is the e-hub pilot project, which aims to utilise online delivery to extend the subject range available through the medium of Irish to students in isolated post-primary Gaeltacht schools, commencing with Higher Level Leaving Certificate Physics. 3 of the 5 island post-primary schools will be participating in the pilot project commencing from September 2019. This will enable students in these schools to undertake the Higher Level Leaving Certificate Physics examination in 2021.

In relation to the assignation of DEIS status to island schools, such schools are assessed on the same basis as all other schools in the country for the purposes of inclusion in the programme. This assessment is based on data in the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases, and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process under DEIS plan 2017 is available on my Department's website at 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 Island Schools, 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.

Teachers' Remuneration

255. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the full salary of a person (details supplied) will be backdated to pre-2011 pay scales. [27605/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Salary scales for teachers are based on the date of their first qualified appointment to an Oireachtas funded post as follows:

A person first appointed to an Oireachtas funded teaching post between 1 January 2011 and 31 January 2012, whose date of first qualified Oireachtas funded teaching service is—

- before 5 December 2011, is paid on the 1 January 2011 qualified pay scale and the qualification allowances applicable to that scale,

- between 5 December 2011 and 28 April 2013, is paid on the 1 January 2011 pay scale and qualification allowances applicable to that scale subject to the maximum value of the honours primary degree allowance applicable to that scale, or

- on or after 29 April 2013, is paid on the 1 February 2012 pay scale with no qualification allowances.

A person first appointed to an Oireachtas funded teaching post on or after 1 February 2012 whose date of first qualified Oireachtas funded teaching service is on or after that date will be paid on the 1 February 2012 pay scale with no qualification allowances.

The records available within my Department show that the teacher in question had his first Oireachtas funded appointment on 14th October 2010 as an unqualified substitute teacher. He qualified as a post primary teacher in 2014 and is registered with the Teaching Council since the 11th August 2014. His first qualified appointment to an Oireachtas funded teaching post was the 1st September 2014. As this date is later than 1st February 2012, as outlined, he is correctly placed on the 1st February 2012 pay scale.

Digital Strategy for Schools

256. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if academic standards and attainment levels at State examinations have been examined at schools involved in the digital learning framework compared to those schools not involved in the framework; and if academic performance indicators are available for these schools. [27614/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will appreciate that no one factor can specifically be attributed to the quality of teaching and learning and student academic performance in State examinations and there are no plans to examine the Digital Learning Framework (DLF) in this context.

However the effective use of digital technologies, as outlined in the DLF and which is for use by all schools, will enhance teaching, learning and assessment practices in schools. The use

of digital technologies, allows teachers to unlock and deepen learning across all areas including literacy, numeracy, languages, arts education and STEM. Students will be able to recognise the benefits of the online interconnected world as an important source of information to create knowledge and problem solve and not just see the internet as a source of information to be “consumed”. Through the effective use of technology students will learn to collaborate and create with their peers. They will develop research, analytical, creativity and communication skills which will support their future careers and strengthen their lifelong prospects

The Digital Strategy for Schools acknowledges that the embedding of digital technologies in teaching and learning is a complex endeavour. The important focus, as provided for in the Digital Strategy, must be for digital technologies to add value to the learning process as part of a suite of tools in the classroom, such as books and whiteboards, alongside more modern learning devices, to enhance teaching and learning. It was for this reason that the Digital Learning Framework was developed together with the extensive range of CPD programmes for teachers and schools on the effective use of digital technologies in the classroom/schools. The Framework provides a roadmap to help schools embed the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning and in leadership & management. The Framework promotes student engagement in the teaching and learning process whereby students become engaged thinkers, active and discerning learners and where digital interactions are respectful and positive and conducive to well-being.

In the context of the DLF, schools are supported to develop a Digital Learning Plan, and have flexibility to determine how best to embed the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning in their school, taking into account their individual circumstances and contexts. The DLF supports and complements the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process and will allow schools to evaluate their own progress and measure where they stand against benchmarks of effective and highly effective practices in the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning and leadership and management. The Framework does not provide for comparison of academic performances.

The Framework is in its second year of dissemination and is accompanied by an extensive CPD framework for teachers and schools.

My Department has also commissioned the ERC to conduct a more longitudinal study of the DLF of a three year duration. This study commenced in January 2019. The focus of the Evaluation will be the implementation of the Digital Learning Framework from the multiple perspectives of school principals, teachers, learners and Digital Learning Team leaders over a three-year period.

State Examinations

257. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the policy on students who become ill during the junior certificate or leaving certificate exams and that, for example, need to be hospitalised; the arrangements in place to deal with this scenario; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27615/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

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

Springboard Programme

258. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding provided to Springboard since it was created by year; the number of students accepted in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27649/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Springboard+ which incorporates the ICT skills conversion programme, is a targeted initiative which is used to provide funding for higher education courses aimed at meeting the need for in-demand skills in the economy. Springboard+ supports jobseekers to return to employment and those in employment to upskill or reskill.

Courses approved for funding under Springboard+ are in areas of identified skills needs and are selected by an independent panel with industry and educational expertise, following a competitive call for proposals.

Springboard+ courses are open to people irrespective of their employment status. Returners and those in receipt of certain allowances, including Jobseekers Benefit, can access courses free of charge. Level 6 courses are free to all participants and for employed participants on courses NFQ level 7 – 9, 90% of the course fee will be funded by the Government, with participants required to contribute just 10% of the fee.

Springboard+ is funded through the National Training Fund, €34.438m has been allocated to Springboard+ 2019 which represents an increase of €4m over the 2018 allocation.

To date over €192m has been spent on Springboard+ providing free/subsidised higher education opportunities to over 52,000 people.

Springboard+ funding and number of participants 2011 - 2018

Academic Year	Number of Participants	Actual spend on Springboard+ per calendar year
2011/12	4,836	€8,732,503
2012/13	6,335	€20,938,150
2013/14	6,183	€21,699,780
2014/15	5,178	€28,688,000
2015/16	7,800	€27,438,000
2016/17	6,079	€27,818,000
2017/18	6,521	€26,752,814
2018/19	9,225	€30,169,585
2019/20	N/A	N/A
Total	52,157	€192,236,832

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

259. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools to the EU average of 20:1. [27662/19]

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.

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.

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.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €13.5m per annum.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

260. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools to 20:1. [27663/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Teacher allocations to all second level schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment and are available on the Department's website. A pupil teacher ratio (ptr) of 19:1 is applied to all second-level schools in the Free-Education System. A ptr of 23:1 is applied to the 52 schools in the fee-charging sector.

Each 1 point adjustment to the pupil teacher ratio at post primary level is estimated to cost in the region of €63m per annum.

Third Level Fees

261. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to abolish higher level education fees for both institutes of technology and universities. [27664/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Student Contribution, was introduced with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. While the student contribution now stands at €3,000, it is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the contribution since 2014/15.

It is estimated that the net cost to my Department of abolishing the contribution would cost approximately €229 million.

This figure is based on the number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2017/18 (and were therefore liable to pay the Student Contribution), and taking into account projected growth in student numbers for 2019 academic year.

It should be noted that this figure incorporates the resulting reduction to my Department's

Student Grant Scheme budget, as the exchequer pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance.

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

School Accommodation Provision

262. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to include the building of an extra classroom to each planned school build in the next five year period. [27665/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The notional cost of building a classroom, at current building costs, for a primary school is €176,937.50 including VAT and for a post primary school is €165,762.50 including VAT.

The projects that are planned for the next five years are already at various stages of Architectural Planning, many of which have statutory approvals in place such as Planning Permission, Fire Certs and Disability Access Certs. If an extra classroom was to be added to each of these schools, the projects would all have to be redesigned and statutory approvals would have to be obtained again. This would result in significant extra cost, including abortive fees for Design Teams, and would invariably result in a significant slowdown in the delivery of much needed schools on the building programme.

Due to the specificity of each project, the cost of adding an additional classroom to each school on the building programme is not readily ascertainable and would represent a significant administrative burden to attempt to compile. However, if the Deputy wishes to nominate a particular school or schools where it is considered that an additional classroom may be warranted, I would be happy to have my officials examine the feasibility of providing same.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

263. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a decision has been made on a summer works programme application by a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27666/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): An application for funding to works on the playground of the school referred to by the Deputy was received. Unfortunately, it was deemed that the scope of works for the project was considered to be outside the terms of the Emergency Works Scheme and it could not be considered for emergency funding in that context.

The purpose of the Emergency Works Scheme is solely for unforeseen emergencies or to provide funding to facilitate inclusion and access for special needs pupils. An emergency is deemed to be a situation which poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or the environment which is sudden, unforeseen and requires immediate action and in the case of a school if not corrected would prevent the school or part thereof from opening.

In relation to the roof works referred to by the Deputy, I am pleased to advise you that approval was granted to the school under the 2016 Summer Works Scheme programme for repair works to the roof and these works have now been completed and all funding paid.

It was open to the school to make an application under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2020 for its most urgently required small-scale building works project. I understand that an application has been received in this respect and this was for further roof works.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

264. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for special education teaching hours review by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27671/19]

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.

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.

Residential Institutions Statutory Fund

265. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will meet formally with the chief executive officer and chairperson of Caranua before the organisation closes down at the end of August 2019; if staff working within Caranua will be redeployed within the Civil Service when it finishes its term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27780/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Caranua, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund, ceased to accept applications on 1 August 2018 and I understand that it expects to have substantially completed the processing of remaining applications and associated payments to or on behalf of former residents by August/September of this year. The organisation will commence its wind down at that stage and will be dissolved when it has completed the performance of its functions. Legislation will be required for its formal dissolution.

All of Caranua's current staff are employed by the organisation on a contract basis and they

are not civil servants. Accordingly, the issue of redeployment within the civil service does not arise.

The Chair of Caranua has invited me to attend a meeting of the Board of the organisation and I am giving consideration to this request. Senior officials of my Department meet with the Chair and CEO of Caranua on a regular structured basis to discuss a range of relevant matters.

Schools Building Projects Status

266. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will request an up-to-date evaluation on progress made in recent weeks regarding the building of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27795/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers is devolved for delivery to Westmeath County Council (WCC).

It appears from the latest programme provided by the contractor for this project that the building will not be fully occupied until this coming October. I am extremely disappointed and frustrated with this latest development. WCC, which is responsible for managing the contract, has also expressed its disappointment with the level of resources on site and the slow progress of the construction programme.

I fully appreciate the anxiety and frustration of the pupils, staff, parents and the local community awaiting the completion of the Curraghmore project that has been caused by the continuing slow progress of the construction programme. However, I can assure them all that WCC, supported by my Department, is continuing to pursue the contractor for as speedy a delivery of the project as possible.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

267. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review and address the cuts to SNA allocation at a school (details supplied) in view of non-reduction of enrolment numbers and the number of children presenting with significant medical and behavioural care needs both currently on roll and in the new junior infant classes for September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27797/19]

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, 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 particular school, I will refer the question to the NCSE for their direct reply. I do not have a role in making determinations in individual cases.

School Costs

268. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on schools making demands for voluntary financial contributions for items such as school tours, stationery and resource fees from parents who are not in a position to pay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27829/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Voluntary contributions by parents are permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition.

The manner in which voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management, however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions take on a compulsory character.

Apart from those recognised fee-charging second level schools, recognised primary and post primary schools are precluded from charging school fees. Section 64 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, which was commenced in October 2018, explicitly prohibits the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions for admission to or for continued enrolment in a school. No charge may be made, in respect of instruction in any subject of the school curriculum or for recreation or other activities where all pupils are expected to take part.

When a child is enrolled in a school certain charges may be legitimately requested such as:

- payment for school books, lockers, text messages or photocopied material provided by the school where the charge is reasonable and simply reflects the true costs concerned; or
- charges for meals and refreshments provided pupils are not obliged to purchase same and can bring their own refreshments to school (e.g. lunchbox); or
- payments in respect of extra-curricular activities provided such activities are not obligatory and individual pupils can choose whether or not to participate.

However, as outlined above such charges may not be used as a condition of admission to a school placement. It is permissible for a school to seek payments in respect of extra-curricular activities provided such activities are not obligatory and individual pupils can choose whether or not to participate.

I believe that schools need to be accountable to parents and we need greater levels of communication, engagement and transparency in how schools serve their communities. Work on the drafting of the Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2019 is close to being finalised and I intend to seek Government approval shortly for its publication. It is intended that the Parent and Student Charter will require every school to set out a financial statement, which will include information on how any voluntary contributions are used.

Schools Grievance Procedures

269. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied with the procedures in place for parents to make complaints regarding a grievance or misconduct in respect of schools; if this procedure can involve the principal, board of management, patron, and the Ombudsman for Children; his views on the fact that this can be a very long, drawn-out procedure; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Ombudsman for Children has no brief for complaints from parents; his plans to improve these complaint procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27830/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The complaint procedures currently operated by most schools are those that have been agreed between the teacher unions and school management bodies. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children may also independently investigate complaints in relation to schools provided the school's complaints procedures have been followed. The Ombudsman for Children accepts complaints from children and young people under the age of 18, and from parents on children's behalf. Most complaints to the Ombudsman for Children are from parents.

The Deputy may be aware that my Department is currently working on the drafting of the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

The overall aim of this legislation is to improve the level of engagement between schools and students and their parents by inviting feedback, comment and observations from students and parents and by developing a listening culture in the school. A key element of the legislation is the need to ensure schools address and resolves concerns of students or their parents relating to the school as far as possible at an early stage.

Under the legislation, 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, including those bodies representing parents.

The legislation will provide for the charter guidelines to include new procedures that all schools will be required to follow when dealing with complaints of students or their parents relating to the school. The procedures, to be developed in consultation with the education partners, will help ensure that grievances of students or their parents relating to the school are dealt with consistently across schools. Once the drafting process has concluded, it is my intention to seek Government approval, for the publication of the Bill in the Autumn.

In-service Training

270. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to update and modernise governance in schools; if the formal procedures for schools and teachers communicating with parents can be improved; if additional training can be provided for teachers to do this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27831/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The governance structure of schools is such that, in accordance with the Education Act 1998 schools are managed by boards of management on behalf of the relevant school patrons. Under the Act, each board of management, in carrying out its functions, is required to do so in accordance with the policies determined by the Minister.

In primary schools the agreed composition and procedures for the appointment and operation of boards of management of primary schools are set out in my Department's publication "Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 - 2019". The term of office of all circa 3,300 primary schools is for four years and the term of office of the current boards will expire on 30 November 2019 with new boards to be appointed from 1 December 2019. In anticipation of the appointment of new boards from 1 December 2019, the Department, following consultations with organisations representing school management, parents and teachers will have in place an updated Governance Manual in advance of the new boards taking up office.

At post primary level requirements in respect of the composition, appointment and operation of boards of management are set out in legal governing documents relevant to each of the three post primary sectors.

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 key aim of the legislation is to improve how schools engage with students and their parents. The charter legislation will include requirements for consultation and engagement with parents and students on matters relating to school life and in respect of the development, review and updating of school plans, policies and activities.

Key concepts in the legislation also include the need for schools to respond to feedback and comments from students and parents where appropriate and to address and resolve any concerns of students or their parents relating to the school as far as possible at an early stage. In addition, the legislation will provide for the charter guidelines to include new procedures that all schools will be required to follow when dealing with complaints of students or their parents relating to the school. The procedures, will help ensure that grievances of students or their parents relating to the school are dealt with efficiently, fairly and consistently across schools.

Schools Building Projects

271. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the 20 school building projects which are delayed; the longest at stage 2b; when a design team was appointed in each case; and when a replacement design team was appointed if applicable. [27834/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The 20 major school building projects which are the longest at stage 2(b) are detailed in the following table. The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table.

Questions - Written Answers

Of the 20 projects listed, 9 continue to have the full design team that was appointed at the start of the project. In the case of one of the projects, the full design team has been replaced twice and in the case of one further project the full design team has been replaced once and a particular Design Team Consultant has been replaced twice.

Of the remaining 9 projects, while there have been replacements of particular Design Team Consultants the full Design Team has not been replaced.

A Design Team consists of a Consultant Architect, a Quantity Surveyor, a Civil & Structural Engineer, a Mechanical & Electrical Engineer and a Project Supervisor for the Design Process.

Project Name	Date Design Team Appointed	Date Replacement Design Team/Design Team Consultant Appointed	Notes
Scoil an Chroí Naofa, Ballinasloe	Jun-01	Jan-15	Replacement Civil & Structural Consultant only
Ballyowen Meadows & Setanta	Mar-06		
Lismullen NS	Sep-11		
St Senan's NS, Ennis-corthy	May-99		
Hedgestown NS (Baile Falbach)	May-11	Jul-18	Replacement Consultant Architect only
Seosamh Naofa Carrabane, Athenry	Nov-12	Jul-14	Replacement Civil & Structural Consultant only
Our Lady of Lourdes Goldenbridge	Oct-11		
St Patricks, Clane	Feb-12	Feb-15 & Mar-19	Feb-15 Replacement of Full Design Team & Mar-19 Replacement Quantity Surveyor Consultant only
Mhicil Naofa, Athy	Jul-07		
St Laurence O'Toole Special School	Oct-07		
Scoil Aine & St Thomas (Esker)	Mar-12	Sep-14	Replacement Civil & Structural Consultant only
Kanturk BNS (S-B) (with RN 17087J)	Dec 11 - Jul 12	Jan 14 & Jul 18	5/12/2011 Architectural Services OPW, 5/12/2011 M & E Services OPW, 5/12/2011 Civil & Structural OPW, 24/7/2012 Quantity Surveyor Consultancy Appointed. 29/1/14 replacement Civil & Structural Consultancy Appointed & July 2018 replacement M & E Consultancy Appointed
Scoil Cholmcille, Letterkenny	Oct-11	Nov-14	Replacement Civil & Structural Consultant only
Rush NS	Jan-11	Oct-14 & Jul-18	Oct -14 Replacement Mechanical & Electrical Consultant (only) & Jul -18 replacement Consultant Architect only
St Joseph's, Kilcock	Dec-12		

Project Name	Date Design Team Appointed	Date Replacement Design Team/Design Team Consultant Appointed	Notes
SN Creachmhaoil, Craughwell (M)	Oct 13 - May 14	May-19	23/10/2013 Architectural Services OPW, 13/12/2013 QS Consultancy Service Appointed, 28/04/14 Civil & Structural Consultancy Appointed, 14/5/2014 M & E Consultancy Service Appointed, 15/5/2019 replacement QS Consultancy Service appointed
St. Finian's Community College, Swords	Jan-13		
St Josephs College, Lucan	Sep-99	Jan - 12 & Mar- 15	Replacement Civil/Structural & Mechanical & Electrical both occasions
St David's Secondary School	Oct-13		
Marymount, Louth	Jun-01	Jun-11 & Nov 2016	Replacement of Full Design Team on both these dates

Schools Building Projects Applications

272. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for a permanent extension by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27840/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of an application, for additional school accommodation, from the school authority in question.

Officials from my Department have recently corresponded with the school Patron and on receipt of their response the application will be progressed and the decision will issue to the school authority directly.

Schools Building Projects Status

273. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the construction of the new primary school in Kanturk, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27858/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that the project to which he refers is devolved to the OPW for delivery.

I am pleased to confirm that the Stage 2B report (preparation of tender documentation) has been received from the OPW and is currently being reviewed by officials in my Department.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the OPW has confidence that the enabling works on site., which had been delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, will be completed this month.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

274. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding 2015 summer works applications; if the case of a school (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27866/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has a Category 10 application under my Department's 2015 Summer Works Scheme. It is intended to undertake an analysis of these outstanding applications later this year. This analysis, together with funding availability and priorities for the SWS in 2020 will determine the pathway forward in respect of these remaining applications.

Teacher Recruitment

275. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request for a full-time teacher for a school (details supplied) will be processed; and when a decision will be made. [27869/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

As the enrolment of the school referred to by the Deputy fell below the retention figure for the eighth teacher, one teaching post will be suppressed for the coming school year.

The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its June meeting. The Appeals Board considered the appeal and determined that it did not satisfy all the published criteria as set out in Circular 0019/2019.

The school has been notified of the outcome of the appeal. The Appeals Board operates independently of my Department and its decision is final.

School Transport Provision

276. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of school transport for persons (details supplied). [27870/19]

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 for Children with Special Educational Needs is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children with special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability.

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers. Applications for transport

provision, under the terms of this scheme, should only be completed in circumstances where children are not in a position to avail of standard school transport services.

The Department and Bus Éireann are very conscious of the specialised nature of transport provision for children with special educational needs. This is reflected in the standard of dedicated service provided and the fact that these services are generally planned and timetabled to operate on a door-to-door basis.

In certain cases, the Department also provides funding to schools for the employment of escorts to accompany children whose care and safety needs require this level of support while they travel to and from school.

One of the children referred to by the Deputy is eligible under the terms of the School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, and Bus Éireann has advised he is availing of a service that caters for a number of children; there is also an escort on board this service.

The second child in question is not eligible for school transport under the terms of the Primary School Transport Scheme as he is not attending his nearest school.

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

Departmental Reviews

277. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27880/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): For the Deputy's information, studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by my Department has been taken to refer to such tasks undertaken by external consultants.

The information in relation to such engagements in 2018 is available at www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Financial-Reports/Expenditure-on-Consultancy/expenditure-on-consultancy-by-department-of-education-and-skills-in-2018.pdf.

Details in respect of consultants engaged in 2019 to undertake studies, reviews and research will be compiled in January 2020 and will be published on my Department's website as soon as they are available.

Departmental Strategy Statements

278. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27904/19]

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

Questions - Written Answers

Name of current Policy Documents or Strategies published by the Department of Education and Skills	Year Published
National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 Interim Review 2016 (Additional 4 Targets 2017-2020 published in 2017)	2016
Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship in Ireland 2016-2020	2016
Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025	2016
Action Plan for Education 2016-2019 – Department of Education and Skills Strategy Statement	2016
Action Plan for Education 2016	2016
Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022	2016
Irish Educated Globally Connected an International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020	2016
Strategy for Technology-Enhanced Learning in Further Education and Training 2016-2019.	2016
Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education	2016
Total Number Published in 2016	9
STEM Education Policy Statement 2017-2026	2017
Languages Connect, Irelands Strategy for foreign languages in Education 2017-2026	2017
Data Strategy for the Department of Education and Skills	2017
Action Plan for Education 2017	2017
Education and Training Sector Shared Services Plan 2017-2020	2017
DEIS Plan (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) 2017	2017
Digital Strategy Action Plan, 2017	2017
Total Number Published in 2017	7
Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023	2018
Education for Sustainability' National Strategy on Education for Sustainable development in Ireland 2014-2020 - Review	2018
Data Protection Policy	2018
Action Plan for Education 2018	2018
Teacher Supply Action Plan	2018
Digital Strategy Action Plan, 2018	2018
Gender Action Plan 2018 - 2020	2018
National Student Accommodation Strategy	2018
Total Number Published in 2018	8
Department of Education and Skills Statement of Strategy 2019-2021	2019
Action Plan for Education 2019	2019
Digital Strategy Action Plan, 2019	2019
Total Number Published in 2019	3
Total Number Published 2016- 2019	27

School Transport Provision

279. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if free school transport will be offered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27957/19]

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.

Under the terms of the Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that the child referred to by the Deputy is not attending her nearest school and is therefore not eligible for school transport under the terms of the above scheme. Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold a valid medical card (GMS scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

The terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

Departmental Meetings

280. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a meeting will be arranged with a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27997/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I understand from recent correspondence from the Deputy that the company in question runs a programme in media literacy, cyber awareness for young people including mindfulness

It is the policy of my Department not to endorse or promote any commercial product or service, professional consultant or company. In this case the endorsement might be seen as advice to parents and schools in what can be a complex and sometimes sensitive area. The Deputy will therefore appreciate that no useful purpose would be served by my officials meeting with the company in question. A letter to this effect will issue shortly.

The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015–2020, which is currently being implemented, reflects my Department's current policy on the effective use of digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment in primary and post primary schools. It sets out a clear vision that is focused on realising the potential of digital technologies to transform the learning experiences of students by helping them become engaged thinkers, active learners, knowledge constructors and global citizens who participate fully in society and the economy.

My Department, through its teacher support services, provides extensive training, supports and resources to schools to assist with the implementation of the Digital Strategy and in the development of policies and practices on the effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning including their safe and ethical use. This includes supports on the prevention of bullying and harassment using the internet.

Webwise.ie is a key educational resource for schools which promotes the autonomous, effective and safer use of the internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting school leaders, teachers, parents and children themselves with consistent and relevant messages. This resource is funded by my Department and the EU and is managed by the Professional Development for Teachers (PDST).

Within the PDST, there is also a team of 22 full time personnel focusing on health and well-being with the goal of helping schools, through the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)

curriculum and other means to develop and promote students' mental, emotional, social, sexual, personal and physical health in the context of a positive health-promoting school environment.

Individual schools have however autonomy to determine whether they wish to supplement or support the school's work with other external resources/materials, such as those referenced by the Deputy, but this is a matter for each individual school itself to determine.

Student Universal Support Ireland

281. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the SUSI grant rate of payment was last reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28008/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those which relate to nationality, residency, approved course, previous academic attainment and means.

The eligibility criteria for student grants including the grant rates is reviewed annually in my Department and approved by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. As the Deputy will be aware, all proposals made in relation to education expenditure, including changes to grant rates, will be considered in the context of the Budget 2020.

The aim of the student grant scheme has always been to make a contribution to the cost of going to college, covering the full cost has never been a feasible option.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Office in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

282. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a SNA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28031/19]

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, 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.

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.

School Transport Provision

283. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for school transport for a child (details supplied) in County Cork will be approved in view of the circumstances that apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28050/19]

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.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are generally eligible for school transport where they are attending the nearest school that is resourced to meet their special educational needs.

Eligibility for school transport is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers; decisions regarding transport eligibility are based on the prevailing circumstances at the time of a child's enrolment.

The child in question is not eligible for school transport as he is not attending the nearest school that is resourced to meet his special educational needs.

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

Overseas Students Data

284. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students from New Zealand studying here; if he, in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland, is taking further steps to attract additional students from New Zealand to come here to study; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [28055/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I thank Deputy O’Dea for asking this question,

Ireland had 29 students from New Zealand studying here within the academic year 2017/18; numbers for 2018/19 have not been collated as of yet.

While some universities have institutional links with New Zealand, Enterprise Ireland acting as the Education in Ireland promotion agency does not have any active or ongoing activities in New Zealand. As the higher education sector here has not identified New Zealand as a country with high potential in this regard, EI has no immediate plans to enhance its presence or activities in New Zealand.

Student Universal Support Ireland Data

285. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full rate of the SUSI grant in each of the years 2008 to 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28062/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information in respect of the 100% maintenance rates for the years 2008-2019 is set out in tabular form as requested.

SUSI MAINTENANCE RATES FROM 2008 TO 2019

	100% MAINTENANCE	100% MAINTENANCE
YEAR	ADJACENT RATE	NON ADJACENT
2008	€1,370	€3,420
2009	€1,370	€3,420
2010	€1,300	€3,250
2011	€1,215	€3,025
2012	€1,215	€3,025
2013	€1,215	€3,025
2014	€1,215	€3,025
2015	€1,215	€3,025
2016	€1,215	€3,025
2017	€1,215	€3,025
2018	€1,215	€3,025
2019	€1,215	€3,025

Schools Building Projects Status

286. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction on a school (details supplied) will commence and be completed; the way in which he plans to address the capacity issues prior to construction of the new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28074/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): A new school building is due to be provided for the school to which the Deputy refers. The current position is that a suitable site has been identified and it is contained within a parcel of land that is currently being acquired by Clare County Council. When Clare County Council has completed its acquisition, arrangements can then be made to transfer the school site to my Department and to commence planning

the new school. Given that the site acquisition is not yet complete, it is premature at this stage to give commencement and completion dates for construction. If there are capacity problems prior to construction of the new building, these issues can be outlined to my Department. I can assure the Deputy that officials from both my Department and Clare County Council are working hard to finalise matters.

Teacher Data

287. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of resource teachers employed at a school (details supplied) in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28075/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Officials from my Department are collating the information sought in relation to the school referred to by the Deputy. I will arrange for the information requested to be forwarded directly to the Deputy at the earliest opportunity.

Schools Establishment

288. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the commitment made to open an educate together national school in Clonmel, County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28127/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The patronage divesting process arises from the recommendations of the 2012 report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, following which the Department undertook surveys of parental preferences in 43 areas of stable population in 2012 and 2013 to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. Analysis of the parental preferences expressed in each area surveyed indicated that there was sufficient parental demand to support changes in school patronage in 28 areas, including in Clonmel.

Under the patronage divesting process, a school can be opened where a school building became, or was due to become available as a result of an amalgamation/closure of an existing school. In some areas, including in the case of Clonmel, in responding to demand for diversity where existing patrons were unable make school properties available, my Department also included an examination of properties held in public ownership.

To date, it has not been possible to secure a school property to facilitate a new school being established in Clonmel. However, my Department is continuing its efforts in relation to identifying a suitable solution under the patronage divesting process, which would facilitate a new Educate Together school being established to serve the Clonmel area. It is not possible at this stage, however, to give a timeframe for the establishment of such a school.

Schools Building Projects

289. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made since a school (details supplied) met with officials in Tullamore, County Offaly in December 2018; his plans for the school when the current lease expires in June 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28181/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that a major building project for the school to which he refers, is included in my Department's school building programme to be delivered as part of the National Development Plan.

In this regard, a project manager has been appointed to master plan the site to explore the feasibility of whether the accommodation needs of the school in question and an existing education provider could be met on the site. This process is on-going.

When the master planning process is completed it will provide an opportunity for further engagement with all parties.

Junior Cycle Reform

290. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when history will be made a compulsory subject at junior cycle. [28185/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): In November 2018 I requested the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to review the optional nature of history under the new Framework for Junior Cycle and, as part of this review, to identify how we can best promote the study of history in our schools.

The NCCA Council considered this matter at its June meeting and the NCCA has this week sent its final report to my Department. The Department will consider this report in the first instance and then determine what next steps to take.

DEIS Data

291. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the percentage of schools that have DEIS status in rural areas compared to those with DEIS status in the five major cities and larger towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28186/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy may be aware, there are currently 896 schools in the DEIS Programme serving over 180,000 pupils. There are 359 rural DEIS primary schools, with approximately 27,000 pupils, and 339 urban DEIS primary schools, with approximately 83,000 pupils, in receipt of supports under the DEIS school support programme. There are 198 Post Primary schools with approximately 74,000 students in the DEIS programme. Post Primary schools are not classified as urban or rural.

A full breakdown of all the schools in the DEIS programme is available on my Departments website at

www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/.

DEIS Eligibility

292. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria that determines whether a school can receive DEIS band status; if location is one of the main criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28187/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The location of a schools does

not determine whether a school receives DEIS status. However, given educational disadvantage can manifest differently in urban and rural settings, urban DEIS schools receive more supports than rural DEIS schools. The list of supports is available at www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/DEIS-Plan-2017.pdf.

In relation to the criteria for determining whether a school should be included in the DEIS programme, when DEIS was first introduced in 2006, the identification of schools for inclusion was based on two different processes at primary and post primary. At primary level, there was a survey of school principals using the following socio-economic variables: %unemployment; %local authority accommodation; %lone parenthood; %travellers; %large families (more than 5 children); %pupils eligible for free books. At post primary level a combination of data from the Departments pupil database including school level retention rates together with exam achievement data and exam fee waiver data, which indicated that students had medical cards, was used.

Following a review of DEIS in 2016 and an extensive consultation process, a new identification process was developed for assessing schools levels of concentrated disadvantage. The key data sources used in the new DEIS identification process are the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases, and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Haase Pratschke Deprivation Index (HP Index). The HP Index combines three underlying dimensions of affluence/disadvantage, identified as Demographic Profile, Social Class Composition and Labour Market Situation, to achieve a balanced measure of relative affluence and deprivation, which evenly applies across the urban-rural continuum. Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, single parent rates, education levels, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools. The calculation of the level of disadvantage in each school using the HP index is therefore based on the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data and is not based on the location of the school but 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 www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf.

Following an initial application of this new methodology, 79 new schools were brought into the DEIS programme in 2017 with a further 30 being upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1 status. These schools were assessed as having the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage.

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.

DEIS Eligibility

293. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the next round of DEIS bands will be allocated to national schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28188/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): 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 on progress on 28th May by officials from my Department and it is intended to schedule a further meeting of the DEIS advisory group for October this year.

Special Educational Needs Staff

294. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if special needs assistants and other workers in the primary and second-level education system will be provided with the same entitlement to paid annual leave that is provided to teachers to allow them to serve on public bodies such as local authorities; the reason this right is denied to special needs assistants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28189/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities who have additional and significant care needs in an educational context. They may be appointed to a special school or a mainstream school to assist school authorities in making suitable provision for a pupil or pupils with special care needs. The first priority is that the care needs of the pupils are met on an ongoing basis during the school year.

In accordance with the Education Act, the terms and conditions of employment of SNAs employed in approved posts funded by moneys provided by the Oireachtas are determined by the Minister for Education and Skills, with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The position regarding annual leave entitlements for SNAs is set out in various circulars which have issued from my Department including Circular Letters 0017/2013; 0019/2013; 0027/2013; 0054/2015 and 0058/2016.

Circular Letter 0032/2010 sets out the brief absences provisions which may be availed of by SNAs to cater for such items as service on public bodies.

Home Tuition Scheme Funding

295. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on home tuition grants in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in respect of children with special needs. [28192/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. My Department will reply directly to the Deputy as soon as the information has been compiled.

School Accommodation Provision

296. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the assistance he is providing to a school (details supplied) in obtaining a new premises that can accommodate enrolment numbers for September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28256/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department does not have any remit for the provision of accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy. However, it is open to the school in question to explore with local schools in the area the possibility of using their buildings outside of school hours.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department has a general policy of encouraging the use of school facilities by community and other groups where this is possible and following consultation with the relevant school authorities, in October 2017 published Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours These guidelines can be viewed on my Department's website at this link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/guidelines-on-the-use-of-school-buildings-outside-of-school-hours.pdf>

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance for schools in relation to the use of school buildings outside of school hours and for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

The management of school premises at local level is a matter for the relevant school authorities. Any decision to make school premises available ultimately lies with the relevant Trustees/Property owners following a recommendation from the school authorities. However, as schools are often the centre of sustainable communities there can be mutual benefits in building links with the local community. It is recognised that schools play an important role in their wider communities and many schools make their facilities available outside of school hours for a variety of different uses and users.

Residency Permits

297. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if updated stamp 4 or the extension of residency status will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27458/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish

Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy held permission to remain in the State on the basis of marriage to an Irish national and that permission expired on 28 June, 2019.

I understand the person must contact INIS to request further permission to reside. I also understand that it remains open to the person concerned to write to the Spouse of Irish National Unit, Residence Division, Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service, PO Box 12695, Dublin 2 or by email at INISsinu@justice.ie and provide information and documentary evidence of any change in personal circumstances.

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.

Immigration Status

298. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration has been given to offering long-term residency with conditions in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27460/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the persons concerned have submitted written representations.

These representations, together with all other information on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

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

Immigration Status

299. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27490/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned has never been the subject of a Deportation Order in this State. However, in light of the fact that he had no valid basis to remain in the State, the person concerned was served with a proposal to deport notification by letter dated 28th March, 2018, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The person concerned has submitted written represen-

tations in response to that notification.

These written representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made. I am advised that such a decision will be made 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 Vetting Applications

300. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for Garda vetting by a person (details supplied). [27497/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, I have contacted his office to request additional information in respect of the person who is the subject of his question in order to be in a position to make enquiries with the Garda Authorities. When the information has been provided, I will make the necessary enquiries regarding this vetting application and revert directly to the Deputy when they have been completed.

Prisoner Releases

301. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and if safeguards will be put in place. [27507/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy's question concerns the parole process as it might apply to a particular prisoner serving a life sentence for murder.

The Deputy will appreciate that while I cannot comment on individual cases, I can say that public safety is of paramount concern when I make decisions on the sentence management of a prisoner following recommendations made by the Parole Board. My priority is that other families would not have to suffer the consequences of another serious crime.

I am aware of how harmful the consequences of crime can be for victims. I can assure the Deputy that each case is considered on its individual merits and that I and the Parole Board take into account the full range of circumstances including the nature and gravity of the offence, the potential threat to public safety, the risk of re-offending and the conduct of the prisoner.

Additionally, while it is essential that the sensitivities and concerns of victims of crime should be carefully considered, other factors, such as the rehabilitation of offenders and their safe reintegration into the community, must also be considered.

I am engaged in supporting the passage through the Houses of a private members Bill, currently before the Dáil, which will create a new statutory Parole Board. This Bill provides a valuable opportunity to discuss and address many important issues relating to the parole pro-

cess.

Asylum Applications

302. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 124 of 20 June 2019, if the response reports an up-to-date appraisal of the case of the person (details supplied) in view of previous developments in the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27508/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted either by email to info@ipo.gov.ie, by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either by email to info@protectionappeals.ie, by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

Following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December 2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are now processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of that Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

For your information, on 27 February 2017, the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications under the International Protection Act 2015 which is available on the website of the International Protection Office (www.ipo.gov.ie).

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

Deportation Orders Re-examination

303. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a deportation order will be revoked in the case of a person (details supplied) on the basis of the substantial contribution they have made to the State over the past sixteen years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27510/19]

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 concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order issued on 12 June 2019. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders are a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

As previously advised it is open to the person concerned to submit representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such a request would require substantial grounds to be successful. To date no such representations have been received.

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.

Road Traffic Offences Data

304. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27513/19]

306. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons arrested for driving under the influence of drugs in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27515/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 304 and 306 together.

I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the statistics sought by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly on receipt of this information.

Road Traffic Offences Data

305. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27514/19]

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 the following information and Report.

This report relates to the District Court Area of Limerick which includes the venues in Limerick city and Kilmallock. As always, this report does not include any prosecutions which the gardaí may have initiated using free text rather than the prescribed code Report on number of persons convicted of drink driving offences for 2014 – 2018 in Limerick Court Area

Year	No. of Persons convicted of drink driving in Limerick Court Area
Jan - Dec 2014	115
Jan - Dec 2015	90
Jan - Dec 2016	116
Jan - Dec 2017	164
Jan - Dec 2018	144

Question No. 306 answered with Question No. 304.

Road Traffic Offences Data

307. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted of driving under the influence of drugs in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27516/19]

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 stated that it has received a code for the offence from An Garda Síochána which will enable it to compile the relevant information with effect from 26 June 2019. Information in respect of the periods referred to by the Deputy is not to hand.

Crime Data

308. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons arrested for burglary in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27517/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Garda authorities that the following table shows the number of persons arrested for burglary (or related offences) within Roxboro Road and Henry Street Districts between 2014 and 2018.

I understand that while Limerick City has no specific Garda boundary, it is locally considered to consist of both Roxboro Road and Henry Street District.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Nr. of persons arrested for Burglary (or related offences) within the Limerick City area (Roxboro Road District and Henry Street District) between 2014 and 2018.

ICCS Crime Type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Grand Total
Aggravated Burglary	9	7	8	11	10	45
Burglary	145	157	136	135	119	692
Possession of an article (Burglary or Theft)	36	27	10	16	7	96
Grand Total	190	191	154	162	136	833

Crime Data

309. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted of burglary in Limerick city in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27518/19]

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 number of persons convicted of burglary offences for 2014 – 2018 in Limerick Court Area. The Courts Service has advised that this report relates to the District Court Area of Limerick, which includes the venues in Limerick city and Kilmallock.

The Courts Service has further advised that data can only be provided where standard offence codes are used by prosecutors on the Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS).

Report on number of persons convicted of burglary offences for 2014 - 2018 in Limerick Court Area

Year	Persons convicted of burglary offences in Limerick Court Area
2014	88
2015	70
2016	57
2017	46
2018	59

Garda Transport Data

310. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of squad cars and motorcycles in County Tipperary as of 2 July 2019 in comparison to 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27554/19]

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 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 so as to ensure their optimum use.

The Garda authorities advise that the following table outlines the cars and motorcycles assigned to the Tipperary Division in 2017 and 2018 (end of year figures in both cases) and up to 27 June 2019.

Tipperary Division	Cars	Motorcycles
2019 (as of 27 June)	45	2
2018	50	2
2017	51	2

Garda Strength

311. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new recruits stationed at Roscrea Garda station in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27555/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware the manner in which the resources of An Garda Síochána are deployed, including the allocation of newly attested Gardaí, is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 57 were assigned to the Tipperary Division. This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide significant additional policing hours throughout the country, both in terms of the increase in new Gardaí and the redeployment of Gardaí to frontline policing duties due to civilianisation of their current roles. I believe that the injection of this large number of experienced officers into the field, along with the new recruits, will be really beneficial in terms of protecting communities. This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible effective and responsive policing service to communities across all Garda Divisions including the Tipperary Division.

In relation to the allocation of newly attested Gardaí it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

The number of newly attested Gardaí allocated to the Tipperary Division since the commencement of recruitment to date is outlined below. Roscrea Garda Station is not a training station, therefore no new recruits are sent there.

Tipperary	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
CLONMEL	0	4	11	4	0	19

Tipperary	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
NENAGH	0	5	5	8	0	18
THURLES	5	5	5	1	4	20

Garda Station Refurbishment

312. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to provide a motorcycle shed, locker room and changing facilities for female staff at Nenagh Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27556/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources made available to An Garda Síochána. This includes responsibility for the identification of requirements in relation to the Garda accommodation and close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of the Garda estate.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive it.

International Protection

313. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons since 1 July 2018 found to have special reception needs according to section 8 of SI No. 230 of 2018 - European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27559/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The EU Directive 2013/333/EU was transposed in to Irish Law in June 2018 as the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, which provides for an assessment in relation to special reception needs within 30 days of presentation or application. Once assessed as having special reception needs, there are a number of ways in which those needs are responded to. For example, Tusla provides the required supports to meet the needs of unaccompanied minors once identified as such.

Vulnerable persons include minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is not privy to all information held by other agencies or Departments in relation to applicants of international protection. The individual professionals communicate with RIA (within the bounds of patient confidentiality) if a particular need is identified that will affect the person's accommodation requirements. As a result, it is not possible to provide data on the number of persons found to have special reception needs.

An initial interview is conducted with all applicants when they first attend the International Protection Office in Dublin. If the applicant indicates at that point that he or she requires accommodation, he or she will then be assessed for any specific accommodation needs. The information provided is taken into account when assigning accommodation to the particular individual.

As detailed in the Regulations, the Minister for Health and the HSE has a lead responsibility in relation to health including mental health assessments. Applicants are invited for an initial health assessment on a voluntary basis. Every effort is made to ensure that residents' specific needs are met. Where more intensive care needs are required, such cases are referred to the HSE.

There is a specific Health Screening Team funded and managed by the HSE located on the site of the Baleskin Reception facility for the purpose of assessing those who have just arrived in the State. The team comprises of GPs, a Medical Officer, a Clinical Nurse Specialist and two nurses, a primary care social worker, two primary care psychologists and clerical/administration support. This team offers a range of individual services and screening for medical and psychosocial needs with onward referral as necessary.

In addition, arrangements are in place with Safetynet, who carry out health screening in various parts of the country on behalf of the HSE, to offer this screening service to those who do not, for whatever reason, avail of it in Dublin. Safetynet staff liaise with RIA if the person is deemed vulnerable on medical or related grounds. This can include a request that particular steps be taken as regards that person's accommodation.

There is on-going engagement between RIA and the HSE in relation to how best to meet the health and related needs of protection applicants. The HSE National Office for Social Inclusion has commissioned research to explore the concept of vulnerability with a view to further improving on the processes which are already in place.

It is important to emphasise that all sectors within the Direct Protection system share a role in identifying and supporting applicants who present as vulnerable. This is particularly the case where vulnerabilities may become evident beyond the initial stage of the protection process.

The Department continues to work hard to improve services to persons claiming international protection and seek our assistance, and to meet the requirements of the 2018 regulations, despite significant pressures with regard to the provision of accommodation.

International Protection

314. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of appeals received by the International Protection Appeals Tribunal since 1 July 2018 further to section 21 of SI No. 230 of 2018 - European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018; the number that have affirmed the decision of the review officer; the number that have set aside the decision of the review officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27560/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 30th June, 2018 I signed the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 to transpose the Directive into our national law. Under Regulation 21(1) a recipient who is dissatisfied with a decision of a review officer under Regulation 20, may subject to Regulation 22, within 10 working days of the date of the notice of the decision, appeal, in fact and law, against that decision to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

I can inform the Deputy that since 1st July 2018, 35 appeals were received by the International Protection Appeals Tribunal pursuant to Regulation 21 of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 of which 3 appeal requests were rejected. A total of 22 have affirmed the decision of the review officer and 4 have set aside the decision of the review officer. The remaining small number of cases are ongoing with the majority of these on

hold due to a reference to the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Garda Stations

315. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied with the operational status of a Garda station (details supplied). [27561/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The Garda members assigned to Douglas Garda Station as of 31 May 2019, the latest date for which figures are available, are as follows:

Douglas Station	Inspector	Sergeant	Garda
Total	1	3	17

These figures have been subject to fluctuation due to the absence of members on maternity leave, promotions and retirements, and have led to the temporary curtailment of opening hours at the station as the working members are deployed to outdoor operational duties to service the needs of the community. The nearby Togher Garda Station is open to the public 24 hours a day.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the roll out of the Cork City Divisional Community Policing Model, which is currently being implemented as part of the Divisional Policing Model, will result in the allocation of four new Community Gardaí into Douglas station, with those members being deployed full-time on Community Policing Duties.

The Deputy will be aware that, as part of the ongoing reform programme, there is an ongoing civilianisation process in An Garda Síochána which will see an increase in overall Garda Staff numbers to 4,000 by 2021. The Garda Commissioner has indicated that the allocation of additional Garda staff will facilitate the continuing redeployment of Gardaí to operational policing duties. I am informed by the Commissioner that this may facilitate an increase in the opening hours of Douglas Garda Station which is an operational matter for An Garda Síochána.

Garda Transport Data

316. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of patrol cars assigned to each Garda station in each Garda division by station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27588/19]

317. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of marked and unmarked cars assigned to each Garda station in each Garda division by station; the number of other vehicles by station in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27589/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 316 and 317 together.

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 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 so as to ensure their optimum use.

The Garda authorities advise that the following table outlines the number of vehicles assigned to each Garda Division by District, excluding National Units and Garda Headquarters, as of 21 June 2019. For security reasons, a breakdown of marked and unmarked vehicles is not included in the table.

	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4 x 4	Others	Fleet
DMR EAST DIVISION	40	9	0	1	2	52
BLACKROCK-W DISTRICT	18	1	0	1	1	21
DUNLAOGHAIRE-F DISTRICT	22	8	0	0	1	31
DMR NORTH DIVISION	74	18	0	1	4	97
BALBRIGGAN-Y DISTRICT	9	1	0	0	1	11
BALLYMUN DISTRICT	29	10	0	1	3	43
COOLOCK-R DISTRICT	21	3	0	0	0	24
RAHENY-J DISTRICT	15	4	0	0	0	19
DMR NORTH CENTRAL DIVISION	41	12	0	3	1	57
BRIDEWELL DISTRICT	6	3	0	0	0	9
FITZGIBBON STREET DISTRICT	12	3	0	2	0	17
STORE STREET DISTRICT	23	6	0	1	1	31
DMR SOUTH DIVISION	53	17	0	2	0	72
CRUMLIN-G DISTRICT	18	10	0	0	0	28
TALLAGHT-M DISTRICT	22	5	0	1	0	28
TERENURE-P DISTRICT	13	2	0	1	0	16
DMR SOUTH CENTRAL DIVISION	41	14	0	0	2	57
DONNYBROOK-E DISTRICT	11	6	0	0	0	17
KEVIN STREET-A DISTRICT	22	4	0	0	1	27
PEARSE STREET-B DISTRICT	8	4	0	0	1	13
DMR TRAFFIC DIVISION	17	1	48	4	3	73
DMR TRAFFIC-DUBLIN CASTLE DISTRICT	17	1	48	4	3	73
DMR WEST DIVISION	61	13	0	0	9	83
BLANCHARDSTOWN-K DISTRICT	33	6	0	0	2	41

	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4 x 4	Others	Fleet
CLONDALKIN-L DISTRICT	14	5	0	0	0	19
LUCAN-Q DISTRICT	14	2	0	0	7	23
KILDARE DIVISION	38	12	1	3	3	57
KILDARE DISTRICT	16	5	0	2	1	24
LEIXLIP DISTRICT	10	2	0	0	0	12
NAAS DISTRICT	12	5	1	1	2	21
LAOIS-OFFALY DIVISION	36	13	2	1	4	56
BIRR DISTRICT	5	2	0	0	0	7
PORTLAOISE DISTRICT	21	6	2	1	3	33
TULLAMORE DISTRICT	10	5	0	0	1	16
MEATH DIVISION	42	12	1	1	0	56
ASHBOURNE DISTRICT	16	4	1	1	0	22
KELLS DISTRICT	7	2	0	0	0	9
NAVAN DISTRICT	11	5	0	0	0	16
TRIM DISTRICT	8	1	0	0	0	9
WESTMEATH DIVISION	45	15	3	3	7	73
ATHLONE DISTRICT	12	2	1	1	1	17
MULLINGAR DISTRICT	33	13	2	2	6	56
WICKLOW DIVISION	41	10	1	5	2	59
BALTINGLASS DISTRICT	10	2	0	1	0	13
BRAY DISTRICT	19	4	1	1	1	26
WICKLOW DISTRICT	12	4	0	3	1	20
CAVAN-MONAGHAN DIVISION	38	14	2	1	3	58
BAILIEBORO DISTRICT	9	2	0	0	0	11
CARRICKMACROSS DISTRICT	7	2	0	1	0	10
CAVAN DISTRICT	14	4	1	0	1	20
MONAGHAN DISTRICT	8	6	1	0	2	17
DONEGAL DIVISION	46	14	3	3	2	68
BALLYSHANNON DISTRICT	14	4	0	2	1	21
BUNCRANA DISTRICT	8	2	2	0	0	12
LETTERKENNY DISTRICT	17	6	1	0	1	25
MILFORD DISTRICT	7	2	0	1	0	10
LOUTH DIVISION	32	9	2	3	4	50
ARDEE DISTRICT	4	3	0	0	0	7
DROGHEDA DISTRICT	11	1	2	1	2	17
DUNDALK DISTRICT	17	5	0	2	2	26
SLIGO-LEITRIM DIVISION	35	13	2	0	1	51
BALLYMOTE DISTRICT	6	2	0	0	0	8
LEITRIM DISTRICT	11	4	1	0	0	16
SLIGO DISTRICT	18	7	1	0	1	27
KILKENNY/CARLOW DIVISION	53	18	1	2	7	81
CARLOW DISTRICT	12	5	1	1	0	19
KILKENNY DISTRICT	26	8	0	1	4	39
THOMASTOWN DISTRICT	15	5	0	0	3	23
TIPPERARY DIVISION	45	13	2	4	1	65
CAHIR DISTRICT	13	2	0	2	1	18
CLONMEL DISTRICT	7	2	0	0	0	9
NENAGH DISTRICT	8	2	0	1	0	11

Questions - Written Answers

	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4 x 4	Others	Fleet
THURLES DISTRICT	13	5	2	1	0	21
TIPPERARY DISTRICT	4	2	0	0	0	6
WATERFORD DIVISION	41	14	3	4	3	65
DUNGARVAN DISTRICT	14	2	0	0	0	16
TRAMORE DISTRICT	9	1	1	1	0	12
WATERFORD DISTRICT	18	11	2	3	3	37
WEXFORD DIVISION	46	11	1	2	1	61
ENNISCORTHY DISTRICT	21	2	1	1	0	25
NEW ROSS DISTRICT	7	2	0	0	0	9
WEXFORD DISTRICT	18	7	0	1	1	27
CORK CITY DIVISION	86	21	8	3	9	127
ANGELSEA STREET DISTRICT	54	14	7	3	4	82
GURRANABRAHER DISTRICT	11	1	0	0	1	13
MAYFIELD DISTRICT	8	4	1	0	4	17
TOGHER DISTRICT	13	2	0	0	0	15
CORK NORTH DIVISION	35	12	2	0	1	50
FERMOY DISTRICT	11	3	0	0	1	15
MALLOW DISTRICT	11	4	1	0	0	16
MIDLETON DISTRICT	13	5	1	0	0	19
CORK WEST DIVISION	42	12	1	2	2	59
BANDON DISTRICT	15	6	1	0	2	24
BANTRY DISTRICT	6	3	0	0	0	9
CLONAKILTY DISTRICT	6	1	0	0	0	7
MACROOM DISTRICT	15	2	0	2	0	19
KERRY DIVISION	37	11	3	1	2	54
KILLARNEY DISTRICT	10	3	0	0	0	13
LISTOWEL DISTRICT	8	2	0	0	0	10
TRALEE DISTRICT	19	6	3	1	2	31
LIMERICK DIVISION	56	16	3	3	5	83
BRUFF DISTRICT	4	2	0	0	0	6
HENRY STREET LIMERICK DISTRICT	32	10	3	3	3	51
NEWCASTLEWEST DISTRICT	12	2	0	0	0	14
ROXBORO ROAD DISTRICT	8	2	0	0	2	12
CLARE DIVISION	36	13	2	1	1	53
ENNIS DISTRICT	25	10	2	0	1	38
KILRUSH DISTRICT	11	3	0	1	0	15
GALWAY DIVISION	65	23	6	3	5	102
BALLINASLOE DISTRICT	6	1	0	0	0	7
CLIFDEN DISTRICT	5	2	0	0	0	7
GALWAY DISTRICT	27	13	4	3	4	51
LOUGHREA DISTRICT	9	3	0	0	0	12
SALTHILL DISTRICT	8	2	0	0	0	10
TUAM DISTRICT	10	2	2	0	1	15
MAYO DIVISION	33	12	1	2	2	50
BALLINA DISTRICT	7	4	0	0	0	11
BELMULLET DISTRICT	2	1	0	0	0	3
CASTLEBAR DISTRICT	8	3	1	0	1	13

	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4 x 4	Others	Fleet
CLAREMORRIS DISTRICT	11	2	0	2	1	16
WESTPORT DISTRICT	5	2	0	0	0	7
ROSCOMMON-LONGFORD DIVISION	39	13	3	0	4	59
CASTLEREA DISTRICT	12	4	0	0	3	19
GRANARD DISTRICT	3	2	0	0	0	5
LONGFORD DISTRICT	14	2	1	0	0	17
ROSCOMMON DISTRICT	10	5	2	0	1	18

White Collar Crime

318. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the anti-corruption framework here; the major policy and legislative changes to tackle corruption in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27606/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The responsibility to develop and implement anti-corruption policies does not rest with any one single body in Ireland. The competence to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute corruption is spread across An Garda Síochána and a number of other bodies with a mandate to tackle corruption.

These include, inter alia, the Central Bank of Ireland, the Standards in Public Office Commission, local authorities, the Ombudsman, Parliamentary Committees on Members' Interests, the Anti-Corruption Unit in the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau, the Criminal Assets Bureau, the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee, other Oireachtas committees, regulators, Government Departments, the Director of Public Prosecutions and tribunals of enquiry and commissions of investigation.

In addition, Ireland has an extensive range of legislative provisions to prevent and combat corruption. These include the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995, the Standards in Public Office Act 2001, Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

In relation to recent legislative developments, the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act 2018 was commenced in full on the 30 July 2018. The Act repealed and replaced the seven previous Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 to 2010. The Act is not merely a consolidation of the old provisions. It strengthens and clarifies the law in relation to corruption.

Ireland is also a party to a number of anti-corruption international instruments. These are the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Public Officials in International Business Transactions and the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). As such, Ireland is subject to regular peer evaluations associated with the implementation of these international agreements with recommendations for improvement made following each review.

Mr James Hamilton, the anti-corruption expert and former Director of Public Prosecutions, is chairing an interdepartmental and multi-agency Review of Ireland's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption structures. The Review Group, which will report later this year, is examining the effectiveness of the State's procedural, legislative and resourcing frameworks for the investigation, prosecution and prevention of fraud and corruption offences.

Criminal Assets Bureau

319. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the Criminal Assets Bureau since its establishment; the quantity and value of assets seized; his plans to strengthen the legislation further; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27607/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Since the inception of the Criminal Assets Bureau in 1996 up to the end of 2018, in excess of €193.8 million has been returned to the State as a result of Bureau's actions. A breakdown of the returns is as follows:

- €32.357 million under the Proceeds of Crime Legislation;
- €157.078 million Tax and Interest;
- €4.391 million in Social Welfare overpayments.

I can assure the Deputy that the legislative framework underpinning the work of the Criminal Assets Bureau is kept under review to ensure its on-going effectiveness and robustness.

This is evidenced by the strengthening of the Proceeds of Crime legislative framework to further support the work of the Criminal Assets Bureau. In this regard, new powers were introduced under the Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act 2016 which provide for Bureau Officers, subject to certain conditions, to immediately seize and detain property for a 24 hour period. Provision is also made for this period to be extended upon the authorisation of the Chief Bureau Officer, subject to certain conditions, for a further period not exceeding 21 days. The 2016 Act also lowered the thresholds applicable to seizures by reducing the value of property involved from €13,000 to €5,000. In addition, regulations were made to reduce the prescribed amount of cash suspected of being the proceeds of crime which can be seized, from €6,500 to €1,000.

Immigrant Investor Programme Data

320. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons that applied for, been refused and granted labour market access permission since 1 July 2018 under SI No. 230 of 2018 - European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018; the number of self-employed returns and employed returns since the same date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27613/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 came into effect from 30 June 2018, and included access to the labour market for eligible international protection applicants. The Regulations provide access to both employment and self-employment.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that as of 28 June, 2019, 3,993 applications for a labour market access permission have been received. 2,713 permissions have been granted, 1,160 have been refused as ineligible, and 120 are under consideration by INIS.

In cases where a person issued with a labour market access permission under the Regulations and takes up employment, the employer is obliged to inform the Minister within 21 days. Similarly, a person taking up self employment must inform the Minister within the same time-frame. A standard form for this purpose is available on the INIS website.

I am advised that a total of 1,229 persons have commenced employment or self-employment to date. The Deputy will appreciate that, arising from the 21 day notification period, there is likely to be a time lag between the actual date of commencement of employment or self-employment and INIS being notified of same and those cases are not reflected in the figures above.

Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

321. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking to provide extra supports to victims of sexual offences; the steps he is taking to educate and change the behaviour of perpetrators of these crimes; the funding allocated to support victims and the investigation of sexual offences crimes in each of the past eight years in view of the fifth annual increase in sexual offences in a row in 2019, an increase of 55%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27661/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can assure the Deputy that the Government is committed to addressing sexual violence and in fully supporting and assisting victims, including facilitating and enabling victims to come forward to report these horrific crimes. Key measures taken to support victims include:

- The development of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence 2016-2021 - a live strategy to which actions are added. This is the overall policy framework dealing with prevention, provision of services to victims and holding perpetrators to account

- Changes to legislation arising from the introduction of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 and the Victims of Crime Act 2017

- The ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence on 8 March, 2019

- The roll out of Divisional Protective Service Units within An Garda Síochána. These are specialised units tasked with improving services to victims, improving the investigation of sexual violence incidents, and identifying and managing risk

- The review that I initiated of the protections for vulnerable witnesses in the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences, being chaired by Tom O'Malley which is expected to report in Q3 of this year

- A major national awareness campaign on sexual harassment and sexual violence - 'No Excuses' - which I launched on 9 May. This is a high impact national media campaign, which aims to increase the awareness of sexual harassment and sexual violence and to bring about changes in societal attitudes and behaviours, with the aim of decreasing and preventing these offences.

A number of measures have also been taken to educate and change the behaviours of perpetrators of sexual crimes. The Irish Prison Service and the Probation Service provide a number of assessment and intervention treatment programmes for people convicted of sexual violence. These include the following:

- The Prison Service Psychology Service deliver a group intervention programme, in conjunction with the Probation Service, known as Better Lives, whereby a convicted sex offender can avail of relevant treatment to address their offending behaviour;

Questions - Written Answers

- Therapeutic one- to-one interventions with sex offenders in the prison setting, primarily delivered through the Prison Services' Psychology Service;
- Probation Service engagement including work on reducing the risk following release and addressing child protection issues;
- Post Release Supervision Orders implemented by the Probation Service where supervision of offenders has been sanctioned by the Court, following release;
- The delivery by the Probation Service, in conjunction with PACE (a community based non-governmental organisation) of the Safer Lives Group Treatment Programme. This sex offender treatment programme runs on an inter-disciplinary, co-facilitated model, which includes psychologists, probation officers and safer lives staff members.

PACE also operates a number of other separate services. The Foothold Floating Support Service provides one to one support for men leaving custody convicted of a sexual offence. The Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) provides support to the offender by providing an inner circle of support, usually volunteers from the community, who are in turn surrounded by a professional circle and community.

While Tusla has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual or gender based violence, and is providing €25.3 million for these services in 2019, my Department provides funding through its Victims of Crime Office to promote and assist the development of support services to victims of crime. Such services continue to provide important information and support to victims of crime, including emotional support, court accompaniment, accompaniment to Garda interviews, accompaniment to sexual assault treatment units, counselling and referral to other services. In this regard, the Victims of Crime Office has allocated a total of €12.5 million since 2011, to provide funding support to victim support services. In addition, Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, has provided funding of €380,000 since 2011 to the Rape Crisis Network Ireland's legal coordination service.

Details of the funding amounts made available for the period in question are set out in the following table.

Year	Victims of Crime Funding	Cosc Funding
2019	€1.712m	€50,000
2018	€1.712m	€40,000
2017	€1.712m	€40,000
2016	€1.462m	€40,000
2015	€1.212m	€40,000
2014	€1.212m	€40,000
2013	€1.196m	€40,000
2012	€1.141m	€45,000
2011	€1.205m	€45,000

In relation to the investigation of such crimes, as the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I have sought information from the Garda Commissioner in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy. I will write to the Deputy when the information is to hand.

The Deputy may also wish to note that the Government has approved a new national survey

approach to the collection of data on the prevalence of sexual violence by the Central Statistics Office in Ireland and work is underway on this project. Finally, while I am concerned at the year on year increases in sexual offences reported by the CSO, I welcome the fact that more and more victims are coming forward to An Garda Síochána. Increased reporting by victims of sexual offences to An Garda Síochána may also be interpreted as an increase in confidence of victims to report. I would continue to encourage anyone who has been a victim of sexual assault to come forward and report the incident to An Garda Síochána.

Family Law Cases

322. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the provision of specialist family courts and judges; his plans in this regard in the context of Budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27686/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I intend to publish proposals in 2019 for a new approach to handling family law cases in Ireland at District, Circuit and High Court levels. A Family Court Bill will be introduced to create a new dedicated Family Court within the existing court structures. These courts will have new procedures aimed at less adversarial resolution of disputes and will have appropriate facilities and case management arrangements.

A working group was established in 2017, comprising officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board, to examine the operational aspects relating to the family court and develop an overall architecture for the new family court structure. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla also participated in the working group. Key issues that arose in consultations included family court venues and facilities, resources and capital investment in family courts and integration of relevant family and child services to provide the best possible family law outcomes.

In 2018, a task force on the Family Court comprising senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Legal Aid Board and the Courts Service was formed to seek agreement on core questions of policy and costs. A representative of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has also joined the group. The work of this group is at an advanced stage. Issues being examined include court areas and locations, use of courthouses, provision of facilities and services, arrangements for management of resources, and oversight arrangements.

Work is well advanced on the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill. When finalised, the General Scheme will be submitted for Government approval in the usual manner and will have to undergo pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill will then be drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. It is not possible at this stage to estimate when the Bill will be ready for publication.

The Family Court Bill is only one component of a new Family Court system. The provision of appropriate court facilities and services, and the capital and current resources that may be required for this, will be just as important, if not more so, for the operation of a new family court system.

The Government is committed to building a new Family Law Centre and Children's Court in Dublin 7. The Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 provides for development of a Family Law and Children's Court at the Hammond Lane site. The project is to be delivered as a Public Private Partnership.

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.

My officials have been in ongoing discussions with the Courts Service who have been advised that €80 million in capital funding has been made available for the Hammond Lane project.

As the Deputy will be aware, Budget 2020 is still under consideration.

Courts Service

323. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the annual comparative Justice Scoreboard 2019 from the EU Commission in relation to the performance of the Courts Service and judicial system over the past year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27687/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland contributes annually to the European Commission EU Justice Scoreboard report which provides comparable data on the independence, quality, and efficiency of national justice systems, the essential parameters of an effective justice system. Ireland also contributes to the Council of Europe, European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) report which compares data on justice systems and court efficiencies from 47 countries. Both reports are available online at www.ec.europa.eu and www.coe.int respectively. These reports assist in providing ongoing international benchmarking which can be used as reference points when undertaking analysis of Ireland's justice system.

The seventh edition of the scoreboard was published on 26 April 2019 and it refers mostly to data from the year 2017.

I want to highlight in particular that in relation to online availability of information about the judicial system for the general public, Ireland is one of five member states to meet all criteria assessed including access to information on the justice system and presentation of tailor-made information for specific groups of society which would otherwise have difficulty accessing this information.

Ireland has the fourth highest general government expenditure on the law courts and the report shows that expenditure has increased year on year.

With regard to the perceived independence of the courts and judges among the general public and among companies, Ireland, which has traditionally scored well in these important metrics, was in fifth highest place.

While recognising the value of gathering international data in relation to the independence, quality and efficiency of national justice systems, it is important to note the existence of anomalies that can arise when comparing such data. In some cases, data is collated in different ways in different countries, underpinning the differing geographical, economic and legal systems and as such, the data is not always directly comparable.

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Data

324. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the budget allocation to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in 2018 and to date in 2019, in

tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27783/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The full year budget allocation to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in respect of 2018 and 2019 is as follows:-

	2018	2019
	€'000	€'000
Pay	42,653	43,770
Non-Pay	26,118	27,618
Total	68,771	71,388

The actual expenditure in 2018 and to the 31st May, 2019 is as follows:-

	2018	2019 (to 31 May)
	€'000	€'000
Pay	40,066	17,626
Non-Pay	26,678	10,841
Total	66,744	28,467

Garda Strength

325. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda asset profilers attached to each Garda division as of 21 June 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27784/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) is a multi-agency statutory body established under the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996. Its primary objective is to identify the proceeds of criminal activities and deprive people of the benefits of such criminal proceeds. The CAB operates nationally and is supported in its work by a network of over 425 trained asset profilers. These asset profilers work hand-in-hand with local Garda management and communities and I am pleased to say this has proved extremely effective.

The Criminal Assets Bureau conducts training courses for Asset Profilers twice per year. For the most part Asset Profilers are members of An Garda Síochána from local divisions and from special units. In addition, a small number have been trained from Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The information you have requested on the number of Garda asset profilers assigned to each Garda Division is contained in the following table.

Region	Division	Total
Crime & Security		
Crime & Security Total		16
DMR	DMR West	27
	DMR Traffic (SIU)	2
	DMR South Central	14
	DMR South	19
	DMR North Central	22
	DMR North	22
	DMR East	11

Questions - Written Answers

Region	Division	Total
	DMR CTU	3
DMR Total		120
Eastern	Wicklow	8
	Westmeath	12
	Meath	10
	Laois/Offaly	9
	Kildare	10
Eastern Total		49
Garda - DSP	DSP	9
Garda - DSP Total		9
Northern	Sligo/Leitrim	9
	Louth	12
	Donegal	8
	Cavan/Monaghan	9
Northern Total		38
Serious Crime Operations	ODCE	3
	GNBCI	15
	GNPSB	5
	GNIB	6
	GNECB	7
	GNDOCB	12
	DMR RSMU	3
Serious Crime Operations Total		51
South Eastern	Wexford	9
	Waterford	9
	Tipperary	8
	Carlow/Kilkenny	7
South Eastern Total		33
Southern	Limerick	12
	Kerry	9
	Cork West	8
	Cork North	7
	Cork City	12
Southern Total		48
Western	Roscommon/Longford	9
	Mayo	10
	Galway	9
	Clare	8
Western Total		36
Garda Total		400

Prison Service Staff

326. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a person (details supplied) will receive notice of an appointment. [27790/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can advise the Deputy that the person referred to in the details which he has supplied with the question was successful at interview stage of the 2018 Recruit Prison Officer campaign and following this stage, their

security clearance application was sent for processing.

I can further advise that whilst the candidate has passed two of the three final stages of the Recruit Prison Officer assessments, their application cannot progress further until their security clearance application is successfully processed. In this instance, the time line for the clearance process has not been affected by the error referred to in the details supplied with the question.

Due to the unique nature of the prison environment, all matters concerning security are of the utmost importance, and the security clearance process is extremely thorough and extensive. As a result, some applications may take longer than others. Therefore, the Prison Service is not in a position to advise when the candidate in question will progress further. However, I have been assured that the candidate will be contacted as soon as the security clearance application has been completed.

Fines Data

327. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons issued with a third payment option to pay a fixed charge notice since the introduction of the third payment option on 1 June 2017; the number of persons that paid the third payment option fixed charge notice; the number that were listed to appear in court having failed to pay; the number convicted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27792/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Data in relation to the third payment option is maintained by the Courts Service. I have requested the statistics sought by the Deputy and will forward the relevant information directly to the Deputy on receipt.

Fines Data

328. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons listed to appear before the courts for not paying a fixed charge notice relating to driving while holding a mobile phone by District Court in each of the years 2017 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27793/19]

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, and this includes the provision of information on the courts system.

I have requested information from the Courts Service in relation to this matter and the Courts Service has stated it will contact the Deputy directly as soon as the information is to hand.

Fines Data

329. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons listed to appear in court for not paying a fixed charge notice for speeding by District Court in each of the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27794/19]

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 responsi-

bility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, and this includes the provision of information on the courts system.

I have requested information from the Courts Service in relation to this matter and the Courts Service has stated it will contact the Deputy directly as soon as the information is to hand.

Road Traffic Offences Data

330. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of e-scooters seized; the number of fines issued; the number of arrests and cautions made with regard to the use of an e-scooter under the Road Safety Act 1961; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27796/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As noted by my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross, T.D., in response to parliamentary question 246 of 15 May 2019:

Insofar as the specific statistics sought by the Deputy are concerned, I am advised by An Garda Síochána that, unfortunately, this data cannot be easily collated, as PULSE does not allow for the disaggregation of such statistics based on vehicle type. To collate the information, a manual trawl of all road traffic licence/insurance/tax offence records concerning mechanically propelled vehicles would have to be undertaken, which, I am advised, would require a disproportionate amount of Garda time and resources, and, therefore, cannot be justified.

Finally, in relation to the legal position of such vehicles, Minister Ross had requested the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to carry out research into how e-scooters and other such vehicles are regulated in other countries, particularly in other EU Member States, indicating that ‘the goal is to understand the road safety implications of the use of such vehicles on public roads, especially when interacting with other vehicles’. I am informed that the Minister has since received this report, which is now being considered in his Department.

Garda Reserve

331. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a response will issue to an interim reply (details supplied) regarding Garda reserves; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27798/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): A response to the correspondence in question has been drafted and will issue this week.

Departmental Reviews

332. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27886/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As a Department with a wide policy remit, my Department undertakes research on a daily basis concerning a range of issues which impact on policy formation, the legislative process and service delivery, amongst other things.

2 July 2019

My Department has a Chief Information Officer who takes a leading role in structuring the commissioning and undertaking of research across the Department. The Department also benefits from membership of the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service, an integrated cross-Government service that aims to support better policy formulation and analysis within the civil service, enhance the role of economics in policy making and provide Government with evidence-based policy advice.

Details of research commissioned by my Department since 2016 is included in the following table. The Deputy will also be aware that there are a range of agencies and offices operating under the aegis of my Department which from time to time may commission studies, reviews or research in addition to that which is outlined below. Furthermore, Annual Reports, whether of the Department itself, or in relation to particular aspects of the Department's work, are regularly published by the Department on its website.

Title of Live Study, Review, Research	Scheduled Date of Completion
Experience of women in the commercial sex trade in the context of the Criminal Law (SexualOffences) Act 2017	May 2020
An evidence review of recidivism and policy responses	Q1 2020
Evidence review of victim satisfaction in the Criminal Justice System	Q3 2019
Understanding the needs and experiences of sex trafficking victims in Ireland	Q1 2020
Evidence review of confidence in criminal justice systems	Q4 2019
Research study on Familicide and domestic homicide reviews	Mid 2020
Mid-term review of National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and gender-based violence2016-2021	Q3 2019
Research into existing Equality legislation.	September 2019
Research and analysis on women's participation at board and senior management level in private companies in Ireland.	December 2019
Review of the Office of the State Pathologist	September 2019
ESRI study on Citizenship	H2 2019
External review on Immigrant Investor Programme	H2 2019
Consultation on draft National Standards for Accommodation offered to People in the Protection Process	Date to be decided
Improving the use of Data to measure Effectiveness in the Irish Youth Justice System	Quarter 1 2020
Evaluation of the Work to Learn Programme (Irish Youth Justice Service)	Quarter 4 2019
Evaluation of the Janus project (Irish Youth Justice Service)	Quarter 4 2019
Evaluation of the Solas Project (Irish Youth Justice Service)	Quarter 4 2019
Evaluation of QQI Programme (Irish Youth Justice Service)	Quarter 4 2019
Studies to inform development of new Youth Justice Strategy, including policy review and consultations with young people	Quarter 1 2020
Action Research Project (GYDP development) including examination of relationships between participants and youth justice workers	On-going research project, reports on a phased basis commencing in 2020
Children in Criminal Networks (Greentown Project) – Design for Intervention programmes	Q4 2019

Departmental Reports

333. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27917/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The following table contains the relevant information on policy documents and strategies published by my Department since 1 January 2016.

Year of Publication	Title of Policy Document/Strategy
2016	Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland
2016	Report of Inter Departmental Working Group on the Future Licensing and Regulation of Gambling in Ireland
2016	Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021
2016	First Interim Report of the Interdepartmental Group to examine issues relating to people with mental illness who come in contact with the criminal justice system
2016	Second Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2017	Department of Justice and Equality Strategy Statement
2017	Third Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2017	Fourth Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2017	National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020
2017	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021
2017	National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021
2017	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service(INIS) Policy Document on non-EEA Family Reunification
2017	INIS Policy Document on Revised Immigration Arrangements for the 3rd Level Graduate Programme
2017	INIS Policy Document on Revised Immigration Rules for Trainee Accountants (on Stamp 1A)
2017	INIS Policy Document on Immigration for Students
2017	Migrant Integration Strategy - A Blueprint for the Future (2017 – 2020)
2018	Department of Justice and Equality Data and Research Strategy 2018-2021
2018	Value For Money and Policy Review - Prisoner Escorts in the Criminal Justice System
2018	Fifth Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2018	Sixth Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2018	Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan - This Plan was published by the Minister for Justice and Equality in accordance with Section 27 of the Children First Act 2015
2018	Department of Justice and Equality Child Safeguarding Statement
2018	INIS Policy Document on Special Scheme for non-EEA nationals who held a Student Permission in the State during the period 1st January 2005 to 31st December 2010
2018	Irish Refugee Protection Programme Humanitarian Admission Programme 2 (IHAP)
2018	INIS Policy Document on Minister of Religion Permission
2018	INIS Policy Document on Volunteering in Ireland
2018	INIS Policy Document on Permission to Access the Labour Market

Year of Publication	Title of Policy Document/Strategy
2018	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service(INIS) Service Improvement Plan
2019	Seventh Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to the Minister for Justice and Equality - This Group is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review
2019	Report of Inter Departmental Working Group on the Future Licensing and Regulation of Gambling in Ireland
2019	Interdepartmental Working Group Report on the Regulation and licensing of security personnel assisting personnel in enforcing court orders by the Private Security Authority
2019	Department of Justice and Equality ICT Acceptable Usage Policy
2019	INIS Policy Document on De Facto Partner of a Critical Skills Employment Permit Holder, or of a Non-EEA Researcher on a Hosting Agreement
2019	Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 – 2020: Progress Report to Government
2019	Community Sponsorship Ireland Initial Policy Framework

Garda Vetting

334. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí by rank attached to national vetting bureau as of 1 June 2017, 1 June 2018 and 24 June 2019; the budget allocation for the bureau in 2017, 2018 and 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27929/19]

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, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this matter.

Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 provide a statutory basis for the vetting of persons carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable persons.

The Act stipulates that a relevant organisation shall not permit any person to undertake relevant work or activities on behalf of the organisation, unless the organisation receives a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in respect of that person.

Garda vetting is conducted on behalf of registered organisations only and is not conducted for individual persons on a personal basis.

For the Deputy's information, I have set out below in tabular form, the number of Gardaí by rank attached to the national vetting bureau as of 1 June 2017, 1 June 2018 and 24 June 2019.

National Vetting Bureau	Sergeant	Superintendent	Total
31/05/2017	5	1	6
31/05/2018	4	1	5
31/05/2019	5	1	6

While a separate annual budget for the Garda National Vetting Bureau is not compiled, the table below details the total actual expenditure for the Garda National Vetting Bureau for the period 2017 to 30th June, 2019 inclusive.

Year	Expenditure
2017	€6,396,389
2018	€6,592,326
2019 (to 30 June)	€3,296,781

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the link: http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Garda Recruitment

335. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a competition for new Garda collision forensic investigators will be held in quarter 3 of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27930/19]

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. I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive it.

Garda Data

336. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí allocated to provide security to concert goers at a concert (details supplied); the cost of such security; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27959/19]

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. I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive it.

Legal Proceedings

337. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to media reports in relation to the collapsed trial regarding persons (details supplied); his views on the circumstances that led to the collapse; if he has been in discussions or contact with the Policing Authority regarding same; if discussions with the Garda Commissioner took place on same; if the matter has been referred to GSOC; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27970/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised that the case referred to by the Deputy is one that has been the subject of discussion between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner at a number of recent Authority meetings. The Commissioner also submitted a written report to the Authority, which he copied to me.

Having discussed the report with the Commissioner at its May meeting, the Authority exercised its power under section 102(7) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to refer the matter to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) for its consideration. GSOC advised me in recent days that it has decided to initiate an investigation under section 95 of the Garda

Síochána Act 2005.

The Deputy will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this case pending the outcome of the GSOC investigation.

Residency Permits

338. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for residency status and updated stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28016/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a request from the person concerned for permission to reside in the State on Stamp 4 conditions.

I understand that the person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State on a temporary basis on Stamp 1 conditions on 15 January, 2019, for 6 months to facilitate an intended application to the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation for an employment permit. I also understand that if the person concerned wishes to make a further request for permission to remain in the State they may do so by writing to Unit 2, Domestic Residence and Permissions Division, INIS, 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

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.

Refugee Data

339. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the commitments made regarding resettling refugees under the various resettlement and relocation programmes; the number of refugees accommodated to date here under the resettlement and relocation programmes in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28035/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): In 2015, as part of Ireland's response to the migration crisis in central and southern Europe, the Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). Under this programme, the Government committed to accepting up to 4,000 people into the State, primarily through a combination of the EU Relocation Programme and the UNHCR's Refugee Resettlement Programme. The Relocation strand was completed in March 2018 and the IRPP is currently fulfilling its obligation under the Resettlement Programme in Lebanon and Jordan.

Table 1: Commitments and Arrivals as part of the IRPP

	Commitment	Arrivals	Remaining
EU Relocation Strand (concluded on 31 March 2018)	1,022	1,022	-
Of which are unaccompanied minors	6	6	-
UNHCR-led Resettlement Strand	1,985	1,309	676

Questions - Written Answers

	Commitment	Arrivals	Remaining
Calais Special Project	41	41	-
Unaccompanied minors: Greece / Malta	60	-	60
Total unaccompanied minors	101	41	60
IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme 2018/19	530	99	431
Mediterranean search and rescue missions			
Adults	54	54	-
Unaccompanied minors	4	4	-
Total from search and Rescue missions	58	58	-
Mechanism as yet undecided	304	-	304
Total IRPP Commitment/Arrivals	4,000	2,529	1,471

To date, a total of 2,529 people have arrived in Ireland under the various strands of the IRPP, 51 of whom are unaccompanied minors. In addition to the above, 5 families (23 people) are due to arrive this week. A further 60 refugees arriving in the coming weeks.

An IRPP mission to Lebanon in March 2019 selected 331 refugees for resettlement to Ireland. A further mission to Jordan later this month will select approximately 300 refugees. This will complete Ireland's commitment to admit 1,985 programme refugees under the Resettlement strand of the IRPP. The remaining refugees are due to arrive in Ireland during the remainder of 2019.

The IRPP programme also includes the IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme under which Irish citizens, programme refugees, Convention refugees and persons with subsidiary protection can apply for family members to come to Ireland where those persons are living in the top 10 refugee generating countries. 530 persons are being admitted to Ireland this year under that programme.

Table 2: Persons Accommodated

Accommodated by	Number of persons
Local Authorities	1,942
Irish Red Cross	111
Community Sponsorship Ireland	9
Total	2,062 (88% of all Relocation and Resettlement arrivals resettled)

Of those who have arrived in Ireland to date, 1,942 persons have been provided with permanent housing by local authorities. In addition, 111 persons have been housed in accommodation through the Irish Red Cross. 9 persons are participating in the Community Sponsorship scheme which is an innovative scheme whereby local communities directly support the process of integrating refugees into their communities. Taken together, 2,062 people who arrived under the IRPP have been resettled in communities across Ireland. This represents 88% of the arrivals so far under the resettlement and relocation strands of the programme.

Garda Deployment

340. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí

attached to each divisional protective services units established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28056/19]

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 of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

To date, ten Divisional Protective Services Units have been established. The Garda Commissioner has indicated that it is expected that units will be established in the remainder of Garda Divisions by the end of 2019. The personnel strength of these units is as follows:

DPSU	D/Sergeants	D/Gardai
Cork City	2	8
Kerry	2	10
Limerick	2	7
Waterford	2	10
Carlow/Kilkenny	2	11
Galway	2	13
Louth	2	12
DMR West Clondalkin	1	9
DMR West Cabra	1	14
DMR South Central	2	15

Garda Deployment

341. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number and rank of new Garda personnel appointed to the Naas district in the past three months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28063/19]

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, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the Cohort Model of resource allocation is currently used for the allocation of personnel within An Garda Síochána, including newly attested probationer Gardaí from the Garda College. Using this model, 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, and operational strategies. When considering the allocation of resources to a Division, comprehensive consultation is carried out with local Garda management during which all factors are taken into consideration.

In relation to the allocation of newly attested Gardaí, it is important to keep in mind that they have a further 16 months of practical and class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and

access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that while not all Garda Stations are training stations it is important to note that the allocation of probationer Gardaí to a Divisional training station facilitates the reassignment of Gardaí to other stations within the Division, if required, by the Divisional Officer.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,800 Garda recruits have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 118 were assigned to the Kildare Garda Division. This year to date, two intakes of probationer Gardaí have attested and been allocated on the 8 March, and the 10 June respectively. Six newly attested Gardaí were allocated to the Kildare Division in March 2019: two to Kildare Garda Station, two to Leixlip Garda Station and two to Naas Garda Station. The allocation of resources within the Division is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer.

The Government has increased the budget for An Garda Síochána to €1.76 billion for 2019, which includes provision for the recruitment of up to 800 Gardaí this year. The Commissioner has now informed me that he plans to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí in 2019 and 600 Garda Civilian Staff. This Garda Staff recruitment will allow the Commissioner to redeploy a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to frontline policing in 2019.

I believe that the injection of this large number of experienced officers into the field, along with the new recruits, will be really beneficial in terms of protecting communities. This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible effective and responsive policing service to communities across all Garda Divisions including the Kildare Division.

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the following link

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Money Laundering

342. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to update the Criminal Justice (Money, Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28069/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 was most recently updated in November last year by the Criminal Justice (Money, Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Act 2018. The 2018 Act transposed in large part the Fourth EU Anti Money Laundering Directive and also brought Irish law into line with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, an international standard-setting body.

The main change brought about by the 2018 Act was the introduction of new requirements around a risk-based approach. This means, first of all, that the businesses concerned (which the legislation calls designated persons), must assess the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing involved in carrying out their business. They must have policies and procedures in place to mitigate these risks. They must determine the risk attaching to each customer or transaction, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account relevant factors. And they must then carry out whatever due diligence measures are warranted by that level of risk. This represents a more targeted and therefore more effective application of measures by the designated person.

The 2018 Act also recognises the reality that many businesses today operate in group structures across borders. It made a number of amendments to the 2010 Act in this regard. The Act expanded the requirements on Irish companies to ensure that their subsidiaries overseas apply high anti-money laundering standards. If a group implements policies and procedures properly, its subsidiaries are not subject to some restrictions that normally apply in respect of high-risk third countries.

The 2018 Act also extended the scope of existing obligations in other ways. For example, some measures which previously only applied to banks, now apply to other financial institutions. There are extra measures that must be applied to the beneficiaries of life assurance policies. Measures applying to politically exposed persons will now apply to those resident in Ireland as well as those resident abroad.

As the Deputy will be aware, of great importance in the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing is the role of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). The FIU in Ireland is part of An Garda Síochána. It is responsible for receiving suspicious transaction reports from designated persons and analysing them, so that it can be used to combat crime. The 2018 Act expands the remit of the FIU. It requires them to have access to all of the information they need to carry out their functions and allows for cooperation and information sharing between the FIU in Ireland and the FIUs of other Member States.

The 2018 Act also introduced a fitness and probity regime for the owners of private members' gaming clubs. This change, which transposes a provision of the Fourth Directive, requires both those who hold a directorial function, as well as the beneficial owners of such clubs, to apply to An Garda Síochána or the Minister for Justice for a certificate of fitness. It is now a criminal offence to carry on such activities without that certificate.

In addition to the changes above, the Government also approved the drafting of a further Bill to amend the 2010 Act in January of this year, provisionally titled the Criminal Justice (Money, Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Bill 2019. The General Scheme for this Bill was published on my Department's website in January and its aim is to give effect to the criminal justice elements of the Fifth EU Anti Money Laundering Directive.

While drafting work is ongoing, the General Scheme, as published, will amend some provisions of the 2010 Act, and insert others, concerned with:

- the use of virtual currencies for terrorist financing and limiting the use of pre-paid cards;
- safeguards for financial transactions to and from high-risk third countries;
- the scope of designated bodies under the existing legislation;
- enhanced customer due diligence (CDD) requirements;
- the prevention of credit and financial institutions from creating anonymous safe-deposit boxes;
- a Regulation-making power for the Minister which will set out what is considered to be a "prominent public function".
- a number of technical amendments.

In addition to the 'money laundering legislation' above, the Deputy may also wish to note that my colleague, the Minister for Finance, has introduced, and will introduce further, legislation to deal with those elements of the Money Laundering Directives that fall within his policy

remit. This includes the establishment of beneficial ownership registers and centralised bank account registers, etc.

Prison Building Programme

343. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the length of time the construction of a new female prison in Limerick and a new wing at Limerick male prison will take to complete; if both construction projects have commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28094/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that a contract has been awarded for a substantial development at Limerick Prison, which comprises the construction of a new wing for male prisoners, a stand-alone unit for female prisoners, staff facilities, a new kitchen, a new visits and reception area, a laundry, and training and recreation facilities. The project also includes the construction of new offices for the Probation Service.

Construction work on the new prison facilities commenced in February this year and is expected to be completed in February 2021. This will be followed by a period of commissioning of the various security systems. It is expected that the new prison facilities will be ready for operational use in the second half of 2021.

The construction of the new prison facilities at Limerick Prison represents a further important milestone in the Government’s commitment to the programme of modernisation of the prison estate.

Visa Applications

344. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the length of time tourist visas take to process; if it takes longer for particular countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28100/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Decisions regarding the granting or refusal of tourist or visit visas are made in a number of INIS Visa Offices overseas, the INIS Visa Office in Dublin, and at Embassies of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which process certain visa applications under delegated sanction from my Department.

The processing times for visa decisions are published on the Visa pages of each Visa Office and Embassy website. As of 24 June 2019, the Dublin Visa Office was processing tourist/visit visa applications received in Dublin on 10 June 2019. Processing times for other Visa Offices overseas and for Embassies will vary but are generally between 3 and 6 weeks at this time, with many applications processed inside those timeframes, depending on travel dates.

I am also advised by INIS that the visa service is experiencing an increase in the number of visa applications across most categories, in line with increased economic activity generally. Notwithstanding this, processing times are on a par with, and in many cases, better than the same time last year.

The business target for processing ‘short-stay C’ visas is within eight weeks (current processing time in Dublin for most categories is within four weeks). However, the processing time at each office and location worldwide is determined by a number of factors such as the volume and complexity of applications, whether investigation is required or not, individual circum-

stances, peak application periods, seasonal factors, and the resources available. While every effort is made to process applications as quickly as possible, processing times inevitably vary as a result.

The Deputy can be assured that every effort is made to keep processing times to a minimum, and a number of measures have been put in place to deal with the increased demand for visas to come to Ireland. This has included the assignment of additional staff to deal with applications, and more generally the streamlining of visa processes where possible. The position in this regard is being kept under review.

The central concern in deciding on visa applications, as with all visa services worldwide, is to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the country's vital national interests by maintaining an effective immigration regime while at the same time facilitating travel for those who meet the criteria. Each visa application is therefore decided on its own merits taking all factors into account.

Naturalisation Applications

345. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a naturalisation application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28104/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy.

If she has made an application for naturalisation and sent it through registered post then the applicant should have a registered post tracking number. If the applicant can confirm the registered post tracking number, we can confirm whether the documents have arrived successfully in the INIS office.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Garda Deployment

346. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will seek the assistance of the Garda Commissioner in respect of the serious concerns of a company (details supplied) regarding drug crime in the area; if the Commissioner's attention will be drawn to the need to assign additional personnel and resources to the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28140/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government has increased the budget for An Garda Síochána to €1.76 billion for 2019. The Commissioner has informed me that he intends to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí along with 600 Garda civilian staff. The recruitment of these additional resources will allow the Commissioner to redeploy a further 500 fully trained Gardaí this year from administrative duties to frontline policing duties.

As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of An Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team. I am assured that An Garda Síochána remains resolute in its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and communities.

I understand that an operation involving Gardaí from the Tallaght and Rathfarnham Districts was conducted on Thursday 27 June. The Tallaght Gardaí "day of action" targeted persons who have outstanding warrants in relation to drug offences as well as burglary, theft, road traffic and public order matters. A total of 17 people were arrested.

The Garda Commissioner has confirmed that the Government's commitment to increase the overall strength of An Garda Síochána to 15,000 Garda members will be achieved by the target date of 2021. The Government supports the Commissioner's management decision which will ensure that increasing numbers of Gardaí are available for frontline duties in the prevention and detection of criminal activity, whether it be in the area of drug offences or otherwise, in 2019 and beyond.

A core focus of the work carried out by An Garda Síochána is aimed at tackling drugs and organised crime. I have been informed by the Commissioner that the resources coming on stream have enabled him to assign additional resources to the specialist units that come within the ambit of Special Crime Operations, including the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. The Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau continues to target organised crime groups nationally, including those involved in drug related crime, burglary and related offences. The Bureau provides support to the Gardaí operating at local level.

Garda Recruitment

347. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applicants in respect of previous Garda recruitment campaigns that are still being processed in respect of the competitions advertised in December 2013, January 2016 and September 2016, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28151/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware the recruitment to An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013. The Public Appointments Service (PAS), on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial recruitment stages for selection of Garda Trainees with the final stages of the recruitment process in which candidates are vetted, complete a physical competency test and a medical examination, managed by the Commissioner. I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter.

An Garda Síochána has held six recruitment campaigns since December 2013, including the

most recent recruitment campaign, which closed in April. I am informed by An Garda Síochána that there are approximately 46 applicants who are still being processed from the recruitment campaigns referenced by the Deputy.

Subject to final approval by An Garda Síochána, successful applicants from these campaigns are considered first for intakes into the Garda College, in accordance with the candidate's place on the Order of Merit. There is no set time frame for offers to applicants as this is dependent on their files being fully completed and the intake dates into the Garda College. All applicants remain on the panel until such time as they are offered a place in the Garda College, with the exception of those who are deemed unsuitable, fail the Medical or Physical Competence Test (PCT) or withdraw from the competition.

I would advise any candidate for a position as a Garda trainee to contact the PAS or the Garda Appointments Office, depending on the relevant stage of the application process, if they have any queries in relation to their application.

Garda Training

348. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the 2019 budget for Garda training and development and incidental expenses is only €11.527 million compared with the 2018 budget which was €23.079 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28165/19]

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 Garda ICT, the Garda fleet and the Garda estate. In total, the Garda capital allocation has increased from €61 million to €92 million in 2019, which represents a 50% increase.

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, including the training of its members and civilian staff. The Commissioner is also responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the budget for training and development is no longer included in the budget for incidental expenses. Training and development expenditure is now included under the Garda College subhead.

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that the budget for training and development in 2018 was €31.8 million. The budget for training and development for 2019 is €37.6 million, which is an increase of €5.8 million.

Garda Deployment

349. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí by rank attached to the warrants and summons unit in DMR north Garda division to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28166/19]

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.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the information requested and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive it.

Road Traffic Offences Data

350. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of drivers stopped for watching videos while driving; his plans to bring in stronger sanctions to prevent such activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28167/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the use of a mobile phone while driving. I will be in contact with the Deputy directly on receipt of this report.

Legislative responsibility sanctioning this form of activity would fall to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

351. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of asylum seekers, single and family units being accommodated in temporary accommodation in Bray, County Wicklow in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28276/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) has arranged the provision of emergency accommodation for international protection applicants since September 2018 due to the increasing numbers of people arriving in the State seeking international protection. RIA had reached full capacity in its centres at that time.

As of 23rd June, RIA is accommodating 872 people in 28 emergency accommodation across the country. RIA will continue to use emergency accommodation for as short a time as possible and is actively working on securing additional capacity, both in existing centres and through sourcing new centres via a national procurement process.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of this Department, has a legal duty to protect the identities of persons in the international protection process and must be mindful of the right to privacy of applicants when responding to specific queries. As such, while I can confirm that the Department is using temporary emergency accommodation in Co. Wicklow, RIA cannot confirm the specific emergency accommodation locations or exact family configuration as this could lead to the identity the applicants becoming known. I can however confirm that as of 23rd June 2019 there were 79 people residing in emergency accommodation in Co. Wicklow, this includes family units and single people seeking international.

The Department put out an expression of interest seeking bed and board in hotels and guest-houses on a 12-26 week basis for emergency temporary accommodation for international protection applications. Premises in County Wicklow were sourced on that basis. RIA continues to work to identify additional accommodation centres for new applicants.

RIA is working very hard to ensure that residents in emergency accommodation are re-accommodated in an accommodation centre as quickly as possible.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

352. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the contract of the temporary accommodation centre for asylum seekers in Bray, County Wicklow; the timeframe of the contract; the location of the centre; the occupancy of same; the obligations within the contract; the cost of the contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28277/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): Since September 2018, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) has arranged for the provision of emergency beds where the mainstream accommodation centres are at capacity. As of 16th June 2019, a total of 817 applicants were staying in 25 emergency centres.

The locations that are being used for the provision of emergency accommodation have been selected by means of a call for expressions of interest from hotels and guesthouses that was advertised in the national press.

I wish to confirm that a premises in Bray is being used for emergency accommodation and is not a direct provision centre. My Department is working to identify additional capacity within its accommodation portfolio so that the use of emergency accommodation will be reduced and ended, if possible by the end of this year.

The premises in Bray is under contract until the 18th November 2019 for the provision of bed and board for 43 persons. There are currently 31 persons resident there. The contract provides for the provision of bed, breakfast, lunch, dinner and laundry facilities. For reasons of commercial sensitivity, the individual costs of contracts are not made public.

As part of the regional procurement process that RIA is rolling out in 2019, a competition for the Mid-East Region which covers Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow will be advertised in Quarter 3 of this year seeking the provision of accommodation and ancillary services for persons seeking international protection. It would be premature to speculate at this stage what properties will be offered to the Department under this process.

Asylum Seeker Accommodation

353. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the transition process for moving asylum seekers from temporary accommodation to direct provision; if the person in question is consulted; if they are moved to a location geographically close to the temporary accommodation; the way in which the health and well-being needs of asylum seekers are addressed within this transition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28278/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): Since September 2018, due to insufficient capacity within the Reception and Integration Agency's (RIA) accommodation portfolio, RIA has contracted for the use of emergency accommodation in hotels and guesthouses. As of 16th June 2019, a total of 817 applicants were staying in emergency accommodation.

The duration of stay in the emergency accommodation is 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 taken into account when allocating to a RIA accommodation centre to ensure that the most suitable accommodation is assigned, notwithstanding the current capacity issues.

When international protection applicants are provided with emergency accommodation, they are advised that this accommodation is on a temporary basis and that they will be moved

to a RIA accommodation centre as soon as possible. RIA notify international protection applicants in advance of their transfer to a RIA accommodation centre from temporary emergency accommodation.

Additionally, RIA is liaising closely with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the HSE to facilitate appropriate service provision to them while in emergency accommodation.

International Protection

354. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if asylum seekers in temporary accommodation are supported to begin the process of applying for refugee status; the average waiting time for process by the RIA of new applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28279/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can advise the Deputy that the State provides support for all protection applicants in making an application for international protection, regardless of their place of residence. There are specific arrangements for unaccompanied minors who are in the care of Tusla who make an application on their behalf.

Applicants are required to attend for preliminary interview with staff of the International Protection Office (IPO). During this interview the applicant will, where necessary and possible, have the assistance of an interpreter. If the person's application is deemed to be admissible, the person is given a questionnaire to complete. All applicants are entitled to free legal aid from the Refugee Legal Service, once they have made an initial application. The applicant will then have a substantive interview after submitting a completed questionnaire to the IPO. The applicant will have the benefit of an interpreter to ensure they can ably communicate their claim to the interviewer.

International Protection

355. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if children in temporary centres are provided with school placement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28280/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): Children of international protection applicants who are residing in emergency accommodation can access school places in local primary and post-primary schools in the same manner as the general population. They can also avail of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, which is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

While an international protection claim is being examined, accommodation and related services are offered as a whole-of-Government approach to anyone without means. This includes all meals, medical care and utilities. A weekly personal allowance is paid to each person by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and they can also cover exceptional needs. The Department of Education and Skills provides school places for children residents and the HSE provides mainstreamed health services.

Immigration Policy

356. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reduce the income and saving thresholds applying to stamp 0 visas for persons, particularly those from the United States of America, who wish to retire and live here; if the interdepartmental consultations following the review of these criteria have been completed; the reason for the delay in the launch of a new scheme which was indicated in the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 133 of 20 June 2018 would happen in the coming months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28282/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department held a review, including a public consultation, on the issue of non-EEA retirees applying for a permission to reside in Ireland.

While a draft immigration scheme for non-EEA national retirees was being devised at the time, wider policy matters have meant that the timescale for the launch of the scheme has had to be extended, from those indicated in my reply to Parliamentary Question Number 133 of 20 June last year. I hope to be in a position to announce the scheme once these matters have been addressed.

Trade Data

357. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the level of trade between Ireland and Vietnam; her plans to further develop trade links; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27609/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In 2018, Ireland's goods exports to Vietnam amounted to €65 million. Ireland's main exports to Vietnam include medical and pharmaceutical products valued at €18.6m in 2018. Ireland's food exports to Vietnam have grown considerably in recent years. While meat and dairy products are the largest share of this, beverages and seafood also contributed strongly. In 2017 (the most recent year with available figures), services exports from Ireland to Vietnam were valued at €164m. Services imports from Vietnam for the same year totalled €13m. Last year, Ireland imported €167m worth of goods from Vietnam which mainly consisted of clothing, footwear and furniture.

Through the Government's Trade Strategy, *'Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World'*, we aim by 2020 to increase indigenous exports by Enterprise Ireland supported companies, including food, to reach €26 billion and secure 900 new foreign direct investments. As part of the Government's Global Ireland 2025 strategy, Enterprise Ireland will open a new office in Ho Chi Minh City this year to support Irish businesses to expand into the Vietnamese market and to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the FTA.

Negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the EU and Vietnam were concluded in December 2015. On 31 June 2019 the EU and Vietnam signed the Free Trade Agreement along with the EU-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement (IPA). The FTA will unlock a market with huge potential for Irish and EU firms and includes the elimination of nearly all tariffs (over 99%) on EU exports to Vietnam. 65% of these tariffs will be liberalised at entry into force of the FTA with the remainder phased out over a 10-year period. The FTA also covers non-tariff barriers to trade and other trade related issues such as public procurement, competition, services, investment, intellectual property rights, regulatory issues, and sustainable development. I support the entry into force of the EU-Vietnam FTA so that Irish firms may benefit from the new business opportunities provided for by the Agreement.

Opportunities exist for Ireland to grow exports in dairy products, pork, seafood and alcoholic beverages by taking advantage of reduced tariffs under the FTA. Currently tariffs on EU exports of spirits to Vietnam are particularly high at 48% and will be eliminated over a 7-year period following entry into force of the FTA. The elimination of tariffs of 15% on frozen pork products is also significant for Irish producers.

Ireland is an exceptionally open economy and is dependent on international trade and investment as sources of growth. Building new export opportunities for our businesses forms a vital part of Ireland's enterprise strategy. We favour ambitious and balanced trade agreements, negotiated by the EU Commission on our behalf, which are designed to deliver jobs and growth for the benefit of our citizens. The EU-Vietnam FTA and the EU's other trade agreements help to open new markets, break down barriers and provide new opportunities for Irish firms.

As part of the St. Patrick's Day "Promote Ireland" Programmes, Ministerial visits around the world, including Vietnam, were organised to ensure that we use this exposure to maximise the promotion of Ireland's trade, tourism and investment interests.

In a wider context, Vietnam is a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The EU is working towards achieving a region-to-region FTA with ASEAN by first concluding FTAs with individual ASEAN members. The first of these was signed with Singapore in October 2018, the Vietnam FTA is the second, and negotiations for an FTA with Indonesia, the largest country in the ASEAN group, are ongoing. In addition, the benefits of comprehensive EU Free Trade Agreements with third Countries are not solely economic but also involve the establishment of strong lines of communication and areas of common interest with other economies.

Company Closures

358. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to ensure companies have a minimum level of paid-up share capital and reserves which reflects the size of their balance sheet and annual turnover to ensure that if a company ceases to trade, the Exchequer and trade creditors are not left unpaid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28290/19]

364. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to introduce legislation to set the minimum level of paid-up share capital and reserves required by a limited company as a proportion of the annual turnover of the company as a way of preventing companies from ceasing to trade and leaving unpaid taxes and trade creditors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28295/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 364 together.

While there is a minimum share capital requirement of €25,000 for Public Limited Companies set out in the Companies Act 2014, there are currently no plans to introduce legislation to set the minimum level of paid up share capital and reserves required by a limited company as a proportion of the annual turnover of the company.

Minimum share capital requirements are often cited as a potential method of protecting creditors. However, the money that is paid in as share capital is not required to be kept separate but is mingled with the other funds of the company and/or used by it. Thus, even if minimum thresholds of share capital were to be required, there would still not be a readily available cash fund equivalent to the share capital from which to cover creditors' claims against the company

in an insolvency situation.

Furthermore, a requirement to set share capital and reserves as a proportion of turnover could represent a significant obstacle to the conduct of commerce through company structures and have unintended consequences. If a minimum level were set and a company breached that minimum it could result in the loss of limited liability and force viable companies into liquidation with adverse consequences for employment in such companies. Further, if a company had a poor trading year, the amount of proportionate reserves required would fall in monetary terms as turnover may be reduced but a company's debts could increase nonetheless.

Limited liability is one of the principal reasons why most businesses decide to incorporate in the first place. The availability of limited liability facilitates entrepreneurship and job creation by allowing entrepreneurs to trade without compromising personal assets. However, the availability of limited liability is a privilege not a right and is subject to safeguards to protect the interests of other stakeholders. The Companies Act 2014 contains provisions in which the separate legal personality of the company may be pierced in certain circumstances to visit liability on persons concerned in the carrying on of the business e.g.:

Section 610 - Civil liability for fraudulent and reckless trading

Section 612 - Miffeasance

Section 722 - Fraudulent Trading.

Section 599 and 600 contain further safeguards as they provide respectively that in certain circumstances a related company may be required to contribute to the debts of a company being wound up, and for the pooling of assets of related companies.

It should also be noted that minimum share capital requirements are stringent in respect of their application to companies which have a director who has been restricted. Section 819(3) of the Companies Act 2014 requires that any company which has a director who is subject to a restriction order must have an allotted share capital of nominal value not less than €500,000 in the case of a public limited company (other than an investment company) or a public unlimited company, and €100,000 in the case of any other company type. These requirements can be difficult to meet. However, perhaps more importantly, the fact that a director is subject to a restriction order can make it much more difficult for a company to obtain credit and as a result, the threat of restriction acts as a powerful disincentive. The Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement has extensive powers to investigate and prosecute cases of corporate failure involving directors who act dishonestly or irresponsibly, particularly in respect of insolvency situations.

Departmental Expenditure

359. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding her Department granted the Dublin Port Company in the past ten years to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27488/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I can confirm that DBEI has not provided any funding to the Dublin Port Company in the past ten years to date.

Ministerial Meetings

360. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when she last met the director general of Science Foundation Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27782/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I meet regularly with the Director General of Science Foundation Ireland, Professor Mark Ferguson, as does the Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development.

My most recent meeting with the Director General took place on 9 May 2019 in the context of an announcement of renewal of funding to six world class SFI Research Centres. On 5 March 2019, I was briefed by Prof Ferguson on SFI's work plan and proposed funding calls for 2019.

Departmental Reviews

361. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by her; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27875/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I understand that the Deputy is referring to studies and research that has been commissioned and is currently ongoing. A list of such studies is set out in the following table.

Name of external Consultant/Organisation	Report Title	Date of Commission	Publication Status
Mazars	Financial and Governance Analysis of certain Credit Co-operatives	7th November 2018	This project is nearing completion and the report is expected by end Q2 2019. It is not the intention to publish this report.
Herlihy Access Consultancy	Development of Access Policy for the Workplace Relations Commission	2018	For publication shortly
OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)	Review of SME and Entrepreneurship Issues and Policies in Ireland	March 2018	Work in progress – Final report to be published in second half of 2019
Insight Statistical Consulting	Annual Employment Survey 2018	05/09/2018	Q2 2019
Ergo Systems	ICT Security Review	January 2019	Not yet completed. Internal report not intended for publication
Clarion Consulting	ICT Strategy Development	October 2018	Not yet completed. Internal report not intended for publication
Cruinn Associates	Design Skills Report (Working Title)	May 2019	Expected to be published early 2020.
Kevin Duffy	Employment Law Guide	22 May 2019	For inclusion in various WRC publications

Departmental Reports

362. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the documents published by her Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27899/19]

2 July 2019

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of the policy documents and strategies published by my Department in the period in question are set out in the following tables.

2016
Policy Framework for Design in Enterprise in Ireland
Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact Report
Annual Employment Survey Report
R&D Budget Report
'Inspiring Partnership – Ireland National IP Protocol 2016' and related Resource Guide
Ireland's European Research Area Roadmap 2016
Department Statement of Strategy 2016-2019
Action Plan for Jobs 2016 Third Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2016 Second Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2016 First Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2015 Fourth Progress Report
Action Plan for Job: Dublin 2016-2018
Action Plan for Jobs 2016
Policy Framework Design In Enterprise In Ireland

2017
Review of RDI Supports Available to Businesses in Ireland (Independent Report)
Economic and Enterprise Impacts from Public Investment in R&D in Ireland (Research and analysis)
Evaluation of Enterprise Agencies Overseas Office Network
Review of Capita Expenditure on Research, Development and Innovation (2000 – 2016)
Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact Report
Annual Employment Survey Report
Higher Education in R&D Survey Report
R&D Budget Report
A Framework for Town Centre Renewal Publication
Ireland's National Plan on Corporate Responsibility 2017-2020
Building Stronger Business: Responding to Brexit by competing, innovating and trading
Patents Office Strategy Statement 2017-2019
Patents Office Customer Service Action Plan 2017-2019
Action Plan for Jobs 2017 Third Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2017 Second Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2017 First Progress Report
Action Plan for Jobs 2017
Action Plan for Jobs 2016 Fourth Progress Report
Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World

2018
Enterprise 2025 - Renewed
Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy
Dominant Cities in Small Advanced Economies (research and analysis)
Review of the Enterprise Agency Economic Appraisal Model

2018
Focused Policy Assessment of Start-Up and Equity Supports
Annual Business Survey of Economic Impact Report
Annual Employment Survey Report
R&D Budget Report
Research Priority Areas 2018 to 2023,
CSR Check 2018 – Progress Report on Towards Responsible Business
Innovation 2020 Research Priority Areas 2018 to 2023
Report of the Interdepartmental Group on the Review of Economic Migration Policy, September 2018
Workplace Relations Commission Statement of Strategy 2019 – 2022 published on 18 December 2018
Department Statement of Strategy 2018-2021
Focus on Sectors
Action Plan for Jobs 2018 First Progress Report
Enterprise 2025 Renewed: Building Resilience in the face of global challenges
Action Plan for Jobs 2018
Action Plan for Jobs 2017 Fourth Progress Report

2019
CSR Check 2019 – Towards Responsible Business 2nd Progress Report
National Space Strategy for Enterprise 2019-2025
Innovation 2020 Progress Report 2018
‘Ireland’s National IP Protocol 2019 – A framework for successful collaboration’ and related Resource Guide
The Labour Court Strategic Plan 2019 -2022 published on 28 June 2019
Action Plan for Jobs 2018 Second Progress Report
Future Jobs Ireland 2019

Departmental Budgets

363. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated full-year cost if the budget for the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission increased by 10%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28070/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The budget allocation for the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) in 2019 is €12,577,000 as set out in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019 (REV) publication. A 10% increase (€1,257,700) would lead to a hypothetical total allocation of €13,834,700 for the CCPC.

Question No. 364 answered with Question No. 358.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

365. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans for HAA cards for survivors of mother and baby homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27456/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs published the recommendations of the First Report of the Collaborative Forum

of Former Residents of Mother and Baby Homes on 16 April, 2019. The Report contains 43 recommendations in total, including 21 health and well-being recommendations relating to healthcare provision and health assessment and screening.

My Department has established an Interdepartmental Working Group to undertake an assessment of the report's health and well-being related recommendations, given their range and complexity, and will develop proposals for a package of health and well-being supports, including access to any necessary health and social care measures for former residents of relevant institutions. The Working Group, which comprises representation from this Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Health Service Executive, is currently examining the scale and scope of healthcare supports which may be provided and is due to report back to Government in September 2019.

Medical Card Eligibility

366. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health if asylum seekers in temporary accommodation are granted medical cards; the process for accessing such medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28281/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE. Asylum seekers living in direct provision must complete and submit a Medical Card application form to the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Medical Card Unit (NMCU) for assessment.

Medical Cards are issued to Asylum Seekers where their application is supported by relevant documentation (confirmation that they are in receipt of Asylum Seekers Weekly Payment). Medical Cards are issued to Asylum Seekers for one year and are subject to normal review thereafter.

Hospitals Building Programme

367. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when funding for the promised extension to the emergency department at Mayo University Hospital will be provided. [25571/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive's National Capital & Property Steering Group are currently considering an application for capital developments at the Emergency Department, the Medical Assessment Unit and additional bed capacity at Mayo University Hospital. The HSE has informed my Department that further information has been requested by the Steering Group in relation to this application. It is expected that this information will be provided in advance of the next meeting of the Steering Group in September 2019.

This project at Mayo University Hospital is at the very early stages of development. It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals, including this one, must progress through detailed appraisal, planning and design, procurement, construction and commissioning stages before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

The availability of funding, the relative priority and the stage in the project's lifecycle determines the timeframe for the delivery of capital projects such as the proposed capital developments at the Emergency Department and the Medical Assessment Unit at Mayo University

Hospital.

Our plans for the 2019 bed capacity programme include preparation of 202 beds, including 10 additional beds in Mayo University Hospital, during 2019, with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation early in 2020.

Mayo University Hospital is an integral part of the Saolta Hospital Group providing health services and care to the people of Mayo and the west of Ireland. The Hospital provides quality patient care, delivered safely by skilled and valued staff, through the best use of available resources. This Government is committed to developing services and infrastructure at Mayo University Hospital.

Hospital Waiting Lists

368. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that some cancer patients (details supplied) triaged as urgent are being informed that they must wait two years for appointments; if these patients can be fast-tracked for appointments in view of the fact that their condition is urgent; if they can be treated through the NTPF; the steps he is taking to resolve the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27454/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Rapid Access Clinics (RACs) for patients with suspected breast disease (symptomatic breast disease clinics), prostate or lung cancer symptoms were established by the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) in the eight designated cancer centres (with a satellite symptomatic breast disease clinic in Letterkenny University Hospital) in the period 2009-2012. Rapid Access Clinics provide multidisciplinary care for breast, lung and prostate referrals.

Target times, within which patients triaged as urgent should be seen, are in place for the Breast, Lung and Prostate clinics. The performance of each hospital in meeting these targets is monitored by the NCCP and reviewed at monthly meetings with the Department of Health. The NCCP liaises on an on-going basis with hospitals to identify measures that can be taken to improve performance, where necessary.

As the Deputy's question relates to a specific service delivery issue, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Hospital Appointments Status

369. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment with a consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27455/19]

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.

HSE Donations

370. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the reason an offer to paint a facility (details supplied) was refused by the HSE. [27461/19]

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

371. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who has recently been discharged from hospital will receive an urgently required hospital bed at their home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27463/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

HSE Properties

372. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider the purchase of a facility (details supplied) in County Sligo; his views on whether the opportunity to purchase same should not be missed in the interest of providing care for persons with an intellectual disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27465/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the healthcare property estate, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

373. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 157 of 22 May 2019, the length of time the design team is at stage 1 of the preliminary design; if there is a timeline to commence stage 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27474/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Home Care Packages Provision

374. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be provided with an appropriate homecare package to allow the person to be discharged from hospital and return home. [27487/19]

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

375. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 357 of 14 May 2019, the progress being made to arrange an early assessment and operation at University Hospital Waterford for a person (details supplied); if an immediate assessment will be arranged; the options available to patients triaged as urgent other than waiting for 12 months; if the NTPF can be used in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27512/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The NTPF works with public hospitals, as opposed to with patients directly, to offer and provide the funding for treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic.

The key criteria of the NTPF is the prioritisation of the longest waiting patients first. While the NTPF identifies patients eligible for NTPF treatment, it is solely on the basis of their time spent on the Inpatient/Daycase Waiting List. The clinical suitability of the patient to avail of NTPF funded treatment is determined by the public hospital.

Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for sched-

uled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Departmental Strategies

376. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the strategies and policy proposals published by his Department since 2014, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27523/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is not immediately available. I have surveyed the Department and the collated replies will be prepared into a full response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Strategies

377. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the HSE strategies and policy proposals published since 2014; the number of these which have been launched by him or his predecessors, by a Minister of State or featured ministerial participation in the launch in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27524/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

378. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason gynaecology services have been removed from a community hospital (details supplied); if they will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27525/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this query relates to a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Departmental Reports

379. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason he is not immediately releasing the de Buitléir report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27527/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals (the "De Buitléir Report") has been received and is being examined in my Department. It is a comprehensive examination of private activity in public hospitals and contains a small number of recommendations.

Detailed consideration of the Report by my Department officials is ongoing and covers a range of issues, which have also been discussed in engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of the Taoiseach. It is intended that the De Buitléir Report will be published when this consideration is complete.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

380. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of a post (details supplied) in Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27533/19]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

381. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for hip surgery in University Hospital Waterford. [27543/19]

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.

Semi-State Bodies

382. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the purpose of the recent establishment of two subsidiaries by a group (details supplied); and if this means the group will now commence owning and investing in private hospitals and clinics. [27546/19]

383. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if his Department, as shareholder of a group (details supplied), is now engaging in a strategy to purchase private hospitals and clinics. [27547/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 382 and 383 together.

Since 2008, Vhi has been empowered to acquire, manage, operate and maintain medical facilities (Voluntary Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2008, section 7). The same Act allows Vhi to form subsidiaries to perform any of its functions under the Acts (excluding the main health insurance business which is carried out by only one subsidiary).

As a part of authorisation by the Central Bank, Vhi was restructured to separate the many functions of the Voluntary Health Insurance Board. The Vhi Group Structure continues to evolve in response to business needs. The group currently comprises the following subsidiaries and associated principal business activities:

- Vhi Group DAC is the Group Holding company.
- Vhi Insurance DAC is a regulated insurance undertaking, underwriting private medical insurance in Ireland, and is regulated by the Central Bank.
- Vhi Healthcare DAC is a regulated insurance intermediary providing sales and policy administration for the group's private medical insurance and other insurance businesses, and is regulated by the Central Bank.
- Vhi Group Services DAC provides shared services to the Group Companies.
- Vhi Health & Wellbeing Holdings DAC is the holding company for Vhi's health and well-being services, including Vhi Swiftcare, Vhi Hospital@Home , Medical Screening and Employee Assistance Services. Vhi Health and Wellbeing DAC is the operating company that delivers health and well-being services to Vhi customers and is also responsible for developing healthcare solutions that will meet the future healthcare needs of Vhi's customers.
- Vhi Abbey DAC and Vhi Portfolio DAC own, operate and develop properties from which Vhi Health & Wellbeing Services are provided. Vhi took full ownership of Swiftcare in September 2017.

Vhi is a commercial company operating in a highly competitive market and it seeks to pursue its strategic goals to meet the current and future healthcare needs of its members. Including through its full ownership and development of Swiftcare, Vhi has been increasingly involved in the provision of healthcare services. As Minister for Health I do not have a role in the day-to-day commercial decisions of Vhi or its subsidiaries. My Department officials meet regularly with Vhi senior management to discuss governance matters, financial performance and the strategic direction of Vhi to ensure I am briefed on important developments, some of which are commercially sensitive. My Department officials and I will give due consideration to a concrete proposal in relation to a private medical facility if and when one is received from Vhi.

HSE Staff Data

384. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of category C consultants in each of the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, in tabular form. [27548/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Medical Card Administration

385. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the need to increase medical card income thresholds for lower income families with children to ensure prompt treatment for the medical needs of all those children in view of the fact that these income limits have not been reviewed in almost 15 years and in the context of budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27565/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medical card provision is primarily based on financial assessment. In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE issues income guidelines to assist in determining entitlement to medical and GP visit cards. Any revision to the income thresholds must have regard for Government policy, increases in

the Consumer Price Index and other issues which may be relevant. While there are no plans at present to revise the income thresholds for medical cards, it is vitally important that the medical card system is responsive and considerate to people's needs and circumstances. In that regard my Department keeps medical card issues, including existing thresholds under constant review. Any new policy measures regarding income thresholds for either medical cards or GP visit cards to be incorporated into the forthcoming Budget will be considered by Government as part of the 2020 Estimates process.

A number of measures have been introduced in recent years to improve access to free GP care and other health services. Since July 2015, 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. Since July 2017, all children under the age of 16 for whom a Domiciliary Care Allowance is paid also has automatic eligibility for a medical card.

Children aged under 6 years and individuals over 70 and those in receipt of a Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit are now automatically eligible for a GP visit card. Most recently in April of this year, a 10% increase was applied across all GP Visit Card income thresholds enabling more people to access free GP care.

In context of the above, it is important to note that approximately 42.8% of the population now have access to free GP care. In addition, if a person's sole income is derived from a social welfare payment, even where this payment is in excess of the current income thresholds, the person will be awarded a medical card.

Psychological Services

386. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the establishment of assistant psychologists; the details of assistant psychologists and the location of the posting of each as of 23 June 2019, in tabular form; the key performance indicators for assistant psychologists; his plans to retain the persons employed in the posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27571/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Appointments Status

387. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who has been urgently referred to an orthopaedic consultant will be issued with an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27576/19]

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 sched-

uled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

388. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a MRI appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27577/19]

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.

Health Services Provision

389. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on the case of a person (details supplied) who applied for an optical examination with the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27578/19]

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

390. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in County Clare in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27580/19]

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

391. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for children with an intellectual disability in County Clare in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27581/19]

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

392. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in County Clare in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27582/19]

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

393. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in County Clare in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27583/19]

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

394. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with intellectual disabilities in residential care in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27584/19]

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

395. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27585/19]

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.

Cancer Screening Programmes

396. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if he will issue a meaningful apology to the women affected by the recent cervical cancer screening controversy in which abnormalities were undetected in routine smear tests; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27598/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is estimated that regular cervical screening can prevent 75% of cervical cancer cases. However cervical screening will not prevent all cases of cervical cancer. In the cases of 1,482 women who had been screened and were later given a diagnosis of cervical cancer, CervicalCheck carried out an audit of their previous cervical screening tests. The objective of audit and quality review at CervicalCheck was to facilitate continued improvement and ongoing learning within the programme. The audit found that 221 of these women could have been provided with a different result.

In August 2015, a decision was taken by the HSE, in line with international best practice, to provide information on the outcome of the audit for onward communication to patients but the intention to disclose this information was not followed through and many of the women concerned were not informed about the results of the audit.

Consideration is being given to an appropriate form of apology, and this will be discussed with the 221+ before any final decision is made. I have met and spoken with many of the women involved, including at a meeting in January 2019, at which I apologised for how women and families were treated, as well as thanking them for sharing their views and experiences. The National Cancer Screening Service wrote last year to each woman affected, or their next of kin, apologising for the failures in relation to disclosure and setting out the actions being taken by the HSE to address the issues identified. The former Director General of the HSE, and the former head of Cervical Check have also apologised personally to individual women when the opportunity has arisen. Last year, Cervical Check placed advertisements with national media outlets apologising for how standards fell short in relation to this issue.

It is also very important to note the actions taken by the State to address the issues identified in the Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Scally. Government has accepted in full the recommendations of the Scoping Inquiry and work is ongoing to implement these in full. In relation to the women concerned I am pleased that the Ex-Gratia Scheme has made its first payments in relation to the non-disclosure of audit results, and I understand that the panel will meet again shortly to consider further payments.

Cancer Screening Programmes

397. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health the reason the State is appealing the recent High Court ruling in respect of a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27599/19]

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 particular case is being managed by the State Claims Agency on behalf of the HSE.

The High Court found that the HSE was entitled to an indemnity from the two laboratories in respect of the Court's finding that their examination of the two smear test results had been negligent. The HSE is appealing the Court's findings against it that it had a primary and vicarious liability, findings which the HSE believes has far-reaching implications for the State well beyond the particular case.

Given the importance of screening, and other diagnostic testing in general, the HSE will also appeal the Court's finding of the Absolute Confidence test which has caused considerable disquiet amongst screening and other medical practitioners. However, the Taoiseach and I have confirmed the award to Ms Morrissey will not be affected by the outcome of the appeal.

Respite Care Services

398. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has conducted an audit of respite provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27604/19]

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

Hospitals Data

399. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons presenting to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, with alcohol and drug misuse related issues from 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27612/19]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

400. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health in the case of rental income derived from a person's principal private residence in the context of a fair deal review, if that is rental income net of costs and expenses or gross rental income. [27622/19]

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.

Participants in the Scheme contribute up to 80% of their assessable income, such as their pension and a maximum of 7.5% per annum of the value of assets held, such as their principal private residence or cash assets. The first €36,000 of an individual's assets is not counted at all in the financial assessment. The capital value of an individual's principal private residence is only included in the financial assessment for the first three years of their time in care. This is

known as the three year cap. No participant will pay more than the actual cost of care.

Under NHSS rental income is considered income for the purpose of the financial assessment, and is assessed at 80% less any allowable deductions. These deductions include income tax and levies where required by law, however do not include costs associated with the renting of the property such as letting agent fees.

Pharmacy Regulations

401. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the proposed draft Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (temporary absence of pharmacist from pharmacy) rules 2018; if he has considered concerns raised by an association (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27623/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Pharmacy Act 2007, my role in relation to the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland PSI (Temporary Absence of Pharmacist from Pharmacy) Rules is limited to their consideration once submitted to me for my consent.

In this case, the Rules in question are currently subject to legal challenge. As a result, they are not currently under consideration.

I am not in a position to comment any further due to the legal challenge.

General Practitioner Services

402. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of practices likely to benefit in view of the recent announcement of €2 million per annum investment to support general practitioner practices in areas of high deprivation; the areas of high deprivation that will benefit from this funding in tabular form; the way in which the areas of high deprivation are being quantified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27624/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am pleased that we have recently been able to conclude an agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation on a major package of GP contractual reforms which will benefit patients and make general practice a more attractive career option for doctors.

The outcome of the talks process is a comprehensive service development and reform agreement in return for significant phased increases in funding for general practice services provided by GPs to medical card and GP visit card patients.

As part of the deal, it has been agreed that the GP rural practice allowance will be increased in 2020 and that targeted funding of €2 million will be set aside to provide additional support to practices in deprived urban areas. The full details in relation to how the latter arrangements will operate, including the most appropriate basis on which to determine the extent of deprivation as it relates to the provision of GP services, will be developed by the HSE in consultation with my Department over the coming months.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

403. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if survey findings by an

organisation (details supplied) are considered as part of the HSE review; if the FreeStyle Libre device will be made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; if he will consider the views of persons self-funding its use when making his final decision on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27626/19]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

404. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment at CAMHS will be made for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27633/19]

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

405. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 303 of 18 June 2019, if assistance is available for a treatment abroad that is not available here and is only available in a private hospital abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27639/19]

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 on the specific query raised in Parliamentary Question No 303 and a reply is due by 2 July, 2019.

Hospital Waiting Lists

406. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is a four to five year wait to see a pain specialist in County Galway; if extra resources will be allocated to reduce waiting times; if persons waiting for more than one year can be seen under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; his views on whether the waiting time is acceptable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27648/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. Many areas in our health service currently lack sufficient capacity to meet the ever-increasing demand for services and the needs of patients, resulting in unacceptably long waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for scheduled care in acute hospitals. The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for in-patient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the NTPF, who will supply additional to HSE activity, in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

The Access Plan ensures an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients. The NTPF is working with public hospitals to seek NTPF-funded solutions for very long waiting patients, either in the private sector or in public hospitals where there is available capacity.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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 HSE has advised that the Galway University Hospital chronic pain service is a tertiary referral service and is delivered across both University Hospital Galway and Merlin Park University Hospital. The service consists of 6 clinics per month, where new and review patients are seen, and patients may also have trigger point injections performed at these clinics. All appointments are followed up by the Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner (RANP) to avoid routine review clinic appointments.

In addition, there are 2 interventional pain management sessions carried out in the Surgical Day ward per week (8 per month). One session (6 patients) is radiology guided procedures and 1 session (6 patients) is non-radiology guided. This list consists of 12 patients per week and in-patients may also be added.

There are also scheduled interventional pain lists (6 per month) in Merlin Park. Four sessions are radiology guided and 2 sessions are non-radiology guided. These lists consist of 6 patients per session. In total 14 intervention sessions a month are carried out between UHG and MP.

The Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner offers a telephone follow up service for all patients following intervention to avoid repeat Outpatient Department appointments for routine follow ups. A number of in-patients are reviewed on a consultation basis also. The pain clinic has the support of 6 psychology sessions a month. Group sessions are conducted 3 times a year.

The HSE advise that all patients are called in order of clinical priority and/or in chronological order and additional clinics to support the waiting lists are currently being discussed.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

407. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has completed a review on the cost effectiveness of providing FreeStyle Libre sensors to assist persons in managing diabetes; his plans to provide this technology in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27670/19]

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 Accommodation Provision

408. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when the emergency department at Mayo University Hospital will be extended and capacity increased. [27680/19]

454. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when an extension will be made to the emergency department in Mayo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27816/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 408 and 454 together.

The Health Service Executive's National Capital & Property Steering Group are currently considering an application for capital developments at the Emergency Department, the Medical Assessment Unit and additional bed capacity at Mayo University Hospital. The HSE has informed my Department that further information has been requested by the Steering Group in relation to this application. It is expected that this information will be provided in advance of the next meeting of the Steering Group in September 2019.

This project at Mayo University Hospital is at the very early stages of development. It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals, including this one, must progress through detailed appraisal, planning and design, procurement, construction and commissioning stages before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

The availability of funding, the relative priority and the stage in the project's lifecycle determines the timeframe for the delivery of capital projects such as the proposed capital developments at the Emergency Department and the Medical Assessment Unit at Mayo University Hospital.

Our plans for the 2019 bed capacity programme include preparation of 202 beds, including 10 additional beds in Mayo University Hospital, during 2019, with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation early in 2020

Mayo University Hospital is an integral part of the Saolta Hospital Group providing health services and care to the people of Mayo and the west of Ireland. The Hospital provides quality patient care, delivered safely by skilled and valued staff, through the best use of available resources. This Government is committed to developing services and infrastructure at Mayo University Hospital.

Patient Data

409. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that presented to the emergency department at Mayo University Hospital in 2018 and to date in 2019. [27681/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The hospital system is currently operating at close to full capacity. The number of patients attending Emergency Departments continues

to increase year on year, with approximately 1.3 million attendances in 2018, up 3.5% on 2017. This reflects increasing demand for unscheduled care, especially by patients in the 75 and over age group.

For the first five months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital EDs increased by 4.9%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 3.3% compared to the same period last year. Despite the significant increase in demand, our health services have managed better for the first five months of 2019 than in the previous year, and the numbers of patients waiting on trolleys nationally were 6.8% lower than the same period last year.

With regard to the numbers of presentations at the emergency department of Mayo University Hospital, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with the requested information.

Hospital Staff Data

410. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of midwives employed at Mayo University Hospital; and the number of vacancies for midwives at the hospital. [27682/19]

411. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of women that went through the maternity unit at Mayo University Hospital in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019. [27683/19]

412. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of babies born at the maternity facilities in Mayo University Hospital in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019. [27684/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 410 to 412, inclusive, together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to operational matters, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Consultant Remuneration

413. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the further proposals he is considering to restore salary levels for the cohort of hospital consultants employed since 2011 and in the context of budget 2020. [27688/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The issue of new entrant consultant pay has been examined by the Public Sector Pay Commission. 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. Research undertaken on its behalf identified a number of relevant factors including relative pay, training opportunities and the lack of attractiveness of specific posts, particularly in smaller hospitals.

The Commission 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 Government accepted the Report of the Commission and recognises that there are significant recruitment and retention challenges in relation to consultant posts. The proposal of the Commission does need to be addressed. The next step is to engage with the representative organisations of medical consultants.

Notwithstanding the current recruitment challenges, the number of consultants working in the public health service continues to grow year on year. It increased by 125 whole time equivalents or just over 4 per cent in the year to the end of May 2019. In the five years to the end of May 2019 the number of consultants has increased by 533 - over 20 per cent - and now stands at 3,121 WTE's.

Primary Care Centres Staff

414. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that all primary care centres have the necessary complement of general practitioners in view of reports that more than 20% of those centres have no practitioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27689/19]

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

State Claims Agency Data

415. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the current level of claims against the HSE; the cost of these liabilities over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27690/19]

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 following report. I have been informed by the State Claims Agency (SCA) that the information contained in this document has been extracted from the National Incident Management System (NIMS). It reflects active claims figures as at 27/06/2019 and transactional expenditure over the 5 full year period 2014 – 2018. The figures only relate to claims against the HSE, and exclude claims against TUSLA and other clinical schemes, which are also funded by the HSE.

[Claims against HSE]

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications

416. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if a person transfers assets in 2014, makes an application for the fair deal scheme in 2015 but does not take up the nursing home placement and continues to reside and be cared for at home until 2019, the reason their application for fair deal in 2019 is based on their financial circumstances in 2015 rather than 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27692/19]

418. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if fair deal assessment remains valid in circumstances (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27696/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 416 and 418 together.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as A Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost.

The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. An applicant to the scheme can choose any public, voluntary or approved private nursing home. The home must have availability and be able to cater for the applicant's particular needs.

Participants in the Scheme contribute up to 80% of their assessable income and a maximum of 7.5% per annum of the value of assets held. Assets include cash assets and all forms of property whether situated in the State or not. The capital value of an individual's principal private residence (PPR) is only included in the financial assessment for the first three years of their time in care. This is known as the three year cap.

In line with the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 a transferred asset, is assessed as per its value on the date application for State support was first made. This is provided in Schedule 1 of the Act. In the context of a transferred asset, it relates to an asset which has been transferred at any time in the period of 5 years prior to, or at any time on or subsequent to, the date on which an application for State support is first made by or on behalf of that person. It relates to circumstances in which the transfer was made for no consideration, for nominal consideration, or for consideration which is less than 75 per cent of the estimated market value of the interest of the person in the asset at the time of the transfer, with some exceptions relating to the transfer of assets in the context of the maintenance of a child or other matrimonial proceedings.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

417. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the position of the review into making the FreeStyle Libre device available to all patients with type 1 diabetes; if the findings of a survey (details supplied) will form part of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27693/19]

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. 418 answered with Question No. 416.

Prescriptions Charges

419. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reducing a charge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27699/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated cost of reducing the prescription charge for medical card holders over the age of seventy to €1.25, to €1.00 and abolition for over seventies is as follows.

€	€
€1.25	€6 m
€1.00	€12 m
€0	€36 m

Prescriptions Charges

420. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reducing a charge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27700/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated cost of reducing the prescription charge for all medical card holders to €1.50 is €11.5 m.

The estimated cost of reducing the prescription charge for all medical card holders to €1.00 is €35 m.

The estimated cost of abolishing prescription charges is €82 m.

Drugs Payment Scheme

421. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reducing a family charge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27701/19]

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.

General Practitioner Contracts

422. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if payments under the GMS contract for general practitioners can be made in advance or monthly for new practices (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27710/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Drugs Payment Scheme

423. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 112 of 28 March 2019, the length of time he expects the review will take; when the results will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27711/19]

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.

General Practitioner Services Provision

424. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the financial supports available for general practitioners who wish to take over or set up new practices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27712/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, GPs are reimbursed for a range of services they provide to medical card and GP visit card holders. GPs are remunerated for these services primarily on a capitation basis, with a range of additional support payments and fees for specific items of service. GPs are also remunerated for services they provide on behalf of the HSE under other public health schemes, such as the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme etc.

Under the GMS scheme GPs are also paid a subsidy towards the cost of employing a practice nurse and/or a practice secretary. The rate payable depends on the GP's GMS panel size and the level of experience of the nurse or secretary.

GPs working in rural areas who meet the qualifying criteria will also qualify for the rural support allowance of €20,000 per annum.

I am pleased that we have recently been able to conclude an agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation on a major package of GP contractual reforms which will benefit patients and general practitioners and make general practice a more attractive career option for doctors.

Agreement has been reached on the provision of new services and on a wide-ranging set of modernisation and reform measures. In return for cooperation with these 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 programme.

There will 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.

Each GP who holds a GMS contract has been invited to sign up to the reform measures which will allow them to access the new fees from 1 July 2019. I am informed that a high proportion of GPs holding a GMS contract have already responded positively to this invitation.

Nursing Staff Provision

425. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the assistance that will be given in the form of funding for the training to advance nurse practitioner level for a nurse (details supplied) in view of the general practitioner contract agreement that recognises that there is need for 247 new practice nurses here to support the contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27727/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am pleased that we have recently been able to conclude an agreement with the Irish Medical Organisation on a major package of GP con-

tractual reforms which will benefit patients and make general practice a more attractive career option for doctors.

The outcome of the talks process is a comprehensive service development and reform agreement in return for significant phased increases in funding for general practice services provided by GPs to medical card and GP visit card patients. 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 period 2019-2023.

The agreement includes the introduction of a structured chronic disease management programme, to be rolled out on a phased basis commencing in 2020, which will benefit over 430,000 medical card and GP visit card patients. New fees and subsidies will be available to participating GPs. Several enabling measures will be put in place to support the introduction of the programme, including supports to GP practices to enhance practice nurse capacity. Any required learning material will be made available on the HSE's online learning and development portal (HSE LanD) as is current practice.

It will not be a requirement for practice nurses providing patient care under the direction of GPs participating in the chronic disease management programme to be trained to Advanced Nurse Practitioner level.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

426. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the position of a person (details supplied) on the panel for healthcare assistant; if there are upcoming vacancies in this regard; and if the panel will be extended over two years. [27729/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Home Care Packages Administration

427. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 431 of 11 June 2019, when a response will issue to same from the HSE. [27733/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I understand that a response to Parliamentary Question No. 431 of 11 June 2019 (PQ23286/19) issued from the HSE on Wednesday 26 June. A copy of that response is in the following link.

[Letter]

Rare Diseases

428. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health the services and treatments available to persons with Friedreich's ataxia; the level of funding provided for research for treatments; his plans to increase funding for future treatments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27734/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been re-

ferred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists

429. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for a procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27776/19]

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 Care Packages Provision

430. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when an increase in home support will be in place for a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27777/19]

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 Provision

431. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed in order to sanction funding for therapy via CAMHS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27789/19]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

432. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement staff member will be appointed for the position of speech and language therapist in the west Waterford network 1 area while the existing speech and language therapist is on maternity leave in order that there is no gap in the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27791/19]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

433. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) regarding an assessment of needs application will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27824/19]

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.

Health Services Provision

434. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a health unit (details supplied); his future plans for its use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27838/19]

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

435. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will be made on reimbursement for the drug osimertinib for treatment of advanced lung cancer; the steps being taken to expedite this assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27853/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. As Minister for Health, I have no role or powers in relation to such matters.

Decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds by the HSE, including advice from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) of medicines for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist the HSE in its decision-making process. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess a drug's clinical and cost effectiveness as a health intervention at the submitted price.

The HSE has a robust assessment and commercial negotiation process for new medicines.

This process challenges inappropriate costings from applicant companies and delivers improved value for money on new medicines, allowing more treatments to be provided within a finite budget.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments can be ongoing multi-million euro investments. If the HSE were not to challenge pharmaceutical companies pricing fewer medicines could be provided from the resources provided.

I am advised by the HSE that it has received applications for the following indications for osimertinib.

1. The treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic EGFR T790M mutation-positive NSCLC.

In respect of this indication, the HSE received a health technology assessment (cost utility analysis) for this application in May 2018.

A summary copy of that report is available on the NCPE website (www.ncpe.ie) @ <http://www.ncpe.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/NCPE-summary-osimertinib-final-draft.pdf>.

Following the assessment and after a number of rounds of commercial negotiations and HSE reviews, the HSE notified the applicant in February 2019 that it was minded to not approve osimertinib for the second line treatment of EGFR T790M mutation-positive non-small-cell lung cancers.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013 requires a period of representations after such notifications, before the HSE makes any formal final decision. The HSE reviewed representations received at its May 2019 meeting and is currently considering this.

2. The first-line treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer with activating epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations.

In respect of this indication, a health technology assessment is ongoing. Details on progress through the HTA process are published on the NCPE website @ <http://www.ncpe.ie/drugs/osimertinib-tagrisso-for-the-first-line-treatment-of-metastatic-nscl/>.

Cancer Screening Programmes

436. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE and CervicalCheck have sought a reassurance from a laboratory (details supplied) that the personal details of Irish women availing of the CervicalCheck screening programme were not exposed as part of the recent statement by the company concerning a significant data breach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27864/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In early June 2019 there were media reports of a data breach issue in one of the laboratories contracted to provide services to CervicalCheck, Quest Diagnostics. This breach involved a third-party payment service. The HSE advises that its arrangement with Quest Diagnostics does not involve any third-party payment providers as payment for services is made directly to Quest Diagnostics.

The HSE advises that it has confirmed with Quest that the nature of the data breach does not impact on Irish cytology slides processed for CervicalCheck.

Hospital Appointments Status

437. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [27873/19]

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.

Departmental Reviews

438. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27884/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is not immediately available. I will survey the Department and the collated replies will be prepared into a full response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance Review

439. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement scheme will be announced for the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant; the reason for the delay in finalising same to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27908/19]

509. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in determining the appropriate scheme to replace the mobility allowance and motorised transport grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28247/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 439 and 509 together.

The Deputies will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in 2013.

With regard to the proposals for a new Health (Transport Support) Bill, the Deputies 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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

440. **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. [27911/19]

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

441. **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. [27912/19]

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.

Departmental Information

442. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27915/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is not immediately available. I have surveyed the Department and the collated replies will be prepared into a full response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Orthodontic Services

443. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent consultant orthodontists in the south-east in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county (details supplied), in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27927/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

444. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the projected cost of the national children's hospital in each of the years 2021 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27949/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In terms of the financing of the children's hospital project for 2019, €250m is included in capital profiles for the project in 2019.

The Summer Economic Statement, published recently, provides an expenditure reserve of up to €200m in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the new Children's Hospital and the National Broadband Plan. My Department will engage with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the HSE in planning funding for the new Children's Hospital beyond 2019.

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

445. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if the cost of the national children's hospital is €1.73 billion as mentioned in a report (details supplied); and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [27950/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I advised Government in December 2018 that the overall cost to complete the capital project is €1,433m, this includes all of the capital cost for the main hospital at St James's Hospital campus which will house the school and third level educational spaces, the two OPD and urgent care centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospital campuses, equipment for the three sites, and the construction of the carpark and retail spaces.

The €1.7 billion includes the capital cost plus investment in ICT and the Electronic Health Record rollout - funded through the ICT capital programme, the comprehensive Children's Hospital Integration Programme which is well underway - ensuring the successful clinical and operational merging of three paediatric hospitals - pre-2013 project expenditure relating to the former Mater project, and the planned construction of the Children's Research and Innovation Centre to be funded through philanthropic funding.

Home Help Service Provision

446. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding home help staff in County Tipperary. [27968/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this operational matter.

Healthcare Policy

447. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if there are active guidelines on the use of defibrillators on infants; and if so, if they are being applied. [27971/19]

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.

Cancer Services Provision

448. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered proton beam therapy in the treatment of cancerous tumours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27972/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Proton beam therapy is an advanced form of radiotherapy, primarily used in neural and some paediatric cancers.

Currently in Ireland, patients are referred abroad for proton beam therapy to preferred providers. Between 2012-2017 an average of 11 patients a year were referred for proton beam therapy in treatment centres abroad under the Treatment Abroad Scheme. This represents an extremely small proportion of Irish patients who are receiving radiotherapy.

In February 2019, a National Proton Group was set up by the National Cancer Control Programme, with a mandate to progress and give due consideration to proton therapy. The work of the National Proton Group includes:

- Carrying out an evidence review of the current clinical indications for proton therapy treatment

- Designing a clinical pathway from Multi-Disciplinary Team to proton therapy services
- Developing a service specification and commissioning framework for any new developments which may happen in Ireland.

The National Cancer Control Programme will continue to monitor the evidence base for proton beam therapy and the number of Irish patients being referred abroad, as well as developments in technology that may impact on the viability of providing this treatment here.

Food Safety Standards

449. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the health hazards of nitrates in food; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27973/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) that Nitrate is found naturally in vegetables. It can also enter the food chain as an environmental contaminant in water, due to its use in intensive farming methods, livestock production and sewage discharge. In humans, nitrite and nitrate from food are rapidly absorbed by the body and, for the most part, excreted as nitrate. Some of the nitrate absorbed by the body is converted in the body into nitrite, the absorption of which can lead, in excessive quantities, to a reduced ability of red blood cells to bind and transport oxygen through the body. Nitrite in food (*and nitrate converted to nitrite in the body*) may also contribute to the formation of a group of compounds known as nitrosamines, some of which are carcinogenic.

For decades the salts of nitrate and nitrite have been added to food to preserve it and they also help hinder the growth of harmful microorganisms. The use of additives in food is strictly controlled by EU legislation. They must undergo a comprehensive scientific safety assessment before being authorised for use in the manufacture or preparation of foodstuffs. The natural occurrence of nitrate in foods such as vegetables is regulated by maximum levels set out in EU Regulation 1881/2006 as amended.

The FSAI has indicated that the safety of nitrate has been comprehensively evaluated by European Union (EU) and International Scientific Experts, including the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), an international expert scientific committee that is administered jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the World Health Organisation.

In a re-evaluation on the safety of nitrate, EFSA concluded in 2017 that the exposure to nitrate resulting from its use as a food additive did not lead to an exceedance of the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) and was estimated to be less than 5% of the overall exposure to nitrate in food from all dietary sources. However, EFSA noted that total dietary exposure to nitrate from all sources (food additives, natural presence and contamination) exceeded the current ADI in all European populations considered. Similar conclusions were drawn concerning dietary exposure to nitrites from all sources.

An assessment carried out by EFSA in 2008 on nitrates present in food as contaminants compared the risk and benefits of exposure to nitrate from vegetables and concluded that the beneficial effects outweighed potential health risks from exposure to nitrate through vegetables, and that the average European consumer would not exceed the ADI.

In 2010, a further opinion was delivered on the potential health risks for infants and young children from naturally occurring nitrate in leafy vegetables, which concluded that levels of nitrate in these vegetables do not pose a health concern for most children.

As previously noted, nitrites, including when used as food additives, contribute to the formation of nitrosamines. Applying some worst-case scenario assumptions, EFSA concluded that the formation of nitrosamines in the body from use of food additives at approved levels was of low concern for human health. However, EFSA further noted that nitrite unintentionally present in meat products from other sources such as environmental contamination can also contribute to the formation of nitrosamines. EFSA concluded that these levels of nitrosamines might give rise to potential health concerns but that more research was needed to address uncertainties and knowledge gaps that may exist in this area.

According to the most recent Irish Total Diet study performed by the FSAI between 2012 to 2014, exposure estimates to both nitrite and nitrate in adults and children resident in Ireland were found to be below the respective health-based guidance values. The study identified vegetables as the most important dietary contributor for nitrate, and ham as the only dietary contributor for nitrite. The study concluded that exposure to nitrates and nitrites from food is not of concern.

Assisted Human Reproduction Legislation

450. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the status of correspondence he has had with a group (details supplied) with regard to changes requested to the assisted human reproduction Bill concerning changes to the law to be more inclusive of LGBT+ families; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27974/19]

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. 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.

The aim of the AHR legislation is to promote and ensure the health and safety of parents, others involved in the process (such as donors and surrogate mothers) and, most importantly, the children who will be born as a result of AHR. Consideration of the welfare and best interests of children born through AHR is a key principle underpinning the General Scheme. Subject to certain conditions being met, AHR treatments will be available to people irrespective of gender, marital status or sexual orientation.

My officials and I have engaged with LGBT Ireland (the group referred to by the Deputy) in relation to provisions within both the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill and Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. As part of this process of engagement, LGBT Ireland also made a formal submission to my Department in relation to these matters.

Given the comprehensive scope of the legislation and the ethical, legal and social issues which arise from AHR practices, it is anticipated that certain areas of the General Scheme will require further consideration and refinement during the ongoing process of drafting the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General. An analysis of the Joint Committee’s report on the General Scheme, once completed, and the response of stakeholders, including LGBT Ireland, will feed into this process.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

451. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health when he will review the decision regarding making flash glucose monitoring technology available to persons with type 1 diabetes; if the survey he received from an organisation (details supplied) has been considered when examining the merits of FreeStyle Libre technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27975/19]

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.

Mental Health Services Provision

452. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health his views on the negative impact experienced by 2,500 children waiting for long periods for an appointment with mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22694/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Enhancement of the specialist CAMHS service, including improved access and reducing waiting lists, remains a priority for both the Government and the HSE.

The total number of children on the CAMHS Waiting List was around 2,606 at the end of April 2019. This was down from 2,711 in April 2018. The HSE has prioritised reducing both short- and long-term CAMHS waiting lists. This has helped to reduce the waiting lists of those waiting over 12 months, which has reduced from 352 in April 2018 to 316 in April this year. In April 2019 approximately 80% of young people were offered a first appointment within 12 weeks in community CAMHS settings

It is important to note that the number of referrals to CAMHS increased from around 12,800 referrals received in 2011 to around 18,100 referrals expected in 2019. Cases assessed by professionals as urgent are seen as a matter of priority.

The recent Budget provided an additional €55 million to progress new developments in mental health which brings overall HSE mental health funding to nearly €1 billion in 2019. This funding has helped to increase services available in this area.

There are now 70 CAMHS teams, compared to 49 in 2008, and 3 Paediatric Liaison Teams. All aspects of CAMHS nationally are being improved by the HSE under its annual Service Plans. This includes better out-of-hours and 7/7 day cover, progression of Day Hospital care, developing specialist teams such as Eating Disorders, and improved Prevention and Early Intervention services.

To this end, we have also tried to reduce demand on CAMHS. The HSE funds Jigsaw to provide early intervention mental health services which focus on the needs of 12-25 year olds. Their early intervention model provides tangible supports for young people at primary care level who have mild and emerging mental health difficulties. There are currently 13 Jigsaw Services in communities across Ireland providing mental health support to young people with 2 more sites in Wicklow and Tipperary expected to be opened in the next year .

In conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE, I am progressing various initiatives to enhance CAMHS, and also to adopt a wider approach around Prevention and Early Intervention measures, designed to alleviate pressures on the specialist CAMHS service. These include maximising the impact of the additional Primary Care Assistant Psychologists recruited

in 2018 to relieve pressures on CAMHS; roll-out by the HSE of various e-mental health pilot projects; and additional Psychiatric Nurse training places coming on-stream to help fill existing vacancies.

The Department of Health will continue to monitor CAMHS activity and staffing data. In addition, I have held meetings with, and sought further information from, the Chief Officers and Executive Clinical Directors of the CHOs specifically on CAMHS vacancies, with a view to improving the rate of recruitment for CAMHS staff.

Hospital Appointments Status

453. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment with a respiratory consultant at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27998/19]

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.

Question No. 454 answered with Question No. 408.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

455. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase CAMHS staffing in CHO 7, which is less than half the personnel numbers recommended under A Vision For Change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27774/19]

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.

General Medical Services Scheme

456. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE is no longer fully funding the cost of prescription contact lenses (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28028/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

457. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an initial appointment for assessment at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28029/19]

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 Staff

458. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if a full staffing complement will be in place when the new radiation oncology unit at Cork University Hospital opens in October 2019. [28036/19]

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

459. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of respreeza for patients with alpha-1. [28037/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on the pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The HSE carefully considered the pricing and reimbursement of human alpha1-proteinase inhibitor (Respreeza). The manufacturer was notified in August 2017 that the HSE was unable to recommend reimbursement. The HSE concluded that there was not enough evidence to suggest that patients would derive a clinically meaningful benefit from this treatment and that the current price was not a cost effective use of resources. I understand that the HSE and the applicant have since signed a ring-fenced agreement for the continued supply of this medicine to the patients involved in the original patient access programme, which starts from the commencement of the next Respreeza clinical trial. This is expected to commence this year.

Ministerial Meetings

460. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will meet the families that have been impacted by the misreading of scans at University Hospital Kerry further to his commitment at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health on 22 May 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28038/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department and I have sought to be kept regularly informed regarding the Radiological Lookback Review which took place at University Hospital Kerry in 2017/2018. The report of this review was completed and published in December 2018.

My officials last met with the South/South West Hospital Group on 08 May 2019 to discuss the look-back review, the status of implementation of the recommendations made in the report of the review and ongoing communications with the families. I was subsequently briefed on this on 14 May.

My Department has been assured by the HSE and the South/South West Hospital Group that implementation of the report's recommendations are underway and are receiving the priority they require.

I wish to once again express heartfelt sympathies to the patients and their families. My absolute priority remains ensuring their confidentiality is respected. On an ongoing basis, my officials have been assured by the South/South West Hospital Group that all affected patients have received or are receiving the care they need. I accept that this has been distressing time for those involved.

I have made commitments to travel to visit health services in the Kerry area and plan to do so in the coming weeks. Planning for my visit is underway.

Legislative Measures

461. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the human tissue (transplantation, post-mortem, anatomical examination and public display) Bill will be published. [28039/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill on the 01 May 2019. The General Scheme is now available on the Department of Health website (<https://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/general-scheme-of-a-human-tissue-transplantation-post-mortem-anatomical-examination-and-public-display-bill/>).

The General Scheme, which is wide-ranging, includes provisions on:

- organ donation and transplantation;
- hospital post-mortems;
- anatomical examination (including medical education and training); and
- the public display of bodies after death.

The General Scheme will:

- regulate the removal, retention, storage, use and disposal of human tissue from deceased persons;

- provide general conditions for the removal, donation and use of organs and tissues from deceased and living persons for the purposes of transplantation; and

- provide for an opt-out system of consent for organ donation and for an associated register.

My Department is working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel on the drafting of the Bill. The General Scheme has been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for pre-legislative scrutiny. It is anticipated that this process will commence in September.

Question No. 462 answered with Question No. 87.

Maternity Services

463. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that treatment of therapeutic hypothermia which is used to treat newborn babies with moderate to severe hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy is not available in 15 of the 19 maternity hospitals here; and if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that the treatment is time crucial and must commence within six hours of birth. [28041/19]

464. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that over the period 2016 to 2017, 140 babies underwent therapeutic hypothermia treatment and 40% of these babies were transferred from regional hospitals. [28042/19]

465. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a matter in relation to newborn babies (details supplied); and his views on whether the treatment is time crucial. [28043/19]

466. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend therapeutic hypothermia treatment on site to each maternity hospital; if so, the timeline in place for the allocation of funds and the implementation of the service in maternity hospitals; if plans exist, the nature of the plans; and if not, the reason therefor. [28044/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 463 to 466, inclusive, together.

The National Women & Infants Health Programme was established in the HSE to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services across primary, community and acute care.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to operational matters, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Midwifery Services

467. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 401 of 21 May 2019, the way in which the number of student midwifery nurses rose from 533 in December 2018 to 933 in April 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28045/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to

the Deputy on this matter.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

468. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre device will be made available to all persons with type 1 diabetes; if the HSE review on the matter has been completed; if he will consider a report recently submitted on the issue by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28049/19]

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.

Disabilities Data

469. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with an intellectual disability in residential care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28051/19]

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.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

470. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out new localised pilot schemes aimed at tackling and preventing drug and alcohol addiction in local communities which can and will operate and develop outside the governance of the local or regional drug and alcohol taskforces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28068/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem in local communities and in ensuring that a coordinated approach is taken across all sectors to address substance misuse.

The Department of Health provides in the region of €28 million to task forces annually through various channels of funding, including the HSE.

Task forces are responsible for allocating money to suitable projects based on locally identified needs and priorities. Applications for funding of prevention initiatives should be made to the relevant task force, in the first instance, for consideration.

I announced on 6th March 2019, of one million euro for the implementation of the National

Drugs Strategy; *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery* . 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. The deadline for the receipt of applications for this funding is 29 July.

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

471. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28071/19]

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

472. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care for adults with an intellectual disability in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28072/19]

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

473. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adolescents with an intellectual disability in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28089/19]

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

474. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite hours provided for adults with an intellectual disability in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28090/19]

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

Mental Health Services Data

475. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of mental health beds available in each LHO; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28106/19]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

476. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have an assessment of need carried out; the date they joined the list; the current number of the child on the list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28107/19]

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 Provision

477. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason respite care allocation was cut for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; when full respite care service will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28109/19]

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.

Abortion Services Provision

478. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of terminations of pregnancy carried out here in each of the years 2013 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28110/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was enacted on 30 July 2013 and commenced on 1 January 2014.

Section 20 of the Act 2013 required that the Minister for Health be notified of each termination of pregnancy no later than 28 days after it took place. Notifications were recorded in the form set out in the "Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 (Section 20) (Notifications) Regulations 2013" (Statutory Instrument no. 546 of 2013). Section 20 also required the Minister to prepare a yearly report by 30 June on the notifications provided to him under section 20 in the previous calendar year and lay it before the Houses of the Oireachtas. Reports excluded any identifying information on the women or doctors involved.

The following table sets out the number of terminations carried out in each of the years 2014 to 2018, the five years the Act was in operation:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	26	26	25	15	32

The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was repealed under section 5 of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

479. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 131 of 4 April 2019, his plans to introduce a three year cap on farm businesses assets in circumstances in which a family successor commits to continue to farm the asset for a period of six years (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28126/19]

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 General Scheme of Bill for the NHSS was approved by Government 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. The General Scheme has been sent to the relevant Joint Committee and I look forward to participating in pre-legislative scrutiny when scheduled by the Committee.

State Claims Agency

480. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be entitled to their full award of damages regardless of the outcome of an appeal in view of the appeal by the State Claims Agency against the judgment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28134/19]

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.

In June 2019, Government gave approval that the Chief State Solicitor to issue, on behalf of the Minister for Health, a letter giving an undertaking to the plaintiffs to make any balancing payment that might arise as a consequence of the outcome of the Supreme Court appeal, in order to ensure that their award is maintained at the level determined by the High Court plus

any legal fees incurred in the appeal. Of course, the commitment to pay is contingent on the outcome of the appeal.

Parliamentary Questions

481. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a response will issue to an interim response (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28135/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The issues involved are currently being examined by my officials and a response will issue as soon as possible.

Disability Services Provision

482. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health when the needs assessment recommendations will be put in place for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28142/19]

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

Home Help Service

483. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that more home supports are provided through direct employment by the HSE rather than through agencies or private companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28143/19]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

484. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when speech therapy and a device will be provided to a child (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28155/19]

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.

Emergency Departments Data

485. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children presenting at emergency departments here with self-harm injuries, suicide attempts and or overdoses in each of the years 2014 to 2018; the location of same in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28156/19]

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.

Ministerial Meetings

486. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health the number of times he has formally met with the chief executive officer and-or chairperson of a company (details supplied) in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28159/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Minister for Health did not meet with either person in 2018 or 2019. The Vhi Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer meet regularly with Department of Health officials to ensure the Minister is kept updated on important matters relating to the Vhi, and quarterly meetings are held to discuss governance issues.

Hospital Charges

487. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if he will remove charges for those with haemochromatosis attending venesection clinics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28169/19]

488. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the amount raised in payments by those with haemochromatosis attending venesection clinics in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28170/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 487 and 488 together.

Where venesection is classed as a day case procedure and is not carried out in an out-patient setting, the public in-patient charge applies.

The issue of the provision of therapeutic phlebotomy services for hereditary haemochromatosis patients, including the issue of charges, is under consideration by my Department and the HSE.

It is agreed that such services should be provided at the lowest level of complexity that is clinically and operationally feasible. In time it is envisaged that the majority of this work will be done in a primary care setting.

Meanwhile, the Irish Blood Transfusion Service is now accepting hereditary haemochromatosis patients who are eligible to donate blood at their fixed and mobile donation clinics nationwide.

Patients can attend a maximum of four times a year with a minimum of ninety days between phlebotomies. The patient's hereditary haemochromatosis will continue to be managed by their

physician, including the monitoring of ferritin levels.

In respect of the question concerning the amount raised in payments by those with haemochromatosis attending venesection clinics in 2018. This is a service matter for the Health Service Executive and I have asked them to respond directly to the Deputy.

Health Services Reports

489. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when the national review under way of cardiac services will conclude; when the report will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28171/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The aim of the National Review of Specialised Cardiac Services is to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive through establishing the requirements for an appropriate configuration of specialist cardiac services throughout Ireland.

While much work has been completed in relation to informing the optimal configuration of adult cardiac services, some significant and important work remains outstanding. In order to allow this work to be completed, the work of the Steering Group will continue through the summer months. I am advised by the Steering Group that it will be in a position to confirm a completion date in September 2019.

Hospital Waiting Lists

490. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to examine the extensive outpatient waiting list at University Hospital Waterford in relation to ophthalmological services; his views on whether the waiting lists are too long; and if his attention has been drawn to the negative impact it has on older persons waiting for treatment. [28172/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures is a key commitment of government. While the last 18 months have seen considerable progress in the reduction of waiting times for Inpatient and Daycase treatments, I am conscious that the Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge as demand for acute hospital services continues to grow.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and National Treatment Purchase Fund Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges and 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which more than 1 million will be to new patients. For its part, the NTPF will provide additionality through the provision of 25,000 IPDC appointments, 5,000 GI scopes, and 40,000 outpatient appointments.

South/South West Hospital Group has advised my Department that University Hospital Waterford is focused on the reduction of waiting lists and is actively working with the NTPF to engage in initiatives to reduce outpatient waiting times. To date this year the NTPF has approved an additional 3,600 outpatient appointments for University Hospital Waterford, and of these 890 are for the specialty of Ophthalmology. More specifically, UHW advise that they

are engaging in the provision of out-of-hours clinics to provide appointments for long waiting ophthalmology patients.

University Hospital Waterford has advised that it remains committed to working in collaboration with South South-West Hospital Group, and the NTPF, on waiting list initiative supports.

Hospital Waiting Lists

491. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to examine the extensive outpatient waiting list at University Hospital Waterford in relation to orthopaedic services; his views on whether the waiting lists are too long; if his attention has been drawn to the negative impact it has on older persons waiting for treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28173/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures is a key commitment of government. While the last 18 months have seen considerable progress in the reduction of waiting times for Inpatient and Daycase treatments, I am conscious that the Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge as demand for acute hospital services continues to grow.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health, HSE, and National Treatment Purchase Fund Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges and 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which more than 1 million will be to new patients. For its part, the NTPF will provide additionality through the provision of 25,000 IPDC appointments, 5,000 GI scopes, and 40,000 outpatient appointments.

South/South West Hospital Group has advised my Department that University Hospital Waterford is focused on the reduction of waiting lists and is actively working with the NTPF to engage in initiatives to reduce outpatient waiting times. To date this year the NTPF has approved an additional 3,600 outpatient appointments for University Hospital Waterford, and of these 1,100 are for the specialty of Orthopaedics. UHW advise that these extra orthopaedic appointments have been made available for the longest waiting patients.

University Hospital Waterford has advised that it remains committed to working in collaboration with South South-West Hospital Group, and the NTPF, on waiting list initiative supports.

Hospital Waiting Lists

492. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to examine the extensive outpatient waiting list at University Hospital Waterford in relation to urologist services; his views on whether the waiting lists are too long; if his attention has been drawn to the negative impact it has on older persons waiting for treatment; his further plans to examine the fact that of the 2,757 persons waiting in the hospital 967 are waiting in excess of 18 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28174/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures is a key commitment of government. While the last 18 months have seen considerable progress in the reduction of waiting times for Inpatient and Daycase treatments,

I am conscious that the Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge as demand for acute hospital services continues to grow.

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges and 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which more than 1 million will be to new patients. For its part, the NTPF will provide additionality through the provision of 25,000 IPDC appointments, 5,000 GI scopes, and 40,000 outpatient appointments.

South/South West Hospital Group has advised my Department that University Hospital Waterford is focused on the reduction of waiting lists and is actively working with the NTPF to engage in initiatives to reduce outpatient waiting times. These outpatient initiatives are focused on those specialties that have a number of long-waiting patients. To date this year the NTPF has approved an additional 3,600 outpatient appointments for University Hospital Waterford, 500 of which are for the specialty of Urology.

In relation to urology services, UHW advise that a Locum Consultant Urologist has been appointed to focus on the longest waiting patients. An additional clinic has been established to schedule long-waiting patients, and from mid-July an additional urology clinic will also commence as part of the wider South South-West Hospital Group plans in South Tipperary General Hospital.

University Hospital Waterford has advised that it remains committed to working in collaboration with South South-West Hospital Group, and the NTPF, on waiting list initiative supports.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

493. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons treated under the National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, in each month to date in 2019; the specialties treated by percentage, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28175/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by officials in my Department and will be provided to the Deputy directly as soon as it becomes available.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

494. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the amount the National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, has spent in the first five months of 2019 treating those on waiting lists in excess of 11 months wait; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28176/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by officials in my Department and will be provided to the Deputy directly as soon as it becomes available.

Health Screening Programmes

495. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if a review of newborn screening will be conducted in view of recent advances in detection and treatment of conditions and the expansion of services and screening in Italy and other countries with a view to that review providing the changes required to ensure Ireland has the best possible newborn screening services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28179/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): All newborn babies (between 3 and 5 days old) are offered newborn bloodspot screening (generally 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 03 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.

Ireland, very much like the UK has always evaluated the case for commencing a national screening programme against 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 to safe standards.

It is correct that the number of conditions screened for by Member States (MS) in Europe does vary. This does not reflect major differences in the genetic background of populations or estimated prevalences but rather highlights different MS approaches to (1) the estimation of risks and benefits in their populations and (2) responding to the cultural demands and ethical difficulties arising from a lack of evidence to screen for many of these rare conditions. Detailed knowledge about the natural course of many rare diseases, their variants and specifically information on the medium and long term outcomes after early treatment initiation are still insufficient.

There is no doubt that newborn screening programmes has the potential to be rapidly trans-

formed by new technologies, new therapies and ever increasing expectations but this highlights the need to continue with a robust, methodologically sound and detailed analysis of the evidence in each and every case against the Wilson and Junger criteria.

I will shortly be announcing the name of the incoming Chair of the National Screening Committee. Recruitment of the remaining membership will continue over the summer months. Any future potential changes to the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme will be incorporated as part of the Committee's immediate work programme.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

496. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health his views on the consultant recruitment and retention difficulties experienced by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28193/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The issue of new entrant consultant pay has been examined by the Public Sector Pay Commission. 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. Research undertaken on its behalf identified a number of relevant factors including relative pay, training opportunities and the lack of attractiveness of specific posts, particularly in smaller hospitals.

The Commission 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 Government accepted the Report of the Commission and recognises that there are significant recruitment and retention challenges in relation to consultant posts. The proposal of the Commission does need to be addressed. The next step is to engage with the representative organisations of medical consultants.

It should also be noted that while pay has an impact in recruitment and retention of consultants, a number of other factors are also important, including, inter alia, opportunities for career development, training opportunities and location. The Commission stated it was strongly supportive of the full implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of Medical Training and Career Structures, the 'MacCraith' recommendations, as they have the potential to resolve many of the issues raised with the Commission relating to recruitment and retention. The Department continues to monitor progress on implementation of these recommendations.

Notwithstanding the current recruitment challenges, the number of consultants working in the public health service continues to grow year on year. It increased by 125 whole time equivalents or just over 4 per cent in the year to the end of May 2019. In the five years to the end of May 2019 the number of consultants has increased by 533 - over 20 per cent - and now stands at 3,121 WTE's.

Hospital Waiting Lists

497. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the reason the waiting time for

first-time ophthalmic appointments in University Hospital Limerick is now 18 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28194/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

The joint Department of Health/HSE/National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care this year by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

The Access Plan sets out the activity levels for the NTPF and the HSE. The NTPF will supply additionality to HSE activity in order to reduce waiting times experienced by patients for a hospital appointment, operation or procedure.

A key element of the 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. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments. The HSE and the NTPF will focus in particular on a number of specialties with a high volume of referrals, which include ophthalmology. The NTPF is engaging with the HSE and public hospitals to seek solutions for very long waiting patients. NTPF funded treatment is provided in private hospitals or in public hospitals where there is available capacity.

In addition, my Department is working with the HSE and NTPF, under the Access Plan, 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 latest published waiting list figures show that at the end of May 2019 there were 4,408 patients awaiting a first Ophthalmology outpatient appointment at University Hospital Limerick. Of this number, 1,184 (27%) were waiting 18 months or longer.

With regard to the specific issue raised by the Deputy in relation to first time Ophthalmology outpatient appointments in University Hospital Limerick, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy Directly.

Orthodontic Services Provision

498. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which orthodontic services are readily made available by all possible means; the extent to which the school medical examinations identifies the need for such services; if the existence of waiting lists impedes the delivery of the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28236/19]

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.

Health Promotion

499. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the need for oral hygiene remains an important part of health service information; the extent to which Ireland complies with best practice in that regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28237/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Oral hygiene, particularly toothbrushing advice in line with best evidence, is central to oral health promotion programmes in Ireland and internationally.

Smile agus Sláinte, the National Oral Health Policy, which was published in April 2019 aims to enable people to achieve their personal best oral health. The Policy has three strategic strands. The first strand, “Health and oral Health promotion and protection programmes” will embrace national, community and individual prevention and protection programmes supported by appropriate regulation. It will address the risk factors for oral health, including poor oral hygiene, and put in place oral health promotion and protection programmes to combat such risk factors.

Health Services Expenditure

500. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he continues to pursue best practice, efficiency and value for money in the delivery of various aspects of the health service; the extent to which a particular aspect of the service has come to his attention in the matter of current expenditure overruns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28238/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Service Plan (NSP) is an important accountability instrument in use by the Department in determining how the HSE is performing against its targets as it captures in a clear and quantified way the range of health and social care services to be provided by the HSE for the allocation it has received. It establishes links between funding, staffing and services and it incorporates activity measures, outcome-based performance indicators and deliverables in key service areas, which are matched with targets and timescales.

The Department provides oversight of the performance of the HSE in relation to the delivery of the services set out in the NSP. The mechanism for this oversight includes the ongoing monthly performance management process in place between the Management Board in the Department and the HSE Leadership (now the HSE Executive Management Team) where the HSE reports monthly to the Department on the performance of the health system against the agreed targets set out in the NSP.

As part of the monthly performance cycle, the HSE provides an update on the application of its Performance and Accountability Framework. This includes the submission of an Escalation report which provides detail on services which are in escalation for the month in question and the actions being carried out to mitigate these. Services in escalation are those which are experiencing significant performance issues.

The latest escalation report is for April 2019 and currently the HSE are reporting 7 areas (6 in acute hospitals and 1 in social care) which have been escalated to the National Performance Oversight Group. Improvement plans and support measures are in place to monitor the ongoing performance of the different areas in escalation.

The HSE’s latest income and expenditure position at 30 April 2019 shows a revenue deficit of €116.2m which represents 2.3% of the available budget. The main drivers of the deficit are

acute hospitals, PCRS and demand led schemes, disability services, and the treatment abroad scheme. Current gross expenditure on the Health Vote, year to date, is 8.8% higher than the same period in 2018. This percentage varies on a monthly basis during the year depending on spending under various headings but is, nonetheless, a matter of concern.

Significant savings are profiled later in the year in line with the targets set out in the National Service Plan. However, on present trends, taking account of the pressure in certain areas, the HSE would have a deficit at the end of 2019. This is a matter of concern for the Government. My Department is working with the HSE to gain further clarity on the projected year end position and working to mitigate the deficit in so far as is possible, in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Health Services

501. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which various budgetary projections and targets have been missed in the services provided; the corrective measures taken or pending to address such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28239/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE's latest income and expenditure position at 30 April 2019 shows a revenue deficit of €116.2m which represents 2.3% of the available budget. The main drivers of the deficit are acute hospitals, PCRS and demand led schemes, disability services, and the treatment abroad scheme. Current gross expenditure on the Health Vote, year to date, is 8.8% higher than the same period in 2018. This percentage varies on a monthly basis during the year depending on spending under various headings but is, nonetheless, a matter of concern.

Significant savings are profiled later in the year in line with the targets set out in the National Service Plan. However, on present trends, taking account of the pressure in certain areas, the HSE would have a deficit at the end of 2019. This is a matter of concern for the Government. My Department is working with the HSE to gain further clarity on the projected year end position and working to mitigate the deficit in so far as is possible, in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I have emphasised to the Executive the need to address health spending urgently by means of the following measures;

- Steps to ensure compliance with the staffing limits for 2019. The Executive has put in place controls around recruitment, pending receipt of finalised financial plans to manage the staffing levels back to affordable numbers;

- A reporting and monitoring structure around agreed savings targets in the National Service Plan, with responsible managers providing a monthly report from Quarter 1;

- A mid-year review of the Health Service Executives performance on savings and staffing limits, with further interventions as necessary.

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. I have emphasised the need for the Executive to meet its service targets in line with the National Service Plan.

Health Services

502. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the delivery of health services here in terms of value for money compares with the most competitive overseas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28240/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Comparing health expenditure across countries is not straightforward, and there are a variety of ways of measuring health spend e.g. as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), modified GNI* (a national indicator that excludes the globalisation effects that disproportionately affect the measurement of the size of the economy), or per capita; or the public versus private spend.

The System of Health Accounts (SHA) was devised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and has been adopted for joint reporting of health care expenditure by the OECD, Eurostat and the World Health Organisation. It provides a basis for uniform reporting by countries with a wide range of different models of organising their national health systems. Since the inception of the SHA methodology in 2013, Irish current expenditure has increased each year and this aligns with other OECD countries reflecting changes in demographics, macroeconomic growth and technological change.

The latest figures for Ireland according to the SHA methodology were included in the CSO statistical release, 20 June 2019. Overall there was a 5% increase in health expenditure in Ireland between 2016 and 2017. Ireland's current health expenditure was €21.1 billion in 2017, which represents 7.2% of GDP or 11.7% of GNI* (Modified Gross National Income).

If modified GNI* is used, Ireland is above the OECD average and if GDP is used Ireland is below the OECD average.

From the most recent report, the majority of health expenditure (73%) was funded by government, with the balance funded by private sources including health insurance (14%) and household out-of-pocket expenditure (12%).

Even within a country, accurately measuring healthcare expenditure can be challenging due to uncertainty over what constitutes expenditure on health. A key feature of the SHA methodology is that it focuses solely on expenditure for health purposes which excludes expenditure on social care, and the implication of this is not insignificant for countries including Ireland where health and social care is delivered by the same providers. The Department has commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute to examine this issue to assist the Department in a more forensic and more meaningful comparable examination of health expenditure and value for money.

The HSE National Service Plan (NSP) is an important accountability instrument in use by the Department in determining how the HSE is performing against its targets as it captures in a clear and quantified way the range of health and social care services to be provided by the HSE for the allocation it has received. It establishes links between funding, staffing and services and it incorporates activity measures, outcome-based performance indicators and deliverables in key service areas, which are matched with targets and timescales. In line with this, the NSP incorporates a value improvement programme with agreed savings to be achieved in 2019.

The Department provides oversight of the performance of the HSE in relation to the delivery of the services set out in the NSP, including the ongoing monthly performance management of the health system against the agreed activity and savings targets.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

503. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals or locations nationally most affected by longer than advisable waiting lists; the degree to which the cause of such waiting lists has been identified with a view to resolution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28241/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am conscious that waiting times are often unacceptably long and of the burden that this places on patients and their families. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

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 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.

In terms of locations with highest numbers on waiting lists, the latest NTPF figures show that there are 15,947 patients on Saolta University Healthcare Group IPDC waiting list. This represents a 15% (-2,801) decrease when compared to the same period last year. The NTPF figures also show that there are 14,282 patients on the Ireland East Hospital Group IPDC Waiting List. This shows an 11% (1,727) decrease when compared to the same period last year.

The latest NTPF figures show that there are 114,609 patients on the South/South West Hospital Group Outpatient Waiting List. The NTPF figures also show that there are 109,543 on the Ireland East Hospital Group Outpatient Waiting List.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify outpatient waiting list proposals.

The Sláintecare Action Plan 2019 which was published by my Department, includes a specific workstream on Access and Waiting Lists. Sláintecare emphasises the need to invest in increased capacity while also shifting the balance of care from hospitals to community services for better health outcomes and a more sustainable health service. In addition, many of the other service reforms and enhancements included in Sláintecare will support timely access to care for patients in the coming years.

In line with Sláintecare objectives, my Department is working with the HSE and the NTPF, to develop medium-long term improvement initiatives for patient access to hospital procedures.

Health Services Expenditure

504. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the branch or branches of the health services that have failed to work within budget in the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28242/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In any given year, the Government has a finite amount of money for allocation in the Budget and has many competing priorities. During the fiscal crisis, as with most areas of public spending, significant reductions in health funding were experienced. Including 2014, the budget provided for health was less than that provided in the previous years, with significant targeted savings through pay reductions and efficiency.

From 2015 onwards, funding began to be increased on a gradual basis to meet existing costs within the system. In recognition of the difficulties facing the system, in 2016 a further €500m was approved for health in the REV, this sum remaining in the base for 2017. This allowed for services for older people to be maintained at the previous years' levels, met shortfalls in the State Claims Agency (SCA) and in PCRS, and provided for a Winter Initiative.

Additional funding was provided for health from 2017 onwards, including supplementary estimates, to cover pay and pension costs, and the SCA. Overall, since 2017, increased funding has been allocated to these and other demand-led areas, and for service-led developments. During the period 2014 to 2018, therefore, supplementary funding was provided for the areas outlined above, and to meet demographic and demand-led requirements in acute hospitals, disability emergency placement and regulation, home supports, local demand led schemes and other areas.

The HSE National Service Plan (NSP) sets out annually the services to be provided by the Executive and the budget provided for that purpose across all health programme areas. The NSP is finalised following an extensive process of engagement between the HSE and my Department. The annual health budget is set within the parameters set out by the Government in its approach to planning for the annual budget. The improving economy has enabled the health service to achieve much needed budget increases in the last three years.

It is clear that there are areas where further improvements are required and my Department continues to work closely with the HSE to optimise service provision within the constraints of available funding. In this regard, the Department provides oversight of the performance of the HSE in relation to the delivery of services set out in the NSP, including ongoing monthly performance management against agreed targets set out in the NSP. In 2019, significant savings are profiled to be achieved in line with these targets. On present trends, taking account of the pressure in certain areas, the HSE would have a deficit at the end of 2019. This is a matter of concern for the Government and my Department is working closely with the HSE to gain further clarity on the position and to mitigate the deficit is so far as is possible, in co-operation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

HSE Governance

505. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the restructured HSE is likely to improve the efficiency and delivery of the health services nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28243/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The report of the cross-party Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare, Sláintecare, identifies four core building blocks that underpin a well-functioning health system. The first of these building blocks is a clear governance and accountability framework. In that respect, I was pleased to meet the new HSE Board last week prior to their inaugural meeting, who will assist in improving oversight and governance of our health service

In addition to this, the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the development of

regional care organisations that will enable the delivery of integrated care at a local level. As a first step in this process, it is necessary to align the CHOs and Hospital Groups geographically. My Department undertook a public consultation on this matter in 2018 and has engaged in significant internal analysis on the optimal size and number of future regional areas. I hope to bring proposals on geographical alignment to Government very shortly.

The development of regional care organisations is a critical enabler of the Sláintecare reform programme. These organisations will be designed to facilitate the efficient and effective delivery of services as outlined in the Sláintecare programme, which focuses on how and where services are delivered to provide a more integrated and person-centred service and on improving financial control, governance, accountability, and performance across the health service. This will ultimately allow us to develop a more population-based approach to service planning and care delivery, with the aim, over time, for greater equity in the allocation of resources within and across regions.

Health Screening Programmes

506. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which school medical examinations continue to identify particular health issues in children that subsequently become instrumental in dealing with the issue through an earlier response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28244/19]

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.

Home Care Packages Data

507. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of personnel engaged in the delivery of home care packages either directly through the HSE or through selected agencies; the extent to which the number has fluctuated in each of the past four years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28245/19]

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.

General Practitioner Data

508. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners practicing throughout County Kildare; the extent to which each practice is sufficiently supported to meet growing demands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28246/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for it to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 509 answered with Question No. 439.

Speech and Language Therapy

510. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which speech and language therapy and mental health support exists for children in all areas nationally; if particular shortfalls have been identified and are being addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28248/19]

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 Card Data

511. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of full medical cardholders in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28249/19]

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.

Mental Health Services Data

512. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of incidents of self-harm in respect of children under the age of 15 reported in each of the past five years to date; the extent to which it was found possible to provide the necessary help and support to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28250/19]

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 Staff

513. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which efforts continue to be made to retain doctors and nurses here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28251/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The public health service in Ireland operates in a global market for medical specialists which is experiencing a world-wide shortage. Notwithstanding this fact, 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. 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.

It should also be noted that while pay has an impact in recruitment and retention of consultants, a number of other factors are also important, including, inter alia, opportunities for career development, training opportunities and location. The Commission stated it was strongly supportive of the full implementation of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of Medical Training and Career Structures, the 'MacCraith' recommendations, on the basis they have the potential to resolve many of the issues raised with the Commission relating to recruitment and retention. My Department continues to monitor progress on implementation of these recommendations.

Concerning Nurses, the recent nursing agreement and the new Enhanced Practice Nurse/Midwife contract will see the financial position of nurses and midwives improve and should help to both recruit and retain nurses in the public health service. In relation to pay, the new Enhanced Practice Nurse and Midwife contract will deliver salary improvements for those that migrate to this new role range from between 2% - 11%. The Enhanced Nurse / Midwife Practice salary scale ranges between €35,806 to €47,201. The agreement will see improvements to a range of allowances, their extension to additional nurses and midwives, and a new allowance for those in medical surgical wards up to the maximum full year cost of €10m. It also includes a commitment to increase the number of Advanced Nurse Practitioners to a minimum of 2% of the nursing workforce. The HSE are currently working on a plan to deliver the implementation of the agreement.

Health Services Staff

514. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which adequate staff at all levels remain available to the HSE to ensure delivery of health services in a fast, effective and efficient manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28252/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Medicinal Products Availability

515. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the procedures in place to encourage manufacturers of medicines to make their product available for sale to the health service at a manageable cost with particular reference to top of the range new products with an expensive price tag; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28253/19]

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

If a company wishes to have a medicine reimbursed, it must apply to the HSE to have the product added to the Reimbursement List. It is the sole responsibility of the company to make this application.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, including the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess the cost and clinical effectiveness of the drug as a health intervention at the submitted price. Where the submitted price for a product does not reflect cost effectiveness, the applicant may enter further discussions with the HSE. This can lead to an protracted deliberation process. However, the HSE, because of the significant monies involved, must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an ongoing basis. *Question No. 516 answered with Question No. 82.*

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

517. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason an organisation (details supplied) was not invited to be a part of the CAP consultative committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27466/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I established the CAP Consultative Committee to facilitate on-going consultation with key stakeholders in relation to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the period post-2020.

The Committee is drawn from stakeholders who have extensive and direct experience of CAP issues as well as organisations that submitted responses to the 2018 public consultation on the “Future of Farming and Food”.

I am satisfied that this approach has facilitated a very broad representation covering all sectors within Irish agriculture as well as interested environmental parties, and that there is no need to further extend the composition of the Committee.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

518. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27486/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application under the LESS Scheme of TAMS II. Following submission of the paperwork required to finalise the payment claim, a number of issues arose and, as a result, no payment issued. These issues related to the fact that the equipment purchased was previously included on a TAMS application submitted by another person and it was also found, at the time of the submission of the claim, that the LESS equipment did not have a direct use on the holding concerned.

The person named, in accordance with standard procedure, was provided with the opportunity to request a review of the decision and this review is currently being carried out.

GLAS Data

519. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount paid to farmers under the green low-carbon, agri-environment scheme, GLAS, for low-emission slurry spreading by farm agricultural contractors at the rate of €1.20 per cubic metre spread since the start of the GLAS programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[27641/19]

520. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount paid to farmers under the green low-carbon, agri-environment scheme, GLAS, for low-emission slurry spreading by farm agricultural contractors by month at the rate of €1.20 per cubic metre spread since the start of the GLAS programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27642/19]

521. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the maximum payment to farmers for low-emission slurry spreading by farm agricultural contractors at the rate of €1.20 per cubic metre spread since the start of the GLAS programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27643/19]

522. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a register of farm agricultural contractors is maintained that provides the low-emission slurry spreading service to green low-carbon, agri-environment scheme, GLAS, participants; if so, the criteria used in establishing the credentials of a low-emission slurry spreading farm agricultural contractor, such as VAT registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27644/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 519, 520, 521 and 522 together.

The Department does not keep a register of contractors who provide this service to individual GLAS applicants and it is open to the farmer as to whether to carry out the action themselves or employ a contractor to do so. GLAS participants who have selected the Low Emission Slurry Spreading action as part of their 5-year GLAS contract are required to provide documentary evidence to confirm the spreading method used and volumes spread on the holding on an annual basis. For example, a calculation of slurry produced, imported and spread and/or a receipt from the contractor where a contractor has been used to supply the service.

For a farmer to qualify for payment, a minimum of 50 cubic metres of slurry must be spread on the holding each year of the 5-year GLAS contract. All slurry must be spread in compliance with Statutory Instrument 31 of 2014 (the Nitrates Regulation). The amount paid to each applicant will vary depending on the amount of slurry spread.

The table below shows total GLAS payments in respect of the Low Emission Slurry Spreading action per scheme year irrespective of whether this action was carried out by a contractor or by the GLAS participant themselves.

-	2016	2017	2018
Total	€1,117,504.13	€2,093,148.00	€2,209,435.85

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

523. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an agricultural appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27652/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department. I have been advised that the records of the Agriculture Appeals Office indicate that an appeal was received from the person named in May 2018 in respect of the Basic Payment Scheme and was assigned to an Appeals Officer. The oral hearing of the appeal was held on 24 October 2018.

2 July 2019

When all of the facts of the case have been fully assessed, including legal aspects, a comprehensive decision letter will be issued by the Appeals Officer.

I am advised that every effort is being made to finalise the decision as quickly as possible.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

524. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an agricultural appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27653/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department. I have been advised that the records of the Agriculture Appeals Office indicate that an appeal was received from the person named in May 2018 in respect of the Basic Payment Scheme and was assigned to an Appeals Officer. An oral hearing of the appeal was held on 24 October 2018.

When all of the facts of the case have been fully assessed, including any legal aspects, a comprehensive decision letter will be issued by the Appeals Officer.

I am advised that every effort is being made to finalise the decision as quickly as possible.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

525. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an agricultural appeal by a person (details supplied); when a decision will be made on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27654/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department. I have been advised that the records of the Agriculture Appeals Office indicate that an appeal was received from the person named in May 2018 in respect of the Basic Payment Scheme and was assigned to an Appeals Officer. An oral hearing of the appeal was held on 24 October 2018.

When all of the facts of the case have been fully assessed, including any legal aspects, a comprehensive decision letter will be issued by the Appeals Office.

I am advised that every effort is being made to finalise the appeal decision as quickly as possible.

Nitrates Usage

526. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the review of the nitrates derogation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27859/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Ireland's nitrates derogation provides farmers an opportunity to farm at higher stocking rates, above 170 kg livestock manure nitrogen/ ha, subject to additional conditions designed to protect the environment. The derogation is an important facility for more intensive farmers and almost 7,000 intensively stocked farmers availed of the derogation in 2018.

Derogation farmers make up 6% of bovine farmers, 11% of the land area but have 20% of the bovine livestock herd. There has been a significant expansion in land area covered by the derogation of almost 35% since 2014.

In addition, a further 5,000 farmers with 13% of the national bovine herd farm above the 170 kg N/ha limit but export slurry to comply with the limit rather than applying for a derogation.

Recent EPA reports have highlighted deterioration in water quality and increasing green house gas and ammonia emissions. There are also significant issues around the decline of EU protected habitats in Ireland. However, we know that there opportunities to reduce the impact of these farms on the environment.

In light of continuing expansion of the dairy herd, increasing land area being farmed under derogation and the environmental pressures outlined, it was considered opportune to review the conditions of the Nitrates derogation. Ireland's current derogation concludes in 2021, and failing to address the environmental pressures above, would negatively impact on any negotiations to renew this important facility. As part of this review, a public consultation was held with 75 submissions received.

The Nitrates expert group which is composed of officials from the EPA, Teagasc, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and my Department is currently considering these submissions. Recommendations for measures which will improve efficiencies and reduce the environmental footprint of these intensive farms will be submitted by the group within the coming months.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

527. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the implementation of the climate roadmap of Teagasc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27860/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The All-of-Government Plan to tackle climate breakdown sets out a target of cumulative abatement of between 16.5 and 18.5 Mt CO₂ eq over the period 2021 to 2030 for the agriculture, sector. In addition, the sector will also deliver an additional 26.8 Mt CO₂ eq through better land use management such as afforestation and improved management of peaty grasslands.

The plan identifies 34 actions for the sector that will contribute to our transition to a low carbon economy and society across abatement measures, carbon sequestration measures and displacement of fossil fuels and reflects our three pillar policy approach to achieving carbon neutrality without comprising sustainable food production of:

1. Reducing agricultural emissions;
2. Increasing carbon sequestration; and
3. Displacing and substituting fossil fuel and energy intensive materials.

These actions in this plan are informed by the recent Teagasc Marginal Cost Abatement Curve report (MACC) - *An Analysis of Abatement Potential of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Irish Agriculture 2021-2030* as an identifiable suite of actions for delivery. These actions include both efficiency measures such as the Dairy EBI programme and technical measures such as changes in fertiliser type or low emissions slurry spreading as well as a series of forestry and

bio economy measures.

Marginal Abatement Cost Curves (MACCs) are very beneficial in terms of identifying the most cost-effective ways of meeting the targets both within and between sectors and also in identifying options that cost less than the marginal benefit from abatement. MACCs provide a useful framework to engage stakeholders on opportunities to reduce emissions.

While the target for the agriculture sector in the All-of-Government Plan to tackle climate breakdown is challenging, immediate action and early adoption is key and there are three important actions that can be advanced immediately.

- Deepening engagement with farmers and other stakeholders to promote the necessary deployment of new technologies and changes in farming practices.

- Improving nitrogen use efficiency such as widespread adoption of low emissions slurry spreading or introduction of clover in grassland swards; and

- Continuing our support for research and innovation such as the potential of novel feed additives in grass based production systems.

I will work to ensure that the next Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) is aligned with this ambition and that climate action is main streamed in the development of our CAP strategic plan to ensure the delivery of this target. While the mitigation potential for agriculture is limited, agriculture can and must play a key role in contributing to Ireland's climate change and energy targets in the years ahead.

VAT Rate Application

528. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will increase funding for low emission slurry-spreading equipment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27861/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The VAT rating of goods and services is subject to EU VAT law, with which Irish VAT law must comply. In accordance with Irish VAT legislation, slurry spreading equipment is liable to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%, and there is no discretion, under the Directive, to exempt these goods from VAT.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that farmers may elect to register for VAT or be treated as flat-rate farmers for VAT purposes. Farmers that are registered for VAT have an entitlement to reclaim VAT charged on costs incurred in relation to the farm business, including VAT borne on the purchase of agricultural equipment. Farmers that are not registered for VAT are compensated for the VAT incurred on goods and services used in the course of their farming business, including purchases of agricultural machinery, through the flat rate addition they receive on payments for their supplies of agricultural produce and services.

Renewable Energy Incentives

529. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of additional supports for anaerobic digestion and on-farm renewables; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27862/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Indigenous

renewable energy plays a vital role in our domestic fuel mix and will become even more important in the context of reducing our reliance on imported fuels and in meeting our challenging renewable energy targets for 2020 and 2030 and decarbonising our energy systems by 2050.

My Department is committed to working closely with the Department for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, which is the lead Department in this area, to ensure that the supply of domestic fuels available in the forest and agriculture sectors are mobilised to support energy generation from a range of bio energy technologies including Anaerobic Digestion. My Department is aware of the need to encourage the utilisation of farm manure as an alternative source of energy and fully recognises the wider environmental benefits of using agricultural residues in the production of bio gas/bio methane and, in particular, the potential for a significant role in the heat and transport sectors. However, the cost efficiency of this technology remains challenging due to the low energy content of farm manure.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) aims to bridge this economic gap 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 roll out of the SSRH for the period of up to 2027.

Earlier this month, my colleague Richard Bruton, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment 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/>.

In addition, the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) supports capital investment in a number of target areas which will promote, among other things, sustainability (e.g. low emissions slurry spreading equipment, farm nutrient storage, and renewable energy and energy efficiency). I recently made €10 million available for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, following a comprehensive review of TAMS designed to increase its focus on sustainability. Eligible investments include extension of support for Solar PV Installation to all sectors and support for LED Lighting as the only form of lighting to be grant aided. In addition, other energy efficiency measures such as biomass boilers and water heating continue to be eligible investment items under TAMS.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

530. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the review of the nitrates derogation will give full recognition of the carbon sinks from forests, permanent pastures and hedgerows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27863/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Nitrates Derogation (S.I. No. 65/2018) gives effect to the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters - Amendment) Regulations 2018. This regulation provides Ireland's nitrates derogation farmers an opportunity to farm at higher stocking rates, above 170 kg live-stock manure nitrogen/ ha, subject to additional conditions designed to protect the environment. The derogation is an important facility for more intensive farmers and almost 7,000 intensively stocked farmers availed of the derogation in 2018.

The purpose of the review of the nitrates derogation was to examine further opportunities for derogation farmers to improve efficiencies and continue to reduce their environmental footprint with particular regard to water, climate and air quality. As part of this review, a public consultation was held and 75 submissions were received.

The Nitrates expert group which is composed of officials from the EPA, Teagasc, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and DAFM is currently considering these submissions. The Nitrates expert group acknowledge that carbon sinks are recognised under the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) EU Regulation which covers emissions and removals of greenhouse gases resulting from human-induced land use and will consider measures which support both climate and environmental challenges.

Recommendations for measures will be submitted by the group within the coming months.

Departmental Reviews

531. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research project is scheduled to be completed. [27874/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Title of current study/ review/ research undertaken or commissioned	Scheduled End Date
Report of the High Level Innovation Team on the Agri-food Sector	Quarter 3 2019
Spending Review - Beef Data Genomics Programme	Quarter 3 2019
Spending Review - Competitive Agricultural Research Programme	Quarter 3 2019
Spending Review - Forestry Programme	Quarter 3 2019
Risk assessment of sea-fisheries in Special Protection Areas (undertaken by Marine Institute)	Quarter 3 2019
Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan	Quarter 3 2019
Mid-Term Evaluation of Ireland's RDP 2014-2020	Quarter 3 2019
GLAS Evaluation – Year 2 Biodiversity Report	Quarter 3 2019
GLAS Evaluation – Year 2 Modelling Report	Quarter 3 2019
GLAS Evaluation – Year 2 Attitudinal Survey Scheme Non-Participants	Quarter 3 2019
GLAS Evaluation – Year 2 Attitudinal Survey Scheme Participants	Quarter 3 2019
Badger territoriality and movement in a medium density population before, during and after road realignment (Trinity College Dublin – N11 Badger Project)	23 September 2019
Spending Review - TB Programme	Quarter 4 2019
Density estimation and reproductive status of European badgers (Meles meles) under bovine tuberculosis management (Dr. Laura Rosen Trans-boundary Epidemiology Analytics)	31 December 2019
Agricultural Catchment Programme	31 December 2019
ESRI- Non Compliance with Nitrates Regulations	31 December 2019
Role of the genital, intestinal and oral microbiome in badger pathogen prevalence, with particular focus on STDs and co-infection of bTB with other bacterial and viral pathogens (Dr. Christina D. Buesching, Pole Research Fellow WildCRU, University of Oxford)	31 July 2020
Population estimates of badgers Meles meles in the context of BCG vaccination (University College Cork)	31 August 2020

Questions - Written Answers

Title of current study/ review/ research undertaken or commissioned	Scheduled End Date
Applying Behavioural Science to the Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Programme - Economic Social Research Institute (ESRI)	30 June 2021
Two host species transmission data analysis and modelling to calculate risk maps for bovine TB during eradication by badger vaccination in Ireland (Wageningen University, Department of Animal Sciences, Netherlands)	31 December 2023
Independent study on forestry in Co. Leitrim	Quarter 3 2019

Departmental Reports

532. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27898/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the tables.

2016
Title of policy documents/strategies published
Dundalk Cockle Natura Permits Policy 2016-2020
European Maritime & Fisheries Fund Operational Programme
Language Scheme 2016 – 2019
Schemes and Services 2014-2020
Human Resources (HR) Strategy “EveryOne”
Annual Review and Outlook, 2016
Steps to Success 2016

2017
Title of policy documents/strategies published
The National Farmed Animal Health Strategy 2017-22
DAFM Statement of Strategy 2016-2019
IMT Statement of Strategy 2017-2020
Ministerial Decision regarding a proposal from the Irish South and West Fish Producer Organisation (IS&WFPO) for a revised Mackerel Distribution between the polyvalent segment and the RSW Pelagic segment
Fleet Policy Statement July 2017 - Replacement capacity requirements for vessels in the Tiered and Ring-fenced portions of the Polyvalent Segment
Pilot Quota Balancing Policy for Pelagic Stocks Policy and Information Booklet
Updated information on LULUCF actions to limit or reduce emissions and maintain or increase removals from activities defined under Decision 529/2013/EU
Adaptation Planning - Developing Resilience to Climate Change in the Irish Agriculture and Forest Sector
The 2017 Evaluation on the Implementation of Ireland’s Rural Development Programme 2014 -2020
Ex-Post Evaluation of the Rural Development Programme Ireland (2007-2013)
Review of the Irish Harness Racing Sector
Annual Review and Outlook, 2017
Steps to Success 2017
Felling and Reforestation Policy

2018
Title of policy documents/strategies published
Policy on Highest Priority Critically Important Antimicrobials
Ireland's Bovine TB Eradication Programme
TB Position Paper Policy Options
Ministerial Decision regarding trawling activity inside 6 Nautical Miles
Indecon Ex-ante Assessment of the Use of Financial Instruments within Ireland's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programmes
Review of Expenditure under the RDP
Food Safety and Food Authenticity Strategy 2018-2020
Workforce Planning and Succession Planning Policy
Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy
Temporary Business Needs policy
People in Dairy Action Plan
Annual Review and Outlook, 2018
Mid-term review of the Forestry Programme 2014-2020

2019 year to date
Title of policy documents/strategies published
Irish National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides
Sea Fishing Boat Licensing Policy - Policy Directive 1/2019
Pilot Quota Balancing Policy for Demersal Stocks Policy & Information Booklet
Public Consultation: Draft Code of Good Agricultural Practice for reducing Ammonia Emissions from Agriculture
Public Consultation on the Draft Agriculture, Forest and Seafood Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan.
RDP Information & Publicity Strategy 2019
Rural Development Programme Amendment 6 & Associated Documents
Market Access Report 2019
Review of Organic Food Sector and Strategy for its Development 2019 - 2015

GLAS Appeals

533. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS appeal application by a person (details supplied). [27922/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was rejected from GLAS following the outcome of an inspection.

A request for a review of the inspection findings was received in the Department on 6 June 2019.

The Department will notify the person named, in writing, of the outcome of this review once it has been completed.

Fishing Industry Development

534. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if grants are available for fishermen for the replacement of outboard boat engines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28007/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department's European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) Operational Programme is the vehicle for financial supports to the seafood sector for the period 2014 to 2020. The Programme delivers a wide range of supports for aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing through a suite of schemes.

The Programme is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union and provides €239.3 million in funding - an investment of €91.7 million provided by the Government of Ireland and €147.6 million provided by the European Union.

The Sustainable Fisheries Scheme funded under the EMFF provides grant aid to the owners of commercial fishing vessels for fleet improvement projects for the purchase of capital equipment.

This includes engine replacement for marine fishing vessels under 12 metres overall length (LOA) provided that the new engine does not have more power in kW than the registered kW of the vessel. Engine replacement is funded at a grant aid rate of 30%.

Outboard engines are not eligible under this Scheme.

Greyhound Industry Data

535. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the capacity of each greyhound stadium in tabular form. [28020/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Bord na gCon and therefore it has been referred to them for direct reply to the Deputy.

Greyhound Industry Data

536. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the manner in which the Irish Greyhound Board accounts for the number of patrons who enter each stadium on race evenings; and if this is consistent across all stadiums and race meetings. [28021/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Bord na gCon and therefore it has been referred to them for direct reply to the Deputy.

Greyhound Industry

537. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are electronic turnstile readings for each race meeting at each greyhound stadium; if receipts are issued to all patrons at each meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28022/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Bord na gCon and therefore it has been referred to them for direct reply to the Deputy.

Greyhound Industry

538. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the method the Irish Greyhound Board uses to account for the number of patrons and total attendance at each race meeting at each stadium; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28023/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Bord na gCon and therefore it has been referred to them for direct reply to the Deputy.

Greyhound Industry

539. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the attendance gate systems and records recorded by the Irish Greyhound Board for race meetings across all stadiums; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28024/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Bord na gCon is subject to the Code of Corporate Governance for State Bodies. The Board has appointed an Audit and Risk Committee as required by the Code. The accounts of Bord na gCon are audited on an annual basis by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The management of operations within Bord na gCon is a matter for the Board and Executive.

Ministerial Meetings

540. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the dates

and attendees of meetings Ministers and or Departmental officials have had with members of the Irish Greyhound Board or executive since 1 May 2016, in tabular form. [28025/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The following is a list of the formal meetings between officials and Ministers from my Department and officials from the Executive and Board of Bord na gCon since 1 May 2016 to date.

Date		Attendees
20 May 2016	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
31 May 2016	Minister of State Doyle	Members of the Executive and Board of Bord na gCon
01 July 2016	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
16 July 2016	Minister Creed	Attended the Irish Laurels in Curraheen Park
14 September 2016	Minister of State Doyle & an official from DAFM	Members of the Board of Bord na gCon
17 September 2016	Minister of State Doyle and officials from DAFM	Attended the Irish Greyhound Derby at Shelbourne Park
04 November 2016	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive and Board of Bord na gCon
10 November 2016	Minister of State Doyle and an official from DAFM	Attended Greyhound Forum at Shelbourne Park
14 November 2016	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
20 July 2017	Minister Creed	Attended the Irish Laurels in Curraheen Park
27 July 2017	Minister Creed and Minister of State Doyle	The Board of Bord na gCon
04 September 2017	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive and Board of Bord na gCon
23 September 2017	Minister of State Doyle	Attended the Irish Greyhound Derby Final at Shelbourne Park
22 October 2017	Minister of State Doyle and an official from DAFM	Attended the National Greyhound Awards
29 November 2017	Officials from DAFM	Member of the Executive of Bord na gCon
12 December 2017	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
14 February 2018	Officials from DAFM	Official from the Board of Bord na gCon
21 February 2018	Minister Creed	Member of the Executive of Bord na gCon
29 April 2018	Minister of State Doyle	Attended the National Greyhound Awards
31 May 2018	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
13 July 2018	Minister Creed	Attended the Irish Laurels in Curraheen Park
22 September 2018	Minister of State Doyle	Attended the Irish Greyhound Derby Final at Shelbourne Park
31 October 2018	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive and Board of Bord na gCon
04 December 2018	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon
24 March 2019	Minister of State Doyle	Attended the National Greyhound Awards
20 May 2019	Officials from DAFM	Official from the Board of Bord na gCon
21 June 2019	Officials from DAFM	Members of the Executive of Bord na gCon

At official level, some more informal meetings may have taken place on an ad hoc basis over this time period. No records of these meetings are available.

Agriculture Schemes

541. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures he plans to introduce to address an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28047/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The details supplied refer to the Young Farmers Scheme, Forgotten Farmers and capital investment grants for young farmers.

With regard to the Young Farmers Scheme, EU Regulation 1307/2013 sets out the definition of a young farmer for the purposes of the scheme. A young farmer is clearly defined as a person who commenced their farming activity no more than five years prior to submitting their first Basic Payment Scheme application and who is no more than 40 years of age in the year of submission of such an application. My Department has no discretion in the implementation of this aspect of EU Regulation 1307/2013 and in this regard farmers who commenced their agricultural activity prior to 1 January 2010 are not eligible for the Young Farmers Scheme.

In respect of the Forgotten Farmer issue, the Regulations governing the operation of the National Reserve include an optional provision whereby Member States may use the National Reserve to allocate new entitlements at the national average level of approximately €185 or give a top-up on the value of existing entitlements to the national average value for persons who suffer from a specific disadvantage.

In the context of the discussions with the EU Commission in early 2015 regarding the inclusion of the group referred to as Old Young Farmers under the 2015 National Reserve, the Commission advised that the inclusion of groups under ‘Specific Disadvantage’ category of the National Reserve would require individual approval at EU level.

The National Reserve in 2017 was established using funding derived from a linear cut to the value of all farmers’ entitlements. EU Regulations pertaining to the National Reserve provide that the two categories of ‘young farmer’ and ‘new entrant to farming’ must receive priority access to the Reserve. In the context of the commitment in the *Programme for a Partnership Government*, Ireland consulted with the EU Commission regarding the possibility of including the group commonly referred to as Forgotten Farmers under the specific disadvantage category of the 2017 National Reserve. The EU Commission confirmed that Member States could not use the proceeds of a linear cut to fund a specific disadvantage category of the National Reserve.

The Commission confirmed at the time that the only funding option for the specific disadvantage category was natural replenishment of the Reserve, such as from unused entitlements or the proceeds of clawback, but only after the two priority categories of ‘young farmer’ and ‘new entrant to farming’ had been catered for.

EU Regulation 2393/2017 (Omnibus Regulation) came into effect in January 2018 and introduced a new possibility for the inclusion of ‘Specific Disadvantage’ categories such as Forgotten Farmers into the National Reserve. From 2018, Member States may use the proceeds of a linear cut to fund ‘Specific Disadvantage’ categories of the Reserve, but only if a linear cut is required to fund the two priority categories of ‘young farmer’ and ‘new entrant to farming’ in that particular year. As there was sufficient funding available in the National Reserve in 2018 and 2019 from natural replenishment of the fund in order to cater for the two priority categories,

the issue of a linear cut did not arise.

All entitlements held under the Basic Payment Scheme are subject to convergence. Farmers who hold entitlements that have an Initial Unit Value that is below 90% of the Basic Payment Scheme national average have seen the value of their entitlements increase gradually over the five years of the scheme. By 2019, all entitlements for all farmers in Ireland are at least 60% of the national average value. In this regard, the group of farmers referred to as Forgotten Farmers will have benefitted from an increase in the value of their entitlements through convergence to 2019.

Decisions in relation to the National Reserve, including the basis of funding the Reserve, are made in consultation with the Direct Payments Advisory Committee which comprises members of the main farming organisations, farm advisory and education services.

With regard to eligibility for the Young Farmers Capital Investment Scheme, I am aware that there is a group of young farmers who established their holdings prior to 2008. A person in this category does not qualify under EU rules for the increased rate-of-aid of 60% available under the scheme. However, where possible priority is given to these affected farmers within the general stream of applicants for TAMS II, with grant-aid payable at 40%.

Food Industry Development

542. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an agricultural attaché will be allocated to the Irish embassies in Ottawa, New Delhi and Seoul; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28092/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department and its agencies have a considerable, and growing, global footprint which is primarily aimed at facilitating growth in our agri-food exports.

In response to the Government’s Global Ireland 2025 initiative, and in keeping with my Department’s efforts to help the agri-food sector to diversify its export markets, my Department is expanding its staffing in international locations over the period to 2025. In addition to establishing attaché posts in new locations, we are also in the process of recruiting local hires in particular locations where they can provide local knowledge and specialist expertise in supporting our market access and trade development work.

New attaché posts will be filled this year in Mexico City, Tokyo, and Berlin. It is also intended that an attaché post will be established in Seoul in 2020.

There are no immediate plans to establish posts in Ottawa or New Delhi. However, my Department maintains its international presence and activities under constant review, with a view to maximising their contribution to the development of the Irish agri-food sector.

Sheep Welfare Scheme Appeals

543. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal under the sheep welfare scheme 2019 by a person (details supplied). [28103/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An appeal has been received by the Department from the person named in relation to the late submission of

his sheep census form. The sheep census form is required under the terms and conditions of the Sheep Welfare Scheme. The appeal is currently being examined, and the applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome shortly. The notification will also advise the applicant of the avenues for further appeal, in the event that he is not satisfied with the outcome.

Maritime Safety

544. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a project (details supplied); if funding has been ring-fenced for the project; if so, the amount; when the project will be delivered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28124/19]

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.

Beef Imports

545. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a deal has been finalised to permit the importation of beef from South America into Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28198/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): On the evening of Friday 28 June, European Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, and Commissioner for Agriculture, Phil Hogan, announced that political agreement has been reached on a trade deal between the EU and Mercosur countries.

While as a small, open economy, Ireland is supportive of international trade deals, I am very concerned at the potential impact of elements of this particular deal on the beef sector.

The agreement includes a significant Tariff Rate Quota for South American beef, at a time when the beef sector in Europe is facing significant uncertainty because of Brexit. We have made concerted efforts over the full twenty-year history of these negotiations, working closely with other Member States and by engaging directly with the European Commission, in order to minimise the EU offer in terms of beef, and, while evidence of these efforts appears to have been reflected in the final offer, I am, nonetheless, deeply concerned at the potential impact on the Irish beef sector. There may be some opportunity for other agri food sectors such as dairy and for the drinks industry, but we will need to examine the text carefully to assess the full impact.

It is also worth noting that this agreement will not come fully into effect for some years. It will first go through a process of legal scrubbing, which could take up to two years, before be-

ing put before the European Trade Council for ratification by Qualified Majority Vote, and the European Parliament.

If the agreement passes those hurdles, it is expected that the trade elements which fall under the EU Commission's competence, will be phased in over 6 years.

Aquaculture Licence Applications

546. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm receipt of a letter of observation and petition opposing an application (details supplied) for an aquaculture licence at Dungloe Bay, County Donegal; if due process and all relevant legal requirements have been adhered to with respect to this application to date in addition to the requirements in relation to public notification and consultation periods; the venue at which all documents in relation to the application were open for public viewing; when a determination will be made with respect to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28216/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable national and EU legislation.

The legislation provides for a period of public and statutory consultation in respect of licence applications received, including the applications referred to by the Deputy. Observations received on foot of the public consultation process are automatically acknowledged by my Department.

As the licence applications are currently under active consideration by my Department as part of a statutory process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Aquaculture Licence Appeals

547. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made with respect to an appeal made against a decision to grant an aquaculture licence (details supplied) at Gaoth Dobhair Bay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28217/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) is the independent statutory body established for the purpose of determining appeals against aquaculture licensing decisions. In accordance with standard practice, my Department has been notified by ALAB that it has received appeals against the decision to grant the aquaculture licence referred to by the Deputy for the cultivation of oysters at a site on Braade Strand, Co. Donegal.

As ALAB is currently considering the appeals referred to by the Deputy as part of the statutory process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter pending the conclusion of that process.

National Broadband Plan

548. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the claims by Eir that the objectives of the national broadband plan can be met at a cost of €1 billion and that it would succeed in delivering 100% coverage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27988/19]

549. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether Eir is credible in its claim that the national broadband plan can be delivered for less than €1 billion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27989/19]

568. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether the claim of Eir that the policy objectives of the National Broadband Plan can be delivered for under €1 billion is credible; the reason for his views in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28019/19]

571. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has considered the recent proposal by a company (details supplied) in relation to the provision of broadband nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28184/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 548, 549, 568 and 571 together.

I would like in the first instance to clarify that Eir has made no formal proposal to Government to replace or supersede the National Broadband Plan.

At its appearance at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Eir's CEO outlined Eir's view on the value for money of the NBP. Eir's CEO made certain observations with regard to Eir's own model for delivery of rural broadband, which could only be delivered outside of the current procurement process. My Department requested a detailed outline from Eir setting out the assumptions made and the financial model underpinning Eir's assumptions. Eir provided further information to my Department at close of business on Friday 28 June and my Department and its NBP advisers are currently analysing this information.

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

550. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if costed proposals were submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the climate action plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27492/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 575, 586, 594 and 608 of 25 June 2019. The actions contained in the Climate Action 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 decision 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) and
- Actions to promote public and community engagement and participation in reducing our

emissions.

The Exchequer and other public funding costs of the Plan will be met through Project Ireland 2040, which provides €30 billion for low carbon and sustainable mobility investments in the period to 2027.

The exact costs of some actions 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 targeted abatement range in each sector.

Under the Climate Action Plan, each sector shall have a carbon budget, which will be the total amount of emissions which are permitted in a particular period.

My Department had an ongoing engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the preparation of the Climate Action Plan 2019, and the two Departments will continue to cooperate closely in the context of implementation of the Plan.

Renewable Energy Generation

551. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if an application for a licence (details supplied) has been received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27503/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I refer the Deputy to my replies to Question Nos 206 of 26 June and 1204 of 8 May 2019. The position is unchanged.

Medical Waste Disposal

552. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when those with a disability will be able to utilise the bin waiver scheme; and if it will be backdated to the date his predecessor announced it. [27534/19]

553. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the groups he has met since his appointment in regard to the bin waiver scheme for persons with incontinence and a disability. [27535/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 552 and 553 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 such as Family Carer's Ireland, Age Action, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the Irish Wheelchair Association, Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland, Multiple Sclerosis Society of

Ireland and public bodies such as the National Disability Authority, the HSE and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 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 Deputy that I continue to be committed to addressing this issue.

Energy Efficiency

554. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the home energy grant schemes will be extended to houses constructed since 2006 to bring them up to a higher energy efficiency standard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27647/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department funds a number of home energy efficiency schemes that are administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The aim of the schemes is to improve the energy efficiency of our built environment, in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding. This involves making difficult decisions and targeting supports in particular ways such as by limiting certain grants to homes built before 2006. As new homes are already required to meet specific energy performance standards and to incorporate renewables under Building Regulations, grant support is currently focussed on improving the condition of existing dwellings. Grant funding further works in more recently built homes that already meet certain levels of energy performance would not represent a cost-effective use of Exchequer funds.

However, grant funding for renewable measures under the Better Energy Homes Scheme is available to homes built before 2011. Additionally, the year of build is not considered as part of the application process for the Deep Retrofit Pilot Programme. This pilot, which provides 50% funding for deep energy upgrades, instead assess the energy uplift that can be achieved.

The recently published Climate Action 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 area based retrofit programme will seek to capitalise on critical mass that will benefit both householders and the supply chain. This programme will 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.

Bituminous Fuel Ban

555. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures he will take post the nationwide ban on smoky coal to ensure smoky coal from Northern Ireland, which has a lower VAT rate and no carbon tax, is not sold here; when the ban will be coming into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27713/19]

556. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if concerns have been raised regarding smoky coal bought in Northern

Ireland, which has a lower VAT rate, no carbon tax and a higher percentage content of sulphur following the introduction of the smoky coal ban; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27714/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 555 and 556 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.

In the meantime Local Authorities are primarily responsible for the enforcement of legislation on solid fuel, including the ‘smoky coal’ regulations, within their functional areas. The powers that Local Authorities have in this area are 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 amounts for breaches of the Regulations is €5,000 on summary conviction

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

Complaints regarding the sale of prohibited fuels, smoky emissions or other breaches of the regulations should, in the first instance, be reported to the relevant Local Authority.

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

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

557. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland has public oversight of the online aspects of RTÉ; if a mechanism can be put in place to deal with regulatory complaints from members

of the public in respect of this online component; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27821/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) establishes the framework for the regulation of audiovisual media services in the European Union. The current Directive applies to linear broadcasting services - i.e. traditional television, and in a limited way to non-linear services, i.e. on-demand services such as the RTÉ Player. The Broadcasting Act 2009 established the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland as the independent regulator for linear broadcasting services, both television and radio in Ireland. On-demand services are currently subject to a co-regulatory Code of Conduct overseen by the On-Demand Audiovisual Services Group (ODAS), which was established under the auspices of IBEC. The Code of Conduct applies to all on-demand audiovisual service providers operating in the state and provides for a complaints mechanism in relation to content on on-demand services.

In terms of the Code's operation, the BAI's only role is that its statutory Compliance Committee acts as an appeals body, where a complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the on-demand service provider, on complaints relating to content. In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the BAI's Compliance Committee and ODAS. The BAI does not have a role in relation to any complaints appeals in respect of commercial communications. This appeals function is carried out by the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland (ASAI).

In May 2016, the European Commission published its proposal to revise the AVMSD. The text of the revised Directive has been adopted by the EU and was officially published on 27 November 2018. The revision of the AVMSD will require an increase in the level of oversight by Member States of on-demand audiovisual media services. In early March, I announced that Government would address harmful online content through the development of new legislation, an Online Safety & Media Regulation Bill, which will also transpose the revised AVMSD. I launched a public consultation on these proposals which concluded last month. The submissions received in respect of this consultation have been published on my Department's website and will inform the preparation of legislation, including in respect of on-demand services.

Inland Fisheries Data

558. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if specific appropriate assessment, AA, screening as set out under Article 6 of the habitats directive appropriate assessment screening report has been carried out in relation to a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27825/19]

559. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the consultation which took place on a project (details supplied); and the reason the project was exempt from planning. [27826/19]

560. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if items (details supplied) are the one project or two separate projects that do not overlap; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27827/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 558 to 560, inclusive, together.

The projects referred to by the Deputy are administered by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI).

I am advised by IFI that project SCF-17-0038 refers to in-stream works near Carnaross

Bridge on the Kells Blackwater, a tributary of the River Boyne. A screening for appropriate assessment for the works contained in the project was carried out in 2016.

IFI have also confirmed that projects C1551 and SCF-17-0006 are two separate projects. Both are projects on the Owenmore River in Altnabrocky in Co. Mayo. Project C1551 was completed in 2016. Following this, the developers sought funding to carry out a separate project to enhance the spawning opportunities for Salmon in the Owenmore River. SCF-17-0006 was approved for funding and the works were completed in 2018.

For clarification, the reference number of the Ray River project, located in Falcarragh, Co. Donegal is NSADF-017-0141. IFI consulted with Donegal County Council, the Planning Authority in the relevant area, on this project. The Planning Authority certified that the project did not require planning permission. The reason for this certification is a matter for the Planning Authority and neither I nor IFI have any function in the matter.

In view of the number of questions tabled recently by the Deputy in relation to IFI funding schemes, I would be happy to ask IFI to fully brief him on these matters.

Postal Services Provision

561. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the future operations of An Post; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27854/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Government is committed to supporting a post office network that meets the needs of communities across the country, particularly in rural areas. A modernised post office network will provide a better range of financial services and e-commerce services for shoppers and small businesses.

Reflecting our commitment to sustaining a nationwide post office network and daily mails service, the Government made €30m available in State funding to An Post which is being used to support the renewal of the post office network (€15m) and the continued fulfilment of a 5 day per week mails delivery service (€15m). As An Post is a commercial State body, this support was provided by way of a loan.

The past financial challenges facing An Post have been well documented primarily due to the impact of email and other forms of online communication on mail volumes. Mail volumes have decreased some 40% since 2007. In 2018 alone mail volumes declined by 7.6%. In response, the An Post Board have put in place a strategic plan setting out a transformation of the company in both the mails and retail business.

An Post recorded an operating profit of €41.2m for 2018 compared to €8.4m for 2017. This represents the second year of significant financial improvement bringing the Group out of its loss making position of €12.4m in 2016. This reflects the significant amount of work that has gone into restructuring the company and modernising its network.

On 17 January 2019 the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection renewed her Department's contract with An Post to provide pensions, Child Benefit and other social welfare payments in cash at Post Offices. The current terms of the contract between the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and An Post were agreed in 2013 for an initial two year period, with an option to extend annually up to the end of 2019. Further contracts are a matter for the Department for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and An Post.

The Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2017 includes an amendment to allow for the tendering of TV Licence fee collection. The Bill is currently at an advanced drafting stage. In the meantime, there will be no change to the existing TV licence fee arrangements and An Post continues to work as my issuing agent in accordance with Section 145 of the Act.

As part of its consideration of the financial position of An Post, the Government agreed that further opportunities for Government business through the Post Office Network should be explored. The first practical step that the Government took was the launch of the Digital Assist pilot initiative. Government funding of €80,000 was allocated to the scheme which has seen 10 post offices kitted out to assist citizens with online Government interactions. The pilot will provide data and insight in relation to the provision of offline Government services to citizens. A review of the initiative will be carried out shortly.

On 4 September 2018, the Government approved the establishment of an interdepartmental group to identify options, including procurement frameworks, for delivering services to those citizens who do not wish to use, or are unable to use, digital services.

Bituminous Fuel Ban

562. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will meet with a group (details supplied) to discuss the decision not to implement a nationwide smoky coal ban in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27865/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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.

My officials who will be in contact with the group in the near future to offer a meeting with officials.

Renewable Energy Incentives

563. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the grants or assistance available to community groups to install renewable energy sources in community centres and facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27868/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): A number of schemes funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland can assist in the installation of renewable energy sources in community buildings and facilities. The Better Energy Communities Scheme funds community based partnerships to improve the energy efficiency of the building stock in their area, including community buildings and facilities. Renewable energy solutions like wind turbines, biomass plants, and photovoltaic systems are eligible where included as part of a broader retrofit under this scheme.

In 2019, I have allocated €23m to the scheme. In 2018, 37 projects were funded with an Ex-

chequer investment of €19.9m. Further information can be found at <https://www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/project-criteria-and-funding/>

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) is designed to support the switch from fossil fuels to renewable heating systems. The SSRH has been developed to financially support the adoption of renewable heating systems by commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating operators and other non-domestic heat users not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System. The SSRH supports eligible projects through one of the following support mechanisms:

- An installation grant, of up to 30% of the installation cost, for ground, water, or air source electric heat pumps; or

- Ongoing operational support for a period of up to 15 years, on the basis of prescribed tariffs, for biomass boilers and anaerobic digestion heating systems.

The National Development Plan includes an allocation of €300 million for the rollout of the scheme for the period up to 2027.

The SSRH is administered by SEAI and full details, including how to apply, are available on SEAI's website at <https://www.seai.ie/sustainable-solutions/support-scheme-renewable-/>

Departmental Reviews

564. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27877/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy.

Studies, reviews and research are currently being undertaken by my Department which contribute to project delivery and informed, robust and evidence based policy making. Details of these are set out in the following table.

Details of Study/Review/Research	Scheduled date of completion
National study into how Ireland can achieve 90% collection rate for single use beverage containers (PET and aluminium)	Q3 2019
Research survey on consumer attitudes to waste	July 2019
Review of Year 1 of Operation of Compliance Scheme for tyres	Q3 2019
An independent analysis of the Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme carried out by the London School of Tropical Medicine	2021
Tsunami inundation mapping pilot study (Geological Survey Ireland)	August 2019
Geological Survey Ireland funded research reports	Ongoing up to end 2020
Pilot Study on Landslide Hazard mapping	October 2019
Review by ComReg of aspects of Analysys Mason Report on "Pricing and Access Arrangements for the MANs"	The ComReg review is expected to be completed in September, 2019.
A social, environmental and economic analysis of the effects of Galmoy and Lisheen Mines on their respective communities	October 2019
Report of the Interdepartmental Group on the Delivery of "Offline" Government Services	H2 2019
BAI 5 Year Review of Public Service Broadcasters	Completed 2018 (not yet published)

Details of Study/Review/Research	Scheduled date of completion
Working Group on the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting	Completed 2019
Research in relation to Online Safety commissioned by the National Advisory Council for Online Safety	End 2019

Last month, I published the Government's Climate Action Plan To Tackle Climate Breakdown which is available on my Department's website.

Departmental Information

565. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27901/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy. Following clarification with the Deputy's office, details of the 32 current policy documents and strategies published by my Department during the period 2016 to date are set out in the following table.

Name of Policy Document/Strategy	Year Published
Statement of Strategy 2019-2021	2019
Annual Report 2017	2018
National Adaptation Framework	2018
Geoscience Ireland Strategic Review 2018-2022	2018
An Economic Review of the Irish Geoscience Sector	2017
Geological Survey Ireland Research Roadmap 2016	2016
Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown	2019
Seventh National Communication Ireland: A report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	2018
Third Biennial Report Ireland: A report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	2018
Annual Transition Statement 2018	2018
Investing in the Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Society: 2018 - 2027	2018
National Mitigation Plan	2017
Annual Transition Statement 2017	2017
Annual Transition Statement 2016	2016
The Sustainable Development Goals- National Implementation Plan 2018-2020	2018
Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy	2017
Long term renovation strategy	2017
Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty	2016
National Energy Efficiency Action Plan	2017
Support Scheme for Renewable Heat - Scheme Overview	2017
Biofuels Obligation Scheme Policy Statement	2018
Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce Progress Report	2018
Report of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce	2016
Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Review 2017	2018

Name of Policy Document/Strategy	Year Published
Mobile Phone & Broadband Taskforce Focus Group Report on Mobile Coverage	2018
Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce Implementation Review 2018	2019
Ireland's National Roadmap on the Use of the 700MHz Frequency Band	2019
Residential Solid Fuel and Air Pollution Study (jointly commissioned with the Department of Environment for Northern Ireland)	2016
Electromagnetic Fields in the Irish Context	2016
Clean Air Dialogue with EU Commission Conclusions document	2017
National Radon Control Strategy – Phase 2 (2019 – 2024)	2019
Ireland's National Programme under Directive 2011/70/EC establishing a Community framework for the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste	2019
BAI Report on Ownership and Control of Media Businesses 2015-2017	2019
Open Policy Debate on Online Safety Report	2018
Review of the Impact of 'Opt-Out' Advertising	2018
BAI Report on Ownership and Control of Media Businesses 2012-2014	2016

Mobile Telephony Services

566. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the basis on which his Department has established that there are no discernible health implications from the roll-out of 5G here; and the extent to which medical guidelines underpinning same are updated and kept under review. [27986/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2015, the Government commissioned a report by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands (RIVM), which examined and synthesised existing peer-reviewed research on the potential health effects of electric and magnetic fields arising from high voltage power lines, and electromagnetic fields from base stations for mobile communication. The report, published in 2016 and entitled “*Electromagnetic Fields in the Irish Context*”, reaffirms the overall conclusion of an earlier 2007 report, “*Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields*”, that there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship between exposure to low-frequency electromagnetic fields and adverse health effects.

Irish policy in this area continues to be informed by a substantial volume of internationally recognised scientific research and evidence. This includes the guidelines set down by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines provide scientifically-based limits that are applicable to both public and occupational exposure from electromagnetic fields (EMF), including 5G. ICNIRP guidelines apply up to a frequency of 300 gigahertz (GHz), well above the maximum frequencies being considered for 5G. ICNIRP guidelines are based on evidence gathered from all peer-reviewed scientific literature and not on the conclusions of any single scientific paper, event, or other source.

In this regard, I have recently assigned a new statutory function to the Environmental Protection Agency to provide general information to the public on matters pertaining to public exposure to non-ionising radiation, to monitor international scientific developments, and to provide independent advice to my Department in this area.

National Broadband Plan

567. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

2 July 2019

Environment when he expects the contract to be signed for the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28018/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recently brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and the Government agreed to this at its meeting on 7 May. This is an important step towards achieving the overarching goal of the National Broadband Plan, which is to provide access to high speed broadband to every home, farm, school and business in Ireland, no matter where they are located.

The Government decision on 7 May 2019 means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the bidder, subject to contract close, including the finalisation of financial and legal documents. A period of final due diligence on all elements of the contract is part of the normal conclusion of a procurement process.

NBI will be supported by a number of experienced subcontractors and is currently tasked with finalising negotiations on contracts with approximately 40 subcontractors to assist in the delivery of the NBP. In order to support deployment it is anticipated that a subset of approximately 15 to 20 of these subcontracts will be required prior to contract close. The State Aid notification in relation to the NBP will also be submitted to the European Commission.

It is anticipated these elements will require a number of months, with contract close expected later this year and deployment commencing shortly after that.

Question No. 568 answered with Question No. 548.

Ministerial Meetings

569. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he last had a formal meeting with the chairperson of Inland Fisheries Ireland; the issues discussed; when he will next meet formally with them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28091/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): As Minister with delegated authority for the Inland Fisheries sector, I have regularly met formally with the Chair and senior management of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) across a range of issues. I am also in regular communication with the Chair. On Thursday last, 27 June, I met with the Board of IFI for a wide ranging discussion in advance of the Board’s next 5 year strategic planning period. The discussions focussed on the consensus that the primary goal is protection, development and enhancement of the inland fisheries resource. In addition, we had constructive dialogue in relation to broadening participation in angling particularly among young people, the potential of inland fisheries for rural development and tourism, the threat of climate change on fisheries and the operational and resource requirements of IFI.

I have also met with fisheries staff on the ground to see first hand the work carried out by IFI around the country and the dedication of operational and support staff. I consider this as important as Board engagement.

I intend to maintain a positive liaison with the Board and will continue my regular formal and informal engagement with the Chair and senior management.

Bituminous Fuel Ban

570. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the implementation of regulations relating to the sale and purchase of smoky coal in smaller towns and villages nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28125/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): 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.

Question No. 571 answered with Question No. 548.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Eligibility

572. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the eligibility criteria for the better energy warmer homes scheme will be reviewed in order that persons who have previously availed of the scheme for minor works or improvements to their homes are not prevented from availing of the newer scheme. [28229/19]

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. The rules of the Scheme stipulate that repeat upgrade visits are not provided. This rule is in place to ensure that the available Exchequer funding provides upgrades to as many eligible homes as possible and to prioritise eligible homes that have never had any work done under the scheme.

Last year, the scheme was expanded. Subject to a survey by SEAI and an assessment of potential for improved energy performance, the scheme can now, 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. In addition, it will 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 further changes to the scheme are required. It is expected that this review will be completed in the coming months.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

573. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the sites on which the OPW and Inland Fisheries Ireland experiment strategies were implemented in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28258/19]

574. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 592 and 593 of 25 June 2019, the reason the stakeholder uptake (details supplied) of the fishery enhancement element is so low in view of the amount of available funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28259/19]

575. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Inland Fisheries Ireland will conduct pre-fishery enhancement test sites for an Inland Fisheries Ireland and OPW enhancement programme in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28260/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 573 to 575, inclusive, together.

I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that the term “experimental strategies” is considered to cover a wide range of habitat – fisheries interactions in the drained rivers managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW).

As previously advised, OPW undertakes maintenance on about 2000 km of channels annually. OPW uses an environmental guidance procedure, agreed with IFI, to ensure habitat retention and to implement value-added works that are consistent with the OPW's compliance requirement with the Water Framework Directive and with fisheries issues.

In the overall planning process, the two organisations under their joint agreement, have also examined the rationale for experimental strategies in respect of:

- reconnection of old channel meanders cut off in drainage works;
- mitigating for gravel traps on OPW channels, constructed as part of the original schemes, that may be impeding fish passage and sediment transport; and
- mitigations for fish passage at bridge structures etc. that can be addressed in OPW work programmes

As previously confirmed the agreement between IFI and OPW was signed in mid-2018 and provides that “proposals from 3rd parties to undertake in-stream and/or riparian works should be tested in advance to assess appropriateness of interventions and the most relevant measures, if the works are to proceed”. The agreement envisages IFI undertaking surveys in this context on an agreed small number of cases annually.

The four sites referred to are all third party projects proposed in 2017 but not progressed by the third party applicants. IFI has advanced matters by organising that these sites are surveyed to facilitate progression of the projects. IFI will, therefore, conduct pre-fishery enhancement

surveys on four locations in 2019, in line with agreement with OPW. IFI envisages that further such surveying will be undertaken in 2020 as part of the on-going IFI-OPW programme.

The previous questions, Nos. 592 and 593, referenced by the Deputy do not appear to relate to uptake on fishery enhancement funding schemes. In that regard, I assume the Deputy is referring to the Salmon and Sea Trout Conservation Fund.

If this is the case I can advise the Deputy that uptake in the most recent call, following the expansion of the scheme, has been as expected, with 32 expressions of interest received by IFI, for this scheme alone, with an investment value in excess of €1 million.

I have already offered the Deputy a briefing from IFI on all these matters and, in view of the questions tabled by her in relation to fisheries schemes, I extend that offer again.

Energy Efficiency

576. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has carried out an audit of the number of public buildings that may require retrofitting; the expected cost to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28293/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Government is committed to ensuring that the public sector continues to play a leadership role in tackling climate change through the achievement of further energy efficiency gains and carbon emissions reductions. The Climate Action Plan sets a target to improve the energy efficiency of public sector buildings by 50%.

The public sector has already made a strong contribution in this regard with the sector improving its energy efficiency by 24% to end 2017. Cumulatively, the energy efficiency improvements achieved by public sector bodies have resulted in an avoided energy spend of more than €1 billion and a carbon emissions saving of over 3.5 million tonnes. The achievements to date result from a combination of improved energy management as well as equipment and building fabric improvements. A combination of approaches will continue to be necessary in the future to meet our targets including targeted energy efficiency investment in the retrofitting of buildings.

My Department is providing leadership and guidance to other Government departments and public sector bodies to help them to achieve their efficiency targets as part of the process of implementing the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy. This includes the SEAI engaging with Public Sector Bodies to assess the range and nature of project opportunities (project pipeline) including building fabric upgrades. This ongoing exercise will help to inform the assessment of the costs to achieve the targets for 2030 and beyond. It is also important to note that the achievement of public sector targets will require initiatives beyond those targeted at the building stock. This would include initiatives relating to public transport fleets, water and waste facilities, public lighting and other energy users across the public sector.

My Department is working with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to avail of expertise under the EU Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) to inform the development of a comprehensive building upgrade programme for the Public Sector. It is intended that this will incorporate an assessment of the total level of investment required to achieve the 2030 targets and recommendations for the optimal mix of funding options to reach the necessary objectives. This exercise, which is included as an action in the Climate Action Plan, will commence in Q3 this year and report in 2020.

Project Ireland 2040 has made significant funding available in pursuit of our public sector targets. This includes funding of €800 million for public building energy retrofit, along with further funding for school energy retrofits, third level building renovations, and public transport fleet replacement. The potential for this investment to be supported by non-exchequer sources of funding such as Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) will be also be explored as part of the SRSS exercise.

Cycling Facilities Data

577. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated number of bicycle spaces available to Civil Service staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28294/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department currently has 86 bicycle parking spaces. Under my Department's Resource Efficiency Action Plan a staff survey on how staff commute to work will be undertaken with a view to promoting more sustainable options and to feed into the design of our new HQ due for completion in early 2023.

I understand that information on the total number of bicycle spaces across the Civil Service is not available as these facilities are managed on a local basis by individual Departments.

Penalty Points System

578. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there is a right of appeal before a person is disqualified from driving, having received 12 penalty points within the required period. [27462/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Disqualification from driving based on penalty points occurs when a person reaches a cumulative total of 12 or more points, except in the case of learner or novice drivers, who are disqualified on reaching or exceeding 7 points. Penalty points may be endorsed on a licence record following payment of a fixed charge for a road traffic offence or following conviction in court.

Where an offence is a fixed charge offence, the person has the option of refusing to pay the fixed charge and going instead to court. If they are then convicted in court - or if the offence is not a fixed charge offence and they have gone straight to court and been convicted - they have the right of appeal against that specific conviction.

As penalty points are accrued in relation to specific offence, a person who has paid a fixed charge has accepted that they are receiving penalty points, while a person convicted in court who has chosen not to exercise their right to appeal, or who has appealed and lost, has had an opportunity to challenge each and every conviction and its consequential penalty points.

There is no specific mechanism for challenging disqualification once the person reaches 12 points, nor is there any need for one, given that each penalty point event could have been challenged.

Departmental Funding

579. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding his Department granted the Dublin Port Company in the past ten years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27489/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In line with National Ports Policy the State Port Companies including Dublin Port Company receive no exchequer funding.

Anti-Social Behaviour

580. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of all reported anti-social behaviour on Irish Rail services in 2018 to 1 June 2019, by route; and the actions of Irish Rail in response to the incidents. [27500/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While the vast majority of public transport passenger journeys occur without incident, I am concerned to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff travelling and working on our rail network.

The safety and security of public transport passengers and staff, including arrangements to deal with anti-social behaviour, are important matters that, first and foremost, must be managed by every public transport company, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, where appropriate.

In view of this, and given that the collection of details of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour on the rail network, as sought by the Deputy, is undertaken by Iarnród Éireann, 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.

Sports Capital Programme

581. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the funding for the sports capital fund will be released. [27501/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works.

For the first time applicants who submitted incorrect documentation under this round are being given the opportunity to correct their application during the assessment period. While there will be no undue delay in completing the assessment process, in view of the opportunity to

correct documentation, the record number of applications received and the detailed information contained in each application, it is likely to take a number of months to have all applications assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it may be the third quarter of this year before the full set of allocations under this current round of the programme are announced.

As soon as allocations have been made, my Department will carry out a review of all aspects of the 2018 round of the programme to include any possible improvements for the future. This review will include consideration of the timing and scale of the next round but I fully expect that the SCP will again be open for new applications before the end of this year.

Public Service Vehicles

582. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the regulatory and licensing application system for public service vehicles; the number of licences in operation for large public service vehicles and small public service vehicles in tabular form; and the number of licences issued in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [27562/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for both the licensing of public bus passenger services under the provisions of the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009 and the regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Driver Test Centres

583. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the driver test centre will open in Drogheda, County Louth; if the centre will be permanent; the location of the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27621/19]

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

Departmental Expenditure

584. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated difference between the average annual steady-state cost of national, regional and local roads, heavy rail, Luas and buses with regard to the integration initiative as estimated in a report (details supplied) and the actual expenditure outlay in each of the years 2017 to 2020. [27655/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In 2015 my Department published the Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport (SFILT). As part of the extensive preparatory work for this publication, 21 background papers were produced and one of these estimated the steady state funding requirement for the transport network, as referenced by the Deputy. From 2017 onwards, SFILT estimated that the annual steady state funding requirement for my Department would be approximately €1.2bn. For ease of reference, I include the full SFILT steady state estimates in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated annual steady state expenditure requirement, 2014-2016 and post-2016 (€m)

	Average Annual Cost 2014-2016	Average Annual Cost Attributable to DTTaS 2014-2016	Average Annual Cost post-2016	Average Annual Cost Attributable to DTTaS post-2016
National Roads	585	481	573	469
RLR Roads	580	480	580	480
Heavy Rail	291	195	291	195
Luas	81	60	49	21
Buses	61	61	61	61
Integration	15	15	15	15
Total	1,613	1,292	1,569	1,241

Isolating steady state investment from other types of transport expenditure can be difficult but, on the basis of available information, I include in Table 2 my Department's best estimate of steady state investment in the regional and local road network and public transport from 2017 to 2020.

Table 2: Departmental steady state expenditure, 2017-2020 (€m)

	2017	2018	2019*	2020**
RLR Roads	300	384	418	-
Heavy Rail	158.8	160.0	197.0	199.7
Buses	60.7	92.1***	100.6***	122.7***
Integration	4.3	6.9	11.4	13.0

*Allocated

**Projected

***Includes some additional capacity provision

Finally, I include in Table 3 the difference between the estimated steady state requirement and investment in regional and local roads and public transport from 2017 to 2020. As steady state expenditure on the regional and local road network includes current and capital expenditure, and current allocations are determined annually as part of the Budget process, a 2020 figure is not available at this point.

Table 3: Estimated difference between steady state requirement and investment, 2017-2020 (€m)

	2017	2018	2019*	2020**
RLR Roads	(180)	(96)	(62)	-
Heavy Rail	(36.1)	(43.2)	0	0
Buses	(0.3)	31.1	39.6	61.7
Integration	(11.7)	(8.1)	(3.6)	(2.0)

In a constrained fiscal context, Departmental spending fell short of the estimated steady state requirement over a number of years. However, with the increased capital allocations for

2 July 2019

my Department announced in Budget 2018 we will be investing more into our existing infrastructure in the years ahead. The steady state funding requirement for heavy rail, through the Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract, and buses has been met in 2019, while we will be investing the required level of funding into national, regional and local roads by 2021.

I have referred your question to TII and the NTA for a direct reply in relation to steady state expenditure on national roads and Luas in the period 2017 to 2020. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Driver Test Regulations

585. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason there are no appeals allowed for those who fail their driver tests, particularly those who fail them on multiple occasions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27694/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Driver testing in Ireland is carried out directly by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to a standard that complies with the EU Directive on Driving Licences.

Under section 33(6)(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1961, a person aggrieved by a test decision may appeal to the District Court. The Court can examine whether or not the test was conducted properly and if it finds that the tester did not conduct the test in accordance with procedures can direct that a further test be offered to the applicant free of charge.

Driver Test

586. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the failure rate in each driver test centre in Dublin in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27695/19]

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 10 days.

Rail Network

587. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a proposal within the national development plan (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27702/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Project Ireland 2040 commits toward an evaluation of the economic benefits and value for money of high-speed rail on the main inter-urban rail network against improvements to existing and planned line speeds along the lines.

I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department will commence this study during 2020.

Sports Capital Programme Data

588. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the planned capital expenditure on sport for years (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27703/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): While the published National Development Plan sets out the overall capital commitments for sports investment, the precise budget available for sports capital projects each year is subject to the annual estimates process.

The total funding currently available for sports capital projects (including planned allocations to Sport Ireland for the development of the Sport Ireland Campus) in the period 2019 - 2022 is set out in the table below. Figures for 2023 will be available once the overall 2023 capital allocation for my Department is agreed with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, in accordance with the five year rolling capital investment plan.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Sport Capital Allocation (€m)	61.38	65.47	60.50	48.37

Transport Policy

589. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the engagement his Department has had and will have with the a State agency regarding a strategy (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27704/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware, section 12 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 provides for the making of a strategic transport plan, known as the transport strategy, by the National Transport Authority (NTA), in relation to the Greater Dublin Area.

The Act details the process by which the strategy shall be prepared, including its engagement with my Department. It requires the NTA to take account of various named policies and strategies and also requires the NTA to consult with various named stakeholders, including of course the general public and the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

The Act stipulates that, following these various consultations, the NTA shall submit a draft strategy to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport for consideration and approval or otherwise.

In 2016 the then Minister approved the *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 to 2035* and the *Strategy* is available to view on the NTA's website.

The *Strategy* is vitally important in assisting with the sustainable development of the Greater Dublin Area and it is a statutory requirement that the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy* for the GDA is consistent with the *Strategy*. This statutory integration of strategic transport and land-use planning reflects international best practice.

The Act also requires that following publication of the *Strategy*, that the NTA review it within 6 years and every 6 years afterwards. I understand that the NTA has indicated that this review will commence during the latter part of 2020.

Electric Vehicles

590. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the re-

views under way regarding the regulation of electric scooters; the timeframe for the completion of such reviews; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27731/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): At my request, the Road Safety Authority commissioned research into the current situation in relation to escooters in other countries, particularly other EU Member States, and the safety implications in the use of electric personal mobility devices.

The report was submitted to me on June 22nd, and is currently under examination by my officials.

I will make a decision on whether to legislate for escooters and other personal mobility devices when I have considered all of the implications of the report and its recommendations.

Electric Vehicles

591. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce legislation regarding the regulation of e-scooters; the premise of such legislation; the date for publication of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27732/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): At my request, the Road Safety Authority commissioned research into the current situation in relation to escooters in other countries, particularly other EU Member States, and the safety implications in the use of electric personal mobility devices.

The report was submitted to me on June 22nd, and is currently under examination by my officials.

I will make a decision on whether to bring forward additional legislation in relation to escooters and other personal mobility devices when I have considered all of the implications of the report and its recommendations.

State Airports

592. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be allocated to Shannon Airport in view of the fact that other airports have recently received significant funding (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27779/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Shannon Group plc, a commercial State company, was incorporated following enactment of the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014. Shannon Airport Authority (SAA), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Shannon Group plc, has statutory responsibility for the management and operation of Shannon Airport. In line with Government policy, Shannon Airport, which operates under a clear commercial mandate, is entirely funded from its own internal resources.

The Regional Airports Programme provides support to Donegal, Ireland West Airport Knock, Kerry and Waterford through a number of capital and operational schemes in compliance with EU Guidelines on State Aid. Passenger numbers at these airports are less than 1 million per year (three have less than 400,000). It is recognised that, without State support, these smaller airports would struggle to comply with international regulatory obligations in these areas.

Supporting Ireland's smallest airports through the Regional Airports Programme is a very clear policy objective in the National Aviation Policy. The policy does not provide for direct Exchequer funding of Shannon Airport, or any of the State owned airports, as part of the Programme.

Public Service Vehicles

593. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the NTA has carried out a review of the new service being piloted by a company (details supplied); if so, the outcome of the review; the number of taxi drivers participating and not participating in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27823/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Road Safety Authority Reports

594. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received the Road Safety Authority report on electric scooters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27851/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): At my request, the Road Safety Authority commissioned research into the current situation in relation to escooters in other countries, particularly other EU Member States, and the safety implications in the use of electric personal mobility devices.

The report was submitted to me on June 22nd, and is currently under examination by my officials.

I will make a decision on whether to bring forward additional legislation in relation to escooters and other personal mobility devices when I have considered all of the implications of the report and its recommendations, bearing in mind developments and experience elsewhere in the EU.

Road Projects Status

595. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the proposed improvement works at the junction of the N72 and R579 at Ballymaquirke, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27856/19]

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, design, up-grading and improvement 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 the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Projects Status

596. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Cork to Limerick motorway project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27857/19]

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, design 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 the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Reviews

597. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27895/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is listed below

Title or Description	Scheduled date of completion
Planning Land Use and Transport - Outlook 2040 (PLUTO 2040)	Q4 2019
Quality Assurance Report 2018	Q4 2019
Measuring accessibility in transport appraisal	Q3 2019
Spending Review 2019 - Regional Airports Programme	Q3 2019
Behaviour Detection Programme Evaluation	Q3 2019
Forecasting Exchequer Impact of Low Emitting Vehicles	Q4 2019
Review of the annual St. Patrick's Festival	July 2019
Review of the ownership and operational structure of State Airports in 2019	End of 2019
Review of international policy and best practise in sustainable tourism	End of 2019
The Search and Rescue Framework Review	July 2019
Examination on the performance of Irish Aviation Authority in regard to technical and safety standards of aircraft and air navigation.	July 2019
Review of public transport policy to ensure services are sustainable into the future and meet the needs of a modern economy	2020
Economic Review of the Aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) and related enterprise sector in Ireland.	30 May 2019
The Munitions of War (MW) Internal Review.	Q4 2019
Alternative Fuel Bus Trial	July 2019
Mitigation of Air Pollution Impacts of Irish Heavy Duty Vehicles (MAP-HDV)	Q2 2020

Title or Description	Scheduled date of completion
Desktop study to assess potential mitigation measures that would reduce CO2 and/or air pollutant emissions from the existing Irish heavy duty vehicle fleet.	Q2 2020
DiSTRaCT: modal shift Reduce Carbon in Transport	Q2 2020
Examine the extent to which Eco Driving Techniques can limit greenhouse gas emissions from heavy duty vehicles (HDVs)	Q2 2020
Alternative Fuel Bus Trial	July 2019
TN-ITS GO – Digital map for Intelligent Transport Systems.	31st December 2019.
Review of Public Transport Policy to ensure services are sustainable in the future and meeting the needs of a modern economy.	2020
Current Practice and Safety Indications of Electric Mobility Devices	7th June 2019

Departmental Reports

598. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27920/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Policy documents and strategies published by my Department are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.dttas.ie/%3Cfront%3E>

Each of the sectors within the Department are listed across the top of the Department's Home page and within each sector, a publication tab is located on the left hand side of the relevant page.

The initial publication and updated dates of the publications are also available on the website. If further assistance is required locating any particular document, please contact my private office at Minister@dttas.gov.ie.

Airlines Regulations

599. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the issue of potentially unfair commercial advantage for an airline (details supplied) and market distortion issues were considered before a decision was made in relation to the recently issued permit for the airline to operate a service between Dublin and Madrid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27921/19]

608. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a permit has been issued to an airline (details supplied) to operate a service between Dublin and Madrid under the fifth freedom provisions; if his attention has been drawn to concerns of Irish-based pilots to the effect that this potentially confers an unfair commercial advantage on the airline in view of its low cost base; his views on whether this could result in serious competitive distortions; his further views on whether the route is already well served by three EU airlines; if Dublin Airport has the capacity to deal with these extra flights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28048/19]

610. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason his Department has issued a permit for a company (details supplied) to operate under the fifth freedom between Dublin and Madrid; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that fifth freedom rights can often result in serious competitive distortions for EU aviation services that

often cannot compete with non-EU airlines; if an analysis on same has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28128/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 599, 608 and 610 together.

The Ireland - Ethiopia Bilateral Air Services Agreement, signed in 2014, allows for the granting of fifth freedom air traffic rights for airlines of both countries, on a reciprocal basis and subject to the approval of the relevant aeronautical authorities.

Ethiopian Airlines applied to both the Spanish and Irish aeronautical authorities in 2018 for approval of their Addis Ababa - Madrid - Dublin (return) route. Following confirmation of approval by the Spanish Aeronautical Authorities and having consulted with Irish air carriers, the Department authorised the route as it conformed with the rights provided under the Air Services Agreement.

Ireland traditionally has a liberal aviation policy and remains positively disposed towards the development of competitive air services. In that context, my Department will continue to consider applications for fifth freedom air traffic rights under bilateral air services agreements, on a case-by-case basis.

Rail Services Data

600. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times the lifts at Skerries train station have broken down since 1 January 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27960/19]

601. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent to repair the lifts at Skerries train station since 1 January 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27961/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 600 and 601 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. The operation of the rail network and stations on the network, including lifts at train stations, is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance.

In view of Iarnród Éireann's responsibility in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services

602. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied Skerries train station is a suitable train station for persons with disabilities or mobility issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27962/19]

604. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the contingency plans in place at Skerries train station for persons with disabilities when the lifts break down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27964/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 602 and 604 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport.

The issues raised by the Deputy are operational matters for Irish Rail and I have forwarded your questions to the company for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Rail Services

603. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if work will take place to make safe and reopen the pedestrian tunnel at Skerries train station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27963/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. Issues such as those referred to by the Deputy are primarily a matter for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance, albeit that specific issues may fall outside the company's direct responsibility.

I have therefore referred the Deputy's question to Iarnród Éireann for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Question No. 604 answered with Question No. 602.

Bus Éireann Staff

605. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of drivers employed by Bus Éireann who retired from the company in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by county, in tabular form; the number of drivers hired as their direct replacements; his views on concerns that the failure to replace retired Bus Éireann drivers responsible for driving school routes has resulted in a reduced capacity that has had to be filled by private bus operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27995/19]

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.

Driver Licence Applications

606. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a letter of entitlement from the Government of New Zealand in relation to the driving qualifications of a person (details supplied) was not accepted as proof that he or she is properly qualified to drive a manual car; the reason he or she was not granted an Irish driver licence for a manual car; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28001/19]

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 10 days.

Road Projects Status

607. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 258 of 27 March 2019, the status of the road project; the engagement with the local authority on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28046/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under the Specific and Strategic Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis with reference to the Public Spending Code and the Capital Appraisal Framework and taking account of available budgets. All appraisals are assessed taking competing projects and the overall regional and local road capital budget into account.

As regards the Letterkenny Southern Relief Road, following consultation between the Department and the Local Authority, a revised draft Appraisal has now been received from Donegal County Council and is currently under review.

Question No. 608 answered with Question No. 599.

Bus Services

609. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the timetable will be released for a bus service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28088/19]

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. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport.

The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Question No. 610 answered with Question No. 599.

Tourism Project Funding

611. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the promotion of Grianán of Aileach will be considered for funding under the platforms for growth initiative of Fáilte Ireland as an immersive heritage cultural attraction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28131/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department’s role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy. While my Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism promotion and development, it is not directly involved in individual tourism projects or programmes and has no role in the administration of the agency’s grant programmes.

I understand that Fáilte Ireland already promotes the Grianán of Áileach as a “must-see” destination in the region and that it has further plans to maximise the potential of this ancient site through its strategic partnership with the OPW and also in the context of overall plans for the Inishowen Peninsula.

I have asked Fáilte Ireland to respond directly to the Deputy with further information on its Platforms for Growth initiative and recent call for proposals under the “Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions” platform; current and planned promotion of the Grianán of Áileach site; and wider plans to maximise the potential of this site. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

612. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Virginia bypass road project. [28203/19]

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, design 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 the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Maternity Services

613. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the result of a trialled baby box for new parents; and her plans to roll out the scheme nationally. [27536/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The First 5 Strategy was published in November of last year, followed in May of this year by the Implementation Plan for the first phase of implementation in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

First 5 outlines Government’s intention to pilot the development and implementation of Baby Boxes and Book Bags initiatives to support parenting with a focus on parent-baby bonding, information on baby development and early learning and promotion of baby safety.

Baby Boxes are packages of items and information to assist with the transition to parenthood including safety items, baby clothes, small toys, baby toothbrushes, and books to support early development. The intention behind Baby Boxes is to welcome a new arrival to a family, acknowledging this very significant moment for parents.

As indicated in the Implementation Plan, an oversight group will be established later this year to lead the development of the pilot and scope the project to prepare for implementation and evaluation.

While resourcing has been secured through the Dormant Accounts Fund to progress the pilot, the pilot has not yet begun so no results are yet available. As indicated in the Implementation Plan, it is intended that the pilot design will be agreed in 2020 and underway, along with the evaluation, in 2021.

The pilot will consult to determine items for inclusion in the pack. Baby Boxes offer the opportunity to communicate important child development and safety messages and is an early opportunity to link with parents in need of support services.

The results of the evaluation will inform any plans about wider roll-out.

Family Resource Centres

614. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an application has been received from an organisation (details supplied) to become a family resource centre; if the application will be approved in view of the invaluable services provided by the organisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27579/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme is administered by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Applications to join the FRC Programme are a matter for Tusla. I have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

In 2019, I secured an additional €1.5 million in funding for Tusla to develop and invest in existing Family Resource Centres. Currently, there are no plans to establish additional Family Resource Centres this year.

Tusla has identified, and continues to monitor the need for family support services in certain areas of the country. In accordance with its Commissioning Strategy, Tusla continuously seeks to assign resources to areas of greatest need.

Tusla will continue to work with Family Resource Centres and other family support organisations throughout the country and will discuss service needs and funding resources with centres, where appropriate. Tusla is committed to using all available resources for children and families in the most efficient, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.

Departmental Funding

615. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will review the decision to withdraw funding from a charity (details supplied); if Tusla funding will be reinstated to the service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27787/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2018, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency provided funding of €3,200 to the service referred to by the Deputy for the provision of child counselling services. This level of funding will be maintained this year. Tusla does not commission this particular service for the provision of support services to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and has never done so.

Tusla currently provides funding to two domestic violence services in the Donegal area, (1) Donegal Women's Domestic Violence Service and (2) Donegal Women's Centre. Donegal Women's Domestic Violence Service is the primary organisation delivering domestic violence support services across Co. Donegal, including Inishowen.

In 2018, Tusla provided over €650,000 for the provision of domestic violence services in Donegal. Tusla has advised my Department that it is not seeking to commission additional domestic violence services in Co. Donegal at this time. Tusla believes that funding additional organisations in Donegal would lead to duplication of service provision and a risk of fragmen-

tation of services, particularly where organisations provide similar services in the same geographical area.

I appreciate the concerns of service users of Lifeline Inishowen. I have been assured by Tusla that services for children and families in Inishowen that are affected by domestic violence will continue to be provided by other funded service providers in County Donegal, including counselling.

Tusla acknowledges that accessibility is an issue for many service users in rural areas, and supports organisations to develop and enhance outreach services in order to improve service access.

Many organisations have moved from a clinic-based response to more flexible responses where arrangements are made to meet service users at times and locations that are safe and convenient for them. Tusla has advised that both Tusla-funded domestic violence support services in Donegal are flexible in their approach in order to ensure services are accessible to service users throughout the county.

Sexual violence services in Donegal are provided by Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre. In 2018, Tusla provided €230,000 to Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre. With the additional 10% funding allocation to Rape Crisis Centres nationally, 2019 funding to the organisation is expected to be €251,500.

At all times, the key priority of Tusla is to ensure the needs of victims and survivors are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Domestic Violence

616. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of persons who accessed domestic violence services in County Donegal by service in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27788/19]

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.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on the matter raised with regard to the number of persons that accessed services in County Donegal by service within the specified time periods.

Departmental Reviews

617. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by her; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27876/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A full list of live studies, reviews and research currently being undertaken by staff in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, or being carried out under commission from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, is provided in the following table. Also included are the scheduled completion

dates for these pieces of work.

Name of study, review or research	Scheduled completion date
A Landscape Analysis and Research and Data Gap Analysis in Respect of LGBTI+ Youth.	Dec-2019
A Process Evaluation of a Pilot Bursary Payment Scheme and Survey of Participants for Participation in Two Continual Professional Development Courses by Early Years Practitioners	Q4 2019
An Appraisal of the Development of an Integrated Service to Reduce Trauma Being Experienced by Children and Their Families as a Result of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)	Sep-2019
Bluetown Local Case Study to Examine the Role of a Criminal Network in Negatively Affecting Children's Offending Behaviour	Q4 2019
Data Protection Advice and Support Services in Relation to the National Childcare Scheme	Feb-2020
Early Years Service Profile (Annual)	Q4 2019
Ensuring the Collaborative Reform of Youth Justice in Ireland in Line with International Research and Evidence Based Approaches	Q2 2020
Focussed Policy Assessment of the ECCE Higher Capitation Payment	Q4 2019
Growing Up in Ireland; the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth in Ireland. Phase 2 (current contract)	Q4 2019
Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Pilot Bail Supervision Programme Funded by DCYA	Q4 2019
Independent Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare	Q3 2019
Information About Social Work Placements and Proposals to Inform the Development of a Guiding Framework	Sep-2019
LGBTI Youth Strategy Mid-Cycle Implementation Report	Dec-09
Mid-term review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020	Sep-2019
Organisation Review Including Design and the Development of an Implementation Plan	Jul-2019
Redtown Local Case Study to Examine the Role of a Criminal Network in Negatively Affecting Children's Offending Behaviour	Q4 2019
Review and Consultation on the Potential Introduction of Open or Semi-Open Adoption in Ireland	Nov-2019
Review of Area Profile, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement	Sep-2019
System Code Review in Respect of the DCYA Early Years Platform/National Childcare Scheme	Aug-2019
'Audit of School Age Childcare services' through the City and County Childcare Committees.	Jul-2019

Departmental Reports

618. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the documents published by her Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27900/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information requested is currently being collated by my Department and will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as it is finalised.

Guardian's Payment

619. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the

steps which can be taken to resolve a matter in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28060/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy may be aware that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on individual cases.

I can advise that an application can be made for a Guardianship Payment to the Department of Employment and Social Protection. This payment may be appropriate if a child, who is an orphan or abandoned, is being cared for on a full time basis by adults who are not their parent/guardian.

I hope you find this helpful.

Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes

620. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to review the situation by which the childcare provider is deemed to be the employer and therefore liable for holiday pay, PRSI and so on for persons providing services under the AIM programme as part of ECCE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28061/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme. AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school service. It offers tailored, practical supports based on need and does not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

Level 7 of AIM provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE programme. In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider, which can be used by the pre-school provider either to reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room (enabling the provider to reduce the number of children in the room without impacting on the provider's total income) or to buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Accordingly, Level 7 assistance is a shared resource for the pre-school setting.

The funding is disbursed to the pre-school provider, through Pobal, who are charged with administration of DCYA programmes. There are restrictions on the use to which AIM funding can be put, as is only right and appropriate to guidelines on grant funding and use of public money. Pre-school providers are awarded AIM Level 7 funding as a result of an assessment carried out by an Early Years Specialist, and guidance and support on how best to utilise the funding may be provided. However, as with all DCYA Early Learning and Care funding programmes, the pre-school provider is the employer of the staff who work in the setting. It is therefore for the pre-school provider to take all necessary steps to ensure they are meeting their legal obligations as an employer.

First 5, the Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, includes a commitment to review the funding model for the Early Learning and Care sector, under which employers will be supported to provide more favourable working conditions to attract and retain staff. The new funding model will leverage additional investment for certain criteria, for example, better pay, or full implementation of the curriculum. It is envisaged that this may open alternative mechanisms by which the State could incentivise services to meet national standards in relation to wages and/or working conditions.

Childcare Services Regulation

621. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will review a situation in view of the operational and administrative difficulties that arise in which a childcare provider (details supplied) in County Cork has been requested to have two separate registration numbers even though the facilities offered are provided by the same service and at the one address; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28066/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As per my Department's rules for childcare funding programmes, each building must have a unique reference number:

“All facilities/locations operated by a service must have an individual DCYA reference number and children must attend the facility/ location in which they are registered.”

Each building must also be inspected by Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate to ensure it meets all regulatory requirements. Officials from my Department have reviewed the service provider in question, it is my understanding that this service provider has two buildings in use, and as such each building is required to have a separate DCYA reference number.

Domestic Violence Services Funding

622. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding allocated to domestic violence emergency refuges accommodation for 2019. [28141/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

The allocation of resources to individual services is an operational matter for Tusla. I have asked Tusla to respond to the Deputy directly with the requested figures.

Since becoming Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I have secured additional resources for domestic sexual and gender based violence services. This year, funding for the further investment and development of these services has increased by €1.5 million. A proportion of this funding will allow for:

- 12 new outreach workers for women and children affected by domestic violence to improve access to support and services.

- The roll out of a 12 week healing programme for children who have been impacted by domestic abuse which also helps parents/guardians to understand their child's experiences and support their recovery.

It is important that the needs of victims of domestic violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services. I am committed to supporting Tusla in meeting the needs of individuals who experience domestic violence.

Planning Guidelines

623. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of meetings he has had with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

and his officials regarding the revised rural housing guidelines; and if he has made a policy submission regarding the issue. [27519/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that I have not had any meetings with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, or his officials, on the issue of revised rural housing guidelines. My Department has not made any policy submissions on this issue.

Western Development Commission Funding

624. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the current and capital allocations in each of the years 2016 to 2019 to the Western Development Commission in tabular form. [27600/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established on a statutory footing under the Western Development Commission Act, 1998. The main aim of the Commission is to promote, foster and encourage economic and social development in the Western Region, covering counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare.

The Exchequer allocations for the Western Development Commission in each of the four years from 2016 to 2019 inclusive are detailed in Table 1. The figures reflect the published Revised Estimates Volume for the years in question.

In addition to its Exchequer allocation, the WDC manages the Western Investment Fund (WIF) which provides loans and equity to businesses and local communities in the West. The WDC currently has €48 million available for investment and lending under this Fund.

An additional €500,000 was allocated to the WDC this year to enable the Commission to appoint extra resources to maximize the use of the WIF and to support the co-ordination of the Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative. This additional allocation reflects the important and expanding role of the WDC in contributing to the Government's regional policy objectives under Project Ireland 2040, and in progressing the economic and social development of the Western region in particular.

Table 1 – REV allocations 2016-2018, Western Development Commission

Year	Current€000	Capital€000	Total€000
2016	1,488	1,000	2,488
2017	1,495	1,000	2,495
2018	1,516	-	1,516
2019	2,028	-	2,028

Departmental Reviews

625. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27889/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is currently undertaking six live studies, including reviews and research. The details are provided in the following table.

Name of Study/Review/Research undertaken or commissioned	Date scheduled to be completed
Guidance document on potential environmental issues of the infrastructural rollout of the National Broadband Plan. (External)	Q4 2019
Review of Local Community Development Committees	July 2019
Review of Community Services Programme (External)	September 2019
Review of Dog Breeding Establishment Act 2010	2020
Review of measures in relation to the Control of Dogs in Ireland	2020
SICAP pre-employment supports. (ESRI)	Q1 2020

Departmental Reports

626. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27919/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established on 19 July 2017 and has published the following policy documents and strategies from 2017 to-date.

-	Department of Rural and Community Development Name of current policy documents or strategies	Year of publication
1	Review of Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) programme and the Communities Facilities Scheme	2018
2	Review of Dog Breeding Establishment Guidelines	2018
3	Social Inclusion and Community Activation (SICAP) Programme Requirements	2017
4	Realising our Rural Potential: The Action Plan for Rural Development	2017
5	Review of the Administration of Dormant Account Fund	2018
6	Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities	2018
7	Statement of Strategy	2018

Departmental Advertising Expenditure

627. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure and planned expenditure on local radio stations in relation to promoting the working families payment during 2019; when each campaign commenced; and the amount spent or planned to be spent in respect of each local radio station in tabular form. [27459/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is currently running a nationwide information campaign to promote the Working Family Payment. The campaign began on Monday, 10 June, and includes advertising in national newspapers, “out of home” advertising in commuter locations such as train stations and on Luas, on local and national radio stations, and on digital and social media.

Promotional campaigns are an important part of how we ensure our customers are informed of the schemes and supports to which they may be entitled. In this instance, we want to ensure our customers are informed about the Working Family Payment, particularly working families on low to moderate incomes who may not realise they qualify for the payment.

Public information campaigns are targeted carefully, using the best mix of media formats, to ensure that the Department's messages reach members of the public effectively. Advertisements on local radio are an important part of this and help to ensure a good regional reach for the campaign.

Wavemaker, the Department's contracted media buying agency, buys local and regional radio slots on a package basis across IRS and Urban Media (details in the following table). This is to obtain the best value while obtaining strong national reach.

My Department has yet to be invoiced for this advertising activity. The projected expenditure on local and regional radio for this campaign from the Working Family Payment media plan is detailed in the following table:

Station Bundles	Dates	Planned Expenditure (ex. VAT)
IRS (Clare FM, East Coast, Highland Radio, KCLR, Radio Kerry, KFM, Midlands 103, MWR, Ocean FM, Radio Nova, SS/NS, South East, Sunshine, Tipp FM)	Week 1: June 17-3 Week 2: July 1-7	€11,500
URBAN MEDIA (FM104, LMF, Galway, Limerick Live, WLR, Cork 96/103, Q102)	Week 1: June 10-16 Week 2: June 17-23	€11,628

My Department does not currently have further promotional activity planned in relation to the Working Family Payment.

Widow's Pension Eligibility

628. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is entitled to a pension under the contributions of their late spouse. [27495/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In order to assess a person's entitlement to a widow(er)'s or surviving civil partner's (contributory) pension examined, a completed application form must be submitted to my Department. To facilitate the person making a claim, an application form has been posted to them for completion and return to Widow(er)'s or Surviving civil partner's (contributory) pensions, Social Welfare Services, College Road Sligo. Application forms are also available for download from the Department's website www.welfare.ie.

On receipt of a completed application received, the entitlement of the person concerned will be examined and they will be notified of the outcome without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

629. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27502/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was

2 July 2019

registered in that office on 25 April 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications Waiting Times

630. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to reduce the waiting time for persons that are waiting for applications for disability allowance to be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27538/19]

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.

In general, social welfare schemes with a number of complex qualifying conditions can take longer to process. Before a decision can be made on entitlement to disability allowance (DA), evidence must be provided in respect of the person's medical condition, the extent to which it restricts them from taking up employment, their means and their habitual residency.

In May 2019, the average waiting time for new DA applications was 14 weeks. The claim processing target for DA is to process 75% of claims within 12 weeks. Staff are being redeployed within the DA area to assist with claims processing.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Applications

631. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a partial capacity benefit application by a person (details supplied). [27557/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has not received an application for Partial Capacity Benefit from the person concerned.

An application form has been sent to her for completion and upon its return it will be processed as soon as possible.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

632. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on the provision of a hot nutritious meal to each schoolchild; if a small

grant scheme for schools for this purpose will be considered in discussions on Budget 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27563/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As part of Budget 2019, I announced that my Department would commence a pilot scheme from September 2019, providing Hot School Meals in 36 primary schools for an estimated 7,200 children at a cost of €1m for 2019 and €2.5 m in 2020.

All 3,239 primary schools have been issued with an invitation to submit an expression of interest to participate in the pilot. Schools will be selected having regard to geographical spread, numbers enrolled, range of suppliers and the overall budget available for the pilot in 2019 and 2020 (€1m and €2.5 respectively).

Expanding the scheme beyond the current pilot would have to be considered as part of budget negotiations. Furthermore, proposals to extend the pilot will be contingent on an evaluation of pilot outcomes. To the extent that these will be largely driven by a differential analysis of educational outcomes in pilot vs non-pilot schools the Department of Education and Skills and the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) will need to be involved in establishing an evaluation framework and timeframe.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

633. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an affidavit is acceptable documentation advising on the separation of a couple in circumstance in which a couple is separated and documentation is requested from her Department. [27572/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Yes, an affidavit is acceptable documentation advising on the separation of a couple in circumstance in which a couple is separated.

For a person to qualify as a separated in order to qualify for the One Parent Family Payment s/he must have been living apart from his/her spouse/civil partner for at least 3 months.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

634. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [27587/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 29 May 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

I wish to confirm to the Deputy that the appeal case file provided to the Appeals Officer includes the medical evidence to which he refers.

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

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

635. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27667/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this lady on 28 February 2019.

On 5 June 2019 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. A further information request issued on 17 June 2019 requesting details regarding maintenance.

If the person concerned wishes to submit evidence from the courts detailing the amount of maintenance which has been actually received by her over a period of time, the means for DA can be assessed based on these details.

On receipt of this information a decision will be made on her DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

636. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27669/19]

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 10 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.

JobPath Data

637. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the types of employment commenced through JobPath; the number of job starts that are part-time and full-time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27676/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The primary purpose of JobPath is to provide a case management based employment advice and counseling service to long-term unemployed jobseekers. This is the group of jobseekers facing

the most significant barriers to secure and sustain full-time employment.

Between July 2015 and May 2019, some 227,590 jobseekers had commenced their engagement period with the JobPath service. Of this number, 52% were unemployed for over three years. These groups face significant barriers when seeking to enter or return to employment in the open labour market.

To date, some 51,818 jobseekers have commenced employment during their engagement period with JobPath. Of this number, 46,155 had commenced full-time employment and 5,663 had commenced part-time employment. Many clients who are currently engaged with JobPath are still in the first phase of the service and have not had sufficient time with the service to have gained employment. Performance will improve as more clients complete their engagement with the service.

My Department does not maintain statistics on the specific types of employment commenced through JobPath. However the recent econometric review of JobPath noted that the weekly employment earnings of people who secured employment with the JobPath service are 17% higher than the weekly employment earnings of people who secured employment without the support of JobPath in 2018. Taken with the 26% improvement in employment outcomes in the same period, it means the overall positive employment/earnings impact is 37% in 2018 for those who are supported by the JobPath service. These findings indicate that jobseekers who engage with JobPath are more likely to get a positive employment outcome than those jobseekers who aren't supported by the service.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

638. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases brought to the scope section; the number of these cases which were investigated; the number of these cases in which fault was found for each of the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27677/19]

639. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the length of time it takes for a decision to be made following an investigation being carried out by the scope section. [27678/19]

640. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of ongoing cases being investigated by the scope section; the average time these cases have been ongoing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27679/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 638 to 640, inclusive, together.

I am committed to address the issue of false self-employment, and I have put in train a series of measures to deter, detect and tackle it. A key element is the increased focus by Social Welfare Inspectors on the enforcement of PRSI compliance obligations. Inspectors nationwide have commenced a campaign of employer inspections and a new unit is being established to focus specifically on the area of false self-employment.

Deliberate mis-classification of employment status is an offence with penalties on prosecution of up to three years imprisonment and/or fines up to €13,000 or twice the amount denied to the Social Insurance Fund as a result of the mis-classification, whichever amount is greater.

The new unit will ensure that cases of fraudulent mis-classification of employment status are prosecuted and that the full force of penalties are applied. To this end, led by my Department, the 2007 Code of Practice on Employment Status will reach the end of a comprehensive revision process next month. This Code will be a vital tool for employers and employees alike so they can be clear when a worker is genuinely self-employed. This document will be circulated to ICTU and IBEC for their input before it is published. In addition, Heads of Bill have already been drafted in order to place the revised Code on a statutory footing later this year.

The question of whether a worker is employed or self-employed is not always a simple one. The Courts have repeatedly stated that a decision must be made based on the specific facts of each case, having regard to key tests such as the level of control a would-be employer has over the worker and the level of obligation they have towards each other.

My strong view is that this is a far better mechanism than trying to capture in legislation a definition that can never be black and white.

I have instructed my officials to also explore a range of legislative proposals to complement the increased inspection work that will be key to the long term success of this project. These proposals include 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; and an increase in penalties for employers who deliberately mis-classify employees as being self-employed.

Most of the cases referred to Scope Section cover matters such as modified classes of PRSI for civil and public servants, family employments and the insurability of Directors. However, I understand the Deputy's questions refer primarily to cases where the insurability of a worker as being either employed or self-employed is to be determined and, in particular, where false self-employment has been found.

Of all the cases referred to Scope, the number involving the mis-classification of an employee as self-employed constitute a small proportion. A breakdown of cases is not available pre 2018 as the historic database in use in Scope did not allow this categorisation.

Number of all cases referred for Scope decision

Year	All cases referred	All cases decisions made	Employed/self-employed decisions made
2017	1,473	1,065	Not available
2018	2,067	1,339	73
2019 (to end May)	879	575	59

The following statistics show the number of such decisions made and the length of time within which the decisions were made:

Number of cases in sub-category of Employed/Self-Employed (Decision Made)

Decision made within	2018	2019 (to end May)
Under 3 months	33	31
3-6 months	14	9
6-12 months	23	16
Over 12 months	3	3
Total decisions made	73	59

These cases do not always involve a deliberate fraudulent mis-classification of a worker as

self-employed. Sometimes it happens that both employer and employee are genuinely mistaken in their approach and are happy to correct the position once the Department's officials make a determination.

There are currently approximately 142 cases on hands in Scope Section that involve employee/self-employed investigations. The duration of these investigations is will very from case to case, depending on the issues involved. Most of these cases are complex and require referral to a Social Welfare Inspector who will interview the relevant parties at local level and send his/her report on the matter back to Scope Section.

I hope this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

641. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has established regulatory mechanisms to monitor and invigilate employment rights compliance in all publicly funded infrastructural capital projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27685/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Ireland has a comprehensive body of employment legislation, in respect of which the Workplace Relations Commission, which comes under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Ms. Heather Humphries T.D., is mandated to secure compliance.

Ireland's employment rights legislation protects all employees, including those employed on publicly funded infrastructural capital projects, who are legally employed on a contract of service basis. This is specifically set out in Section 20 of the Protection of Employment (Part Time Work) Act 2001.

Where an individual believes they are being deprived of employment rights applicable to employees they may refer a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) where the matter can be dealt with by way of mediation or adjudication leading to a decision that is enforceable through the District Court. Complaints can be made on a single online complaint form available at the WRC's website www.workplacerelements.ie.

Ireland also has a well-resourced and proactive labour inspectorate, which forms part of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The WRC undertakes inspections on the basis of risk analysis, which identifies certain sectors as a result of complaints received and on a routine basis.

It is important that any person with questions or complaints regarding their rights under employment law should contact Workplace Relations Customer Service on lo-call 1890 80 80 90 or at www.workplacerelements.ie

There are, separately, strict rules governing public procurement, responsibility for which rests with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Mr. Paschal Donohoe T.D.

I am committed to address the issue of false self-employment, and I have put in train a series of measures to deter, detect and tackle it. A key element is the increased focus by Social Welfare Inspectors on the enforcement of PRSI compliance obligations. Inspectors nationwide have commenced a campaign of employer inspections and a new unit is being established to

focus specifically on the area of false self-employment.

Deliberate misclassification of employment status is an offence with penalties on prosecution of up to three years imprisonment and/or fines up to €13,000 or twice the amount denied to the Social Insurance Fund as a result of the misclassification, whichever amount is greater. The new unit will ensure that cases of fraudulent misclassification of employment status are prosecuted and that the full force of penalties are applied. To this end, led by my Department, the 2007 Code of Practice on Employment Status will reach the end of a comprehensive revision process next month. This Code will be a vital tool for employers and employees alike so they can be clear when a worker is genuinely self-employed. This document will be circulated to ICTU and IBEC for their input before it is published. In addition, Heads of Bill have already been drafted in order to place the revised Code on a statutory footing later this year.

The question of whether a worker is employed or self-employed is not always a simple one. The Courts have repeatedly stated that a decision must be made based on the specific facts of each case, having regard to key tests such as the level of control a would-be employer has over the worker and the level of obligation they have towards each other.

My strong view is that this is a far better mechanism than trying to capture in legislation a definition that can never be black and white.

I have instructed my officials to also explore a range of legislative proposals to complement the increased inspection work that will be key to the long term success of this project. These proposals include 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; and an increase in penalties for employers who deliberately mis-classify employees as being self-employed.

Scope Section of my Department undertakes investigations on foot of requests from a variety of sources, for example employees, employers or Social Welfare Inspectors. These investigations cover a variety of situations, for example, modified classes of PRSI for civil and public servants, family employments or insurability of Directors.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

642. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing payments (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27705/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The costings sought by the Deputy are detailed in the following tables.

Table 1: Cost of €1 increase in all social insurance payments

Scheme	Full year cost of a €1 increase
	€m
Social Insurance Schemes	
Pension Payments	
State Pension (Contributory)	22.45
Widow/er's Contributory Pension (Aged 66 and over)	4.98

Questions - Written Answers

Scheme	Full year cost of a €1 increase
	€m
Deserted Wife's Benefit (Aged 66 and over)	0.34
Death Benefit Pension (Aged 66 and over)	0.03
Working Age Payments	
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension	1.55
Deserted Wife's Benefit	0.15
Invalidity Pension	3.23
Partial Capacity Benefit	0.09
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	0.06
Disablement Pension	0.26
Illness Benefit	2.76
Injury Benefit	0.08
Incapacity Supplement	0.05
Jobseeker's Benefit	1.7
Carer's Benefit	0.14
Health and Safety Benefit	0.00
Maternity & Adoptive Benefit	1.03
Paternity Benefit	0.04
Total Social Insurance Schemes	38.94

Table 2: Cost of €1 increase in all social assistance payments

Scheme	Full year cost of a €1 increase
	€m
Social Assistance Schemes	
Pension Payments	
State Pension (Non Con)	5.03
Carer's Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	0.1
Half Rate Carer's Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	0.34
Working Age Payments	
Blind Pension	0.07
Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con) Pension	0.07
Deserted Wife's Allowance	0.00
One-Parent Family Payment	2.04
Carer's Allowance	2.22
Half Rate Carer's Allowance	0.59
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	0.03
Jobseeker's Allowance	7.83
Jobseeker's Allowance - for those aged 18 to 24 years of age	0.6
Jobseeker's Allowance - for those aged 25 years of age	0.09
Disability Allowance	7.94
Farm Assist	0.44
Back to Education Allowance	0.3
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	0.37
Community Employment	1.25

Scheme	Full year cost of a €1 increase
	€m
TÚS	0.37
Rural Social Scheme	0.22
Jobs Initiative	0.07
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	0.88
Total Social Assistance Schemes	30.85
Overall Total	69.79

The costs shown above are on a full year basis and are based on the estimated number of recipients in 2019. It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2020.

It should also be noted that these costings include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant.

Child Benefit Expenditure

643. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending the time limit for eligibility for a payment (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27707/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid, as of May 2019, to almost 634,000 families in respect of over 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

Given the universality of Child Benefit, extending entitlement to parents of full time students in second level education who are over 18 years of age would not be a targeted approach. The adoption of such a proposal would have significant cost implications and would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Families on low incomes may be able to avail of a number of social welfare schemes that support children in full-time education until the age of 22, including:

- Increase for a Qualified Child (IQCs) with primary social welfare payments;
- the Working Family Payment for low-paid employees with children;
- the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

These schemes provide targeted assistance that is directly linked to household income and thereby support low-income families with older children participating in full-time education.

Fuel Allowance Data

644. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending the number of months for a payment to be made (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27708/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The cost of extending the Fuel Allowance payment for the full calendar year would be €201.9 million.

To examine the impact of the measure on poverty rates, a social impact assessment has been carried out. This is an evidence-based methodology which estimates the likely distributive effects of this change on household income. The assessment uses a tax-welfare simulation model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) known as SWITCH (Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes). The model simulates the impact of changes in welfare and income tax for a representative sample of 9,770 households drawn from the 2013/2014/2015 CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions, with the data updated to reflect trends in population, employment and incomes.

The model estimates that the overall population at risk of poverty would fall by 0.2%, with a reduction in the rate of older people at risk of poverty by 1.5%.

Any change to the Fuel Allowance conditions would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Child Benefit Expenditure

645. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing a payment (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27709/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing Child Benefit by €10 would be €146.6 million.

To examine the impact of the measure on poverty rates, a social impact assessment has been carried out. This is an evidence-based methodology which estimates the likely distributive effects of this change on household income. The assessment uses a tax-welfare simulation model developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) known as SWITCH (Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes). The model simulates the impact of changes in welfare and income tax for a representative sample of 9,770 households drawn from the 2013/2014/2015 CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions, with the data updated to reflect trends in population, employment and incomes.

The model estimates that the overall population at risk of poverty would fall by 0.1% as a result of this measure. For children at risk of poverty, there would be a reduction of 0.2%.

Any increase to Child Benefit would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Community Employment Schemes Review

646. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend the community employment scheme objectives to allow for extensions of time beyond three years for older employees that have little chance of gaining full-time employment in the workforce (details supplied). [27717/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) is an employment and training scheme which helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. The scheme assists by enhancing and developing a person's technical and personal skills which can then be used in the workplace. The very significant improvement in the number of people in employment and concomitant reduction in unemployment is a strong testament to the Government's job creation and pathways to work strategies which is ensuring employment opportunities across all age groups and in all regions.

All CE participants age 55 and over can avail of 3 consecutive years on a CE scheme. As CE is intended to be a stepping stone to employment for participants rather than a long-term placement, there is an overall lifetime limit of participation on CE of 6 years from 1st January 2007 (7 years if on a disability payment).

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government agreed to establish an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to explore how social inclusion schemes might best be organised into the future including which Department should hold lead responsibility for sponsoring CE schemes focused on social Inclusion. The deliberations of the group will also inform any further consideration to review participation limits.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

647. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if consideration will be given to transferring responsibility for community employment schemes from employment affairs to community affairs in view of the community gain being provided by community employment schemes. [27719/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department operates a number of employment support schemes one of which is the Community Employment (CE) scheme.

I am fully committed, as are all of my Ministerial colleagues, to the future of these community services and the valuable contribution they make to local communities. We want to see them sustained. I believe that we need to take a wholly inclusive approach for people who participate in CE and to include an appropriate focus on their ongoing contribution to the provision of services in local areas.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government agreed to establish an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to explore how social inclusion schemes might best be organised into the future including which Department should hold lead responsibility for sponsoring CE schemes focused on social Inclusion. The Interdepartmental Group was charged with the task of examining the options in this regard and I expect to have a final report shortly.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

648. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay with the appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27720/19]

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 gentleman concerned on 05 April 2018. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 26 June 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review or appeal.

He requested a review of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of the review. Following a review of all the information available it was decided that there was no change to the original decision. He was notified on 05 December 2018 of the outcome of the review.

The gentleman concerned appealed the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) and submitted further medical evidence in support of his appeal. Following a review by a deciding officer of this medical evidence in conjunction with all information available to date, it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. A submission has been prepared by the department and forwarded to the SWAO for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Waiting Times

649. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the waiting times for appeal for all social welfare payments in tabular form. [27726/19]

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

All claim decisions taken by the Department's Deciding Officers and Designated Persons are appealable to the Chief Appeals Officer. In any year about 85% of all claims are awarded by the Department and just 1% are appealed. Nevertheless, the Department is concerned that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects a number of factors including that the appeals process is a quasi-judicial process with Appeals Officers being required to decide all appeals on a 'de-novo' basis. In addition, appeals decisions are themselves subject to review by the High Court and decisions have to be formally written up to quasi-judicial standards. Other factors that influence appeals processing times include the quality of the initial decision – in this respect the Department has changed the decisions process in respect of medical schemes, in order to provide more information to the claimant. I expect that this will help to reduce the number of appeals over time.

In addition, a considerable number of new Appeals Officers have joined the Appeals Office over the past 12-18 months, to replace staff leaving on retirement. Given the complexity of the appeals process it takes some time for new staff to be trained up and develop expertise and this has led to somewhat longer processing times during this period. The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times continue to be a priority for her Office.

Accordingly, significant efforts and resources have been devoted to reforming the appeal

process in recent years. As a result, appeal processing times in respect of all schemes improved between 2011 and 2017 from 52.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 26.4 weeks in 2017 and from 25.1 weeks for a summary decision in 2011 to 19.8 weeks in 2017. The corresponding processing times for the year 2018 were 30 weeks for an oral hearing and 24.8 weeks for a summary decision. There has been some improvement to date in 2019 with an oral hearing decision taking on average 28.2 weeks and a summary decision taking 23.3 weeks.

Finally, where a claimant has been refused a social welfare payment, regardless of the scheme involved, and is appealing that decision, if their means are insufficient to meet their needs it is open to them to apply for supplementary welfare allowance in the interim.

If their application for supplementary welfare allowance is refused, they can also appeal that decision. The supplementary welfare allowance appeal will be prioritised for attention within the Appeals Office as soon as the appeal file and submission is received from my Department.

The following table sets out the appeal processing times (for summary and oral hearing cases) for the various schemes for the first five months of 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appeal Processing Times by Scheme 1 January 2019– 31 May 2019

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	Nil	33.7
Blind Person's Pension	19.6	30.0
Carer's Allowance	26.5	29.2
Carer's Benefit	26.2	22.9
Child Benefit	33.0	35.0
Disability Allowance	15.8	20.9
Illness Benefit	32.6	32.3
Partial Capacity Benefit	34.5	46.9
Domiciliary Care Allowance	29.1	33.0
Deserted Wife's Allowance	20.4	Nil
Deserted Wife's Benefit	91.7 (1 case)	33.6
Farm Assist	29.2	33.2
Bereavement Grant	39.7	Nil
Working Family Payment	22.7	29.6
Invalidity Pension	26.6	28.2
Liabile Relatives	25.9	14.2
Maternity Benefit	33.5	31.6
Paternity Benefit	34.5	17.7
One Parent Family Payment	32.3	37.0
State Pension (Contributory)	34.9	47.0
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	36.1	39.3
Occupational Injury Benefit	32.3	56.6 (3 cases)
Disablement Pension	26.5	32.4
Incapacity Supplement	Nil	32.5
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	20.9	30.1
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	22.2	Nil
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	28.1	35.8

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Jobseeker's Allowance (Payments)	25.0	30.1
Back To Work Family Dividend	28.3	Nil
Jobseeker's Transitional	27.7	37.3
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	37.3	Nil
Jobseeker's Benefit	26.2	26.9
Carer's Support Grant	26.9	26.7
Insurability of Employment	63.7	72.4
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	19.2	26.9
Widow/Widower's Pension (Contributory)	35.9	31.0
Widow/Widower's Pension (Non-Contributory)	37.6	42.1
Widowed Parent Grant	34.7	Nil
All Appeals	23.3	28.2

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

650. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in switching a rent supplement payment to a new address in the case of a person (details supplied) who was previously in receipt of the payment and has submitted all documentation as requested; when payment will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27786/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The most recent rent supplement claim in respect of the person concerned was closed in October 2017. There is no record of any application for rent supplement since that date.

It is open to the person concerned to contact the South Kildare/West Wicklow Rents Unit should he wish to submit an application for a rent supplement payment. The Rents Unit can be contacted by telephone at 01 6732155, by post at Rents Unit, PO Box 1107, Newbridge, Co Kildare or by email at RentsSouthKildare@welfare.ie. The person concerned will need to complete form SWARS 1 and return it with relevant supporting documentation in support of his application.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Payments

651. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) is not in receipt of a full carer's payment. [27828/19]

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.

The person concerned is currently in receipt of CA since 11 April 2013 in respect of one care recipient. Her current weekly basic rate of payment is €156.50 plus and increase for one qualified child under 12 years of age of €17.00 totalling €173.50 per week.

2 July 2019

Full basic rate CA for a claimant under 66 years of age is currently €219.00 per week. The person concerned was initially assessed with means of €67.85 in 2013 which was derived from her spouse's income.

Once a CA claim is in payment, a person can at any stage request a review of their claim where they consider there is a change in their circumstances, including a change to their means, which could affect their rate of entitlement.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions

652. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which approved retirement funds, ARF, distributions are treated with regard to PRSI contributions and entitlement to the State pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27836/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Approved Retirement Funds or ARFs are funds managed by a qualifying fund manager into which an individual may invest the proceeds of their pension fund when they retire. The income and gains of such funds are exempt from tax within the fund. Any amounts withdrawn from an ARF are referred to as a distribution. A distribution is treated as income from an employment. It is subject to income tax and the fund manager must operate the PAYE system on it.

Under social welfare legislation any payments received by way of pension are not regarded as reckonable emoluments for the purposes of self-employed pay related social insurance (PRSI). However, unlike annuity products, ARFs are not pensions but are treated as assets. As such distributions from ARFs for people less than 66 years of age fall within the charge to Class S self-employed PRSI, or if the recipient of the distribution is a modified class contributor, Class K. Distributions and imputed distributions, after age 66 (current State Pension age), are not liable to Class S PRSI deduction. They are recorded under PRSI Class M for which there is a nil liability.

As the Deputy will be aware PRSI Class S contributors are covered for the State Pension (Contributory), Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (Contributory), Guardian's Payment (Contributory), Maternity & Adoptive Benefits, Paternity Benefit (since September 2016), Treatment Benefits (since March 2017) and Invalidity Pension (since December 2017). This Department is in the process of developing a new Jobseeker's Benefit for the Self-Employed scheme which will be introduced in November 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

653. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment will issue in respect of a recent allowed appeal for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27839/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, this lady has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 11 July 2018. The first payment will be made by her

chosen payment method on 17 July 2019.

Arrears of payment due, will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Eligibility

654. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the income disregard for carer's benefit from €332.50 for a single person and €665 for a married couple to €450 and €900 per week, respectively. [27841/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's Benefit is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for someone in need of full-time care and attention. A person may be eligible for Carer's Benefit if they have enough PRSI contributions. This and other care-related supports, such as the Carer's Allowance payment and the Carer's Support Grant, provide recognition and support for the valuable role of carers.

Carer's Benefit is payable for a maximum period of 104 weeks for each person being cared for. It can be taken in one block or in separate periods as long as the combined total does not exceed 104 weeks. The current weekly rate is €220.00. Where a person is caring for two or more care recipients, the rate of payment is increased by 50%.

At the end of May 2019, there were 2,724 carers in receipt of Carer's Benefit. An Increase for a Qualified Child was being made in respect of 824 children, 302 of whom are aged 12 years or more. Estimated expenditure on Carer's Benefit in 2019 is €37.83m

A person in receipt of Carer's Benefit may not take part in employment, self-employment, training or education courses outside the home for more than 15 hours a week. The maximum amount a person can earn is €332.50 per week. (€332.50 is the net income after deducting income tax, Universal Social Charge, PRSI, superannuation (pension payments), pension levy, union dues, subscriptions to Friendly Societies and any health insurance contract premium from total wages.)

With regard to Carer's Benefit the means/income of a spouse, civil partner or co-habitant of a carer would only be taken into account if claiming an increase for a child dependant (IQC). Therefore it is not possible to estimate the cost of increasing the income disregard for Carer's Benefit from €332.50 for a single person and €665 for a married couple to €450 and €900 per week respectively.

Carer's Allowance is a means tested payment, made to people who are providing full-time care and attention to elderly people or to people with disabilities and whose income falls below certain limits. The principal conditions for receipt of the allowance are that full time care and attention is required and being provided and that the means test which applies is satisfied.

The conditions attached to payment 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.

2 July 2019

The means test for Carer's Allowance is one of the most generous in the social protection system in that €332.50 of gross weekly income is disregarded in the calculation of means for a single person; the equivalent for someone who is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting is €665 of combined gross weekly income.

As of end of May 2019, there were 81,131 people in receipt of Carer's Allowance. The projected expenditure on Carer's Allowance in 2019 is almost €840 million.

With regard to Carer's Allowance, it is not possible to make a robust estimate of the costs requested on the level of additional programme costs using available administrative data, particularly as such a change would be highly sensitive to the income distribution in households at the time of implementation. However, analysis based on the SWITCH model (Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes) predicted an estimated cost in the region of €73 million, which, when income tax and Working Family Payment offsets are taken into account, produces an estimated net expenditure of €55 million.

Any changes to qualifying criteria for these schemes, including income disregards, would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Reviews

655. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by her; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27881/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled by my Department. It will be made available to her as soon as possible.

Departmental Reports

656. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the documents published by her Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27905/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): All documents published by my Department are on the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's comprehensive and user-friendly website *www.welfare.ie*. The full list of document published can be found at the following link.

http://m.welfare.ie/en/Pages/publications_home.aspx

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

657. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the free travel pass will be made an automatic entitlement for persons deemed unsuitable to drive by the national licensing authority (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28002/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 948,000 customers with direct eligibility. Following recent announcements in Budget 2019 the funding for the free travel scheme was increased by €5 million to a total of €95 million.

In general access to a free travel pass for those aged under 66 is linked to a person being in receipt of certain primary Social Protection payments such as disability allowance, invalidity pension, carer's allowance, blind pension and partial capacity benefit. In 1997 the free travel pass was extended to all registered blind people regardless of whether they qualify for the Department's blind person's pension or any other Social Protection payment. Blind people remain one of the only cohorts of people aged under 66 who can qualify for a free travel pass while not in receipt of a qualifying Social Protection payment.

Any possible extension to the eligibility criteria for free travel would have significant costs implications for the free travel scheme and would also require additional administrative processes to be put in place to adjudicate eligibility. Any decision to do so could only be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may award a travel supplement in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant. The supplement is intended to assist with ongoing or recurring travel costs that cannot be met from the client's own resources and are deemed to be necessary. Every decision is based on consideration of the circumstances of the case, taking account of the nature and extent of the need and of the resources of the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

658. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if reconsideration will be given to an extension of time on community employment schemes in the case of persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28003/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The persons concerned were originally approved for participation on Community Employment (CE) under the Part-Time Integration (PTI) option.

Under the PTI option, a person may be eligible to participate on CE for a maximum continuous period of two years. After the two year period elapses, they must leave the program and be on the live register for 12 months before re-qualifying for any additional participation on CE. Any further participation on CE is limited to a maximum lifetime duration of 3 years for persons under 55 years of age and 6 years for persons over 55 year of age.

The first person concerned will complete his 6th year on CE on the 27/9/2019 and will have reached the maximum eligible time on CE on this date. Unfortunately, he does not qualify for a further extension beyond this date.

The second person concerned will complete his 6th year on CE on the 16/8/2019 and will have reached the maximum eligible time on this date. However, as the participant is over 62

he can be considered for the ‘Special Stream 62 initiative. To qualify, the position must be approved by the Sponsor in the first instance and there must be vacancy on the scheme on the participants finish date i.e. 16/8/2019.

The Department’s activation services are available to the persons concerned, to work with them to ensure that the benefits of the experience and training they received during their time on CE are maximised. This process will help identify potential employment opportunities and offer support to them in overcoming any barriers to employment.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government agreed to establish an Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to explore how social inclusion schemes might best be organised into the future including which Department should hold lead responsibility for sponsoring CE schemes focused on social Inclusion. The Interdepartmental Group was charged with the task of examining the options in this regard and I expect to have a final report shortly.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

659. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the assisted technology grant for partially sighted and blind persons will be reviewed (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28005/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) does not operate an “assisted technology grant”. The Department of Education and Skills does administer an “Assistive Technology Grant” under the Assistive Technology scheme, where funding is provided to schools towards the cost of computers and specialist equipment which are required for educational purposes. Any funding to Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO) areas as mentioned in the Deputy’s question, is likely to come through the HSE, which is under the remit of the Department of Health.

However, this Department does administer the Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant (WEAG) under the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF). A range of employment support grants for people with disabilities and employers are provided under the RAF.

The fund is comprised of -

- Employee Retention Grant: The purpose of the Employee Retention Grant Scheme is to assist employers to retain employees who acquire an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on their ability to carry out their job.

- Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant: Where a person with a disability has been offered employment or is in employment, and requires a more accessible workplace or adapted equipment to do the job, funding / a grant will be provided by the department.

- Personal Reader Grant: If a person is blind or visually impaired and needs assistance with job-related reading, s/he may be entitled to a grant to allow him/her to employ a Personal Reader.

- Job Interview Interpreter Grant: A jobseeker who is deaf, hard of hearing or has speech impairment and is attending job interviews, may apply for funding to have a sign language interpreter or other interpreter to attend the interview with him/her. Funding can also be provided

to cover the costs of an interpreter during an induction period when starting work.

- Disability Awareness Support Scheme. This scheme is open to all organisations in the private sector and is available for raising the awareness of personnel at all levels and occupations. It may be regarded as grant support for staff development programmes that deal with disability etiquette. The purpose of this scheme is to assist the integration of people with disabilities into the workforce and to eliminate mistaken perceptions about people with disabilities and their capacity to be productive and effective colleagues and employees.

The Department intends to commence a focussed policy review of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund in 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

660. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full cost of the Christmas bonus for the past five years it was issued; the size of the bonus, for example, 85% or 100%; and if the bonus is included in the expenditure base in each year in tabular form. [28015/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Christmas Bonus payment is made to long-term social welfare recipients, such as pensioners, carers, people with disabilities, lone parents and long-term unemployed people who rely wholly or mainly on their social welfare payments for financial support.

The payment of a Christmas Bonus is a discretionary decision made by Government in the context of the annual Budget process and available resources. The level of payment made can vary annually and, in fact, was not paid at all in the period from 2009 to 2013.

The bonus was reinstated in 2014, initially at a rate of 25%, rising to 75% in 2015, 85% in 2016 and I am happy to say was paid at 100% in 2018.

The following table provides details of the percentage of Christmas bonus paid and its cost since it's reinstatement.

Year	Expenditure	Christmas Bonus
	€m	%
2014	€63.5	25%
2015	€197	75%
2016	€221	85%
2017	€219	85%
2018	€264.3	100%

The Revised Estimates do not include a specific allocation in respect of a Social Welfare Christmas Bonus. This is in line with the practice that such payments are funded based on the fiscal position at Budget time. For this reason, the expenditure does not go into the base for the following year, as the decision on whether to pay a bonus as well as the rate of that bonus depends on the projected end-year position.

Any decision taken regarding the payment of the Bonus has to be consistent with the legal requirements set out in the domestic Fiscal Responsibility Acts 2012 and 2013 and the targets

set for Ireland by the EU Stability and Growth Pact.

Equal Opportunities Employment

661. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to review and extend the workplace adaptation grant to those on community employment schemes, particularly for those that are vision impaired; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28030/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My department provides a range of grants and supports to assist both jobseekers with disabilities and employers to take appropriate measures to enable either a potential employee or existing employee with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. These include the:

- Disability Awareness Support Scheme (DASS)
- Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF), which encompasses -
 - Employee Retention Grant
 - Workplace Equipment / Adaptation Grant
 - Personal Reader Grant
 - Job Interview Interpreter Grant

The purpose of the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant (WEAG) is to increase the job opportunities for people with a disability by supporting any additional costs, related to the disability, incurred by private sector employers employing or retaining an employee with a disability or self-employed people with a disability. The general principles of the scheme are that it -

- applies only to the additional costs of adapting workplace equipment or of provision of equipment arising from the individual's disability. It should not be used to provide support usually provided by employers or supports required under legislation for employees who do not have a disability;

- is a contribution towards the cost of an adaptation or of equipment up to a current limit of €6,350. It can also be used to upgrade adaptive equipment which may have been funded previously. Application in excess of this sum will be considered on an individual basis up to a maximum of €9,523 if specialist training for the assistive technology is required;

- is not intended to meet the usual costs of setting up and running a business either for an employer or a self-employed person;

- will be treated as a grant; and
- may be used in part for training in the use of the grant-aided equipment.

Those eligible for receipt include -

- Any person with a disability who is about to take up employment with a private sector employer, change job as a result of re-deployment or promotion, or become self-employed, and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to undertake the duties required.

- Any person employed by a private sector employer who acquires a disability whilst in employment, whose employer is participating in the Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS), and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

- Any person with a disability who is employed by a private sector employer, whose condition deteriorates so that he/she requires new assistive technology or a further adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

The Community Employment (CE) scheme provides part-time employment and training opportunities in local communities for people in receipt of a long term Social Welfare payment as a stepping stone back to employment. It is important to note that community employment, does not, nor is it intended to, provide full-time sustainable employment. As CE projects are funded by the exchequer, participation on a CE scheme is not considered as private sector employment for the purpose of eligibility for WEAG.

The Department intends to commence a focussed policy review of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF) in 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

662. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) is in receipt of €270 rent supplement in view of the fact that the appropriate level of rent support for a person paying €500 per month in rent that is in receipt of an invalidity pension only is €361 per month; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28052/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised that the Rent Supplement claim is in payment based on the application and documentation submitted by the person concerned.

My Department has not been made aware of any change in circumstances. If there has been a change of circumstance, the person concerned should contact my Department to seek a review of their Rent Supplement payment.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

663. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to a carer's benefit application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28057/19]

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 16 April 2019.

The application was awarded to the person concerned with effect from 18 April 2019 when

2 July 2019

her carer's leave commenced. The first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 4 July 2019.

Arrears of benefit due from 18 April 2019 to 3 July 2019 will also issue to her bank account on 4 July 2019.

The person concerned was notified on 27 June 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

664. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in regard to an application for carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28058/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 11 January 2019.

It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have such disability that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of the application was examined and the deciding officer decided that the evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 21 March 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of her application.

The review is on-going and once complete; the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

665. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in regard to an application for disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28059/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 19 March 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted

in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 28 June 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent social welfare appeals office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

666. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in regard to an application for disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28064/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following the submission of further medical evidence by the person concerned, their case has been reviewed and they have been awarded disability allowance with effect from 2 May 2018. The first payment will be made on 10 July 2019.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Appeals

667. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment of partial capacity benefit will be made to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28065/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Partial Capacity Benefit allows a person who has been in receipt of Illness Benefit for six months or Invalidity Pension and who may not have full capacity for work, to return to employment and continue to receive a partial or full payment from the Department. The personal rate of payment is based on the assessment of the person’s restriction on capacity for work i.e. moderate, severe or profound, where the person retains 50%, 75%, or 100% of their payment respectively.

An application for Partial Capacity Benefit was received from the person concerned on the 13th December 2018. She was assessed as having a mild incapacity for work and therefore did not qualify for Partial Capacity Payment. She was notified of the decision on the 15th February 2019.

On request, the Department reviewed this decision and a second medical assessment resulted in her being considered as having a moderate incapacity for work which would satisfy the medical criteria for entitlement to Partial Capacity Benefit. A notification issued to her on the 29th May 2019 informing her of this.

However, as entitlement to Partial Capacity Benefit is dependent on a person having an underlying entitlement to either Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension and as the entitlement of the person concerned to Invalidity Pension is currently being reviewed, a decision on her Partial Capacity Benefit application cannot be made until this review is completed.

2 July 2019

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits

668. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a form will be signed by her Department (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28095/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The statutory Recovery of Certain Benefits and Assistance provisions enable the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to recover the value of certain illness-related social welfare payments from compensation awards made to persons as a consequence of personal injuries claims. The benefits are recovered from the compensator and not from the injured person.

An application for a statement of recoverable benefits was received by the Department on 18th June 2019 from AXA Insurance in relation to the person concerned. The application was processed on 24th June 2019.

A statement of recoverable benefits with covering correspondence was posted to AXA Insurance and a copy posted to the person concerned on 24th June 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

669. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when arrears in relation to a disability allowance will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28097/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This gentleman has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 16 January 2019. The first payment was made by his chosen payment method on 24 April 2019.

Arrears of payment due, were calculated to take account of overlapping payments, and have issued to the person concerned on 27 June 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Allowance Applications

670. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a carer’s allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28098/19]

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 8 February 2019.

It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have such disability that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of the application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 29 May 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Applications

671. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a working family payment application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28099/19]

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.

An application for WFP was received from the person concerned on 5 April 2019.

Their application has been referred to a local Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for further clarification.

On receipt of the completed report from the SWI their WFP application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified of the decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Eligibility

672. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason not all persons who have sight loss are eligible for the free travel scheme; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that 700 persons who use a service (details supplied) do not have sufficient vision to drive a car but are also not entitled to the free travel scheme; if the scheme can be extended to this cohort of persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28101/19]

674. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to examine and change the eligibility criteria for access to the free travel scheme to include those with a long-term eye condition which means their level of vision does not meet the criteria to get a driver licence in order that they avail of the free travel scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28108/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 672 and 674 together.

2 July 2019

The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 948,000 customers with direct eligibility. Following recent announcements in Budget 2019 the funding for the free travel scheme was increased by €5 million to a total of €95 million.

In general, access to a free travel pass for those aged under 66 is linked to a person being in receipt of certain primary Social Protection payments such as disability allowance, invalidity pension, carer's allowance, blind pension and partial capacity benefit. In 1997 the free travel pass was extended to all registered blind people regardless of whether they qualify for the Department's blind person's pension or any other Social Protection payment. Blind people remain one of the only cohorts of people aged under 66 who can qualify for a free travel pass while not in receipt of a qualifying Social Protection payment.

Any possible extension to the eligibility criteria for free travel would have significant costs implications for the free travel scheme and would also require additional administrative processes to be put in place to adjudicate eligibility. Any decision to do so could only be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may award a travel supplement in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant. The supplement is intended to assist with ongoing or recurring travel costs that cannot be met from the client's own resources and are deemed to be necessary. Every decision is based on consideration of the circumstances of the case, taking account of the nature and extent of the need and of the resources of the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Appeals

673. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when payment of a disability allowance claim will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28102/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, this gentleman has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 3 October 2018. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 17 July 2019.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Funding

675. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an equipment grant will be made available to community employment schemes to aid in the employment of blind and partially sighted persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28133/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a range of grants and supports to assist both jobseekers with disabilities and employers to take appropriate measures to enable either a potential employee or existing employee with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. These include the:

- Disability Awareness Support Scheme (DASS)
- Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF), which encompasses:

The purpose of the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant (WEAG) is to increase the job opportunities for people with a disability by supporting any additional costs, related to the disability, incurred by private sector employers employing or retaining an employee with a disability or self-employed people with a disability.

The general principles of the scheme are that it:

- applies only to the additional costs of adapting workplace equipment or of provision of equipment arising from the individual's disability. It should not be used to provide support usually provided by employers or supports required under legislation for employees who do not have a disability;

- is a contribution towards the cost of an adaptation or of equipment up to a current limit of €6,350. It can also be used to upgrade adaptive equipment which may have been funded previously. Application in excess of this sum will be considered on an individual basis up to a maximum of €9,523 if specialist training for the assistive technology is required;

- is not intended to meet the usual costs of setting up and running a business either for an employer or a self-employed person;

- will be treated as a grant; and

- may be used in part for training in the use of the grant-aided equipment.

Those eligible for receipt include:

- Any person with a disability who is about to take up employment with a private sector employer, change job as a result of redeployment or promotion, or become self-employed, and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to undertake the duties required.

- Any person employed by a private sector employer who acquires a disability whilst in employment, whose employer is participating in the Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS), and who requires assistive technology or an adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

- Any person with a disability who is employed by a private sector employer, whose condition deteriorates so that he/she requires new assistive technology or a further adaptation to the workplace in order to retain his/her employment.

The Community Employment (CE) scheme provides part-time employment and training opportunities in local communities for people in receipt of a long term Social Welfare payment as a stepping stone back to employment. It is important to note that community employment, does not, nor is it intended to, provide full-time sustainable employment. As CE projects are funded by the Exchequer, participation on a CE scheme is not considered as private sector employment for the purpose of eligibility for WEAG.

2 July 2019

The Department intends to commence a focused policy review of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF) in 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

676. **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. [28150/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 5 April 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this gentleman was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 27 June 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Gender Balance

677. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 96 of 25 June 2019, her plans to undertake a gendered analysis of full employment to establish the gap between male and female participation in the workforce separate from the Central Statistics Office. [28154/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There is no commonly agreed measure of what constitutes full employment for Ireland. The CSO is responsible for determining the employment and unemployment rates for the State, and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source of employment estimates in the State.

The CSO publishes detailed tables on the LFS on a quarterly basis, and these tables include a gender breakdown. The releases from the CSO are closely monitored by my Department, including the gender breakdowns of employment and unemployment.

Examples of breakdowns produced by the CSO include the Labour Market Participation Rates and the Unemployment Rates for men and women; the results from the last five LFS releases are shown in the following table.

		Q1 2018	Q2 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2018	Q1 2019
Male	Participation Rate	68.2	68.6	69.0	68.3	68.1
Female	Participation Rate	55.1	56.4	56.4	56.2	56.1
Male	Unemployment Rate	5.8	6.2	5.9	5.4	5.1
Female	Unemployment Rate	5.5	5.8	6.1	5.4	4.4

The latest LFS results show that over the year to Q1 2019, female labour market participation increased by 1%, while the female unemployment rate decreased by 1.1%. These are

both positive developments and highlight the increasing participation of women in the labour market.

The LFS is also used to monitor gender equality in the Labour Market at an EU level. This includes the overall unemployment rates of men and women, as well as analysis of the long-term unemployment rates of men and women. These are illustrated in the following table for the year 2018.

	EU average	Ireland
Male Unemployment	6.6	5.8
Female Unemployment	7.1	5.7
Male Long Term Unemployment	2.8	2.3
Female Long Term Unemployment	3.0	1.8

The CSO's Monthly Unemployment release also details the unemployment rate for men and women; in June 2019, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for women was 4.3% and 4.7% for men. This compares to June 2018, when the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 5.7% for women and 6.0% for men.

Female labour market participation is below that of males, but has increased year-on-year. The unemployment rate for females has fallen year-on-year, and at a faster rate than for men. The detail reported by the CSO in this regard provides great depth, breadth, and regularity of the statistics produced by CSO on gender participation and outcomes in the Labour Market.

Civil Registration Legislation

678. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 159 of 29 May 2019, the progress made in relation to the commencement of section 13 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014; the position that pertains to the recognition and recording here of death certificates issued in other jurisdictions in respect of Irish citizens who died abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28178/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The commencement of section 13 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 is subject to engagement by Civil Registration Service staff in the HSE with training that has been developed by the General Register Office of my Department. Officials from my Department are meeting this week with counterparts from the Department of Health and the HSE to progress the matter with a view to progressing early commencement of section 13 and subsequent implementation of the record of deaths abroad.

Disability Allowance Applications

679. **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. [28190/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

2 July 2019

(Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the evidence supplied in support of this person's application, his application for disability allowance (DA) was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. The person in question was notified in writing of this decision on 2 April 2019.

They requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional medical evidence for consideration on 12 April 2019.

When a decision is made on their review the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

680. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) has been requested for payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28195/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): A review of this gentleman's disability allowance (DA) was carried out and it was established that the person concerned had a reduced entitlement to disability allowance for the period 14/06/2000 to 06/08/2002. This resulted in an overpayment being raised against him.

On 27 August 2006, he was notified of this decision which included his right to a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office. No request was received in this case.

The Department is obliged to recoup any debt owing to it and the method of recovery, and negotiations regarding the amount recoverable, are dealt with under the Department's code of practice.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

681. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the review of PRSI contributions and possible application of homecaring credits to social contribution history resulting from same; her plans to ensure a person (details supplied) qualifies for the State pension (contributory) as part of the overall ongoing review within her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28257/19]

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.

Reviews commenced from 13 February 2019, the day after I signed the necessary Regulations which, together with provisions in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registrations

Act 2018, allows the increased payments to be made.

The person concerned applied for State pension (contributory) in January 2018 and was assessed as having 432 paid social insurance contribution. As their contributions fall short of the required 520 paid contributions, the claim was disallowed and the person was notified of this decision at that time.

The person concerned is currently the beneficiary of the maximum rate of Increase for qualified adult payment on their spouse's pension, which is currently equivalent to 90% of the maximum rate of pension. In addition, the option remains for the person concerned to apply for state pension (non-contributory). This is a means-tested payment, based on the person's share of household means, where the maximum rate payable equates to 95% of the maximum rate of state pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Overpayments

682. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an overpayment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will be reviewed in order to ascertain the reason they have been assessed with an overpayment due to a Departmental error; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28272/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned claimed Illness Benefit from 1st November 2018 to 16th December 2018 and nominated her employer as payee. She subsequently made a second Illness Benefit claim from 17th January 2019. This claim continues in payment to the person concerned as she elected that payment be made to herself in her application.

The person concerned was paid beyond the entitlement period to 23rd January 2019 on her first claim due to a processing system problem that has since been rectified. On the subsequent claim the person concerned was overpaid for the period 24th January to 20th March 2019 due to a duplicate payment issuing in error to the nominated bank account.

Arising from this, the person concerned was over issued €1,835.40, of which €746.40 was paid directly to her and €1,089.00 paid to her employer.

A letter issued to the person concerned on the 13th June 2019 outlining how she and her employer can refund the amounts overpaid.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Planning Issues

683. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a maximum permissible length for solar panels to be installed on commercial and residential buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27467/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, all development, unless specifically exempted under the Act or associated Regulations, requires planning permission. Section 4 of the Act and Schedule 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended,

set out various exemptions from the requirement to obtain planning permission. Any such exemptions are subject to compliance with any general restrictions on exemptions set out in the Act or the Regulations and to the specific conditions set out in each class of exempted development in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

With regard to exemptions for solar panels, Class 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection of a solar panel on, or within the curtilage of a house or any buildings within the curtilage of a house”, subject to certain siting and size conditions including that the “total aperture area of any such panel, taken together with any other such panel previously placed on or within the said curtilage, shall not exceed 12 square metres or 50% of the total roof area, whichever is the lesser”.

Class 56 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on a business premises or light industrial building, or any ancillary buildings within the curtilage of such premises or building, of solar panels (thermal collector or photovoltaic) subject to certain siting and size conditions including, that “the total aperture area of any such panels, taken together with any other such panels previously placed on or within the said curtilage, shall not exceed 50 square metres or 50% of the total roof area, whichever is the lesser”. Additional exemptions also exist under Class 56 for industrial buildings and associated ancillary buildings.

Furthermore, Class 18 of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on an agricultural structure, or within the curtilage of an agricultural holding, of solar panels (thermal collector or photo-voltaic)”, again subject to a number of conditions.

It is important to note that the total aperture area of a solar panel is only one of many conditions attached to these exempted development provisions.

Any development which falls outside of the conditions for exemption are subject to the planning process and as such are matters for individual planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála.

My Department is currently undertaking a review of the solar panel exemptions, in consultation with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and other key stakeholders, with a view to bringing forward amending Regulations, as may be required - for example, to reflect technical developments in the sector - in the latter part of 2019. As required under Planning legislation, any such proposed exempted development regulations must be laid in draft form before the Houses of the Oireachtas and receive a positive resolution from both Houses before they can be made.

Property Registration Authority

684. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will investigate with the Property Registration Authority the reason for the delay in registering designs (details supplied); if the authority will now expedite the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28129/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A service for Oireachtas members was introduced in 2006 through which information can be obtained on the current status of applications to the Property Registration Authority (PRA), such as the case referred to in this question. This provides a speedy, efficient and cost effective system through which the PRA can address such queries. This service can be contacted at reps@prai.ie.

Presidential Elections

685. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for the forthcoming referendum on extending the franchise for presidential elections. [28204/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan) : At its meeting on 5 February 2019, the Government agreed that the preferred option to be put to the people in a referendum to extend the franchise at Presidential elections is for an extension of the franchise to all citizens resident outside the State, including citizens resident in Northern Ireland. More recently, at a meeting of the Government on 11 June 2019, the general scheme of a Constitution Amendment Bill was approved for drafting and for circulation to the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, for pre-legislative scrutiny. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 27 June 2019 to waive pre-legislative scrutiny.

My Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade are currently working in close consultation with the Office of the Attorney General on the preparation of the necessary Constitution Amendment Bill. It is intended that a Bill will be brought to Government shortly for approval to initiate in the Dáil in accordance with Article 46.2 of the Constitution. The publication of the Bill will allow for the establishment of a Referendum Commission in good time and to allow for the holding of a referendum in October/November 2019, subject to the passage of the Bill by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Housing Data

686. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the social housing build and acquisition targets for 2020 and 2021. [27470/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The overall targets under Rebuilding Ireland for social housing build and acquisition, over the period 2020-2021, are as follows:

	2020	2021
Build	7,736	8,907
Acquisition	800	800

Data in relation to 2018-2021 overall targets and 2019 social housing targets on a local authority basis, across all delivery streams under Rebuilding Ireland, can be found on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/social-housing-targets-2019/>

Housing Assistance Payment

687. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on a report (details supplied) published by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission which highlights the way in which the Workplace Relations Commission process cannot be the solution for dealing with discrimination against persons on housing benefits; and if further initiatives to deal with the problem will be examined. [27471/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Housing Assistant Payment (HAP) scheme, eligible households source their own accommodation in the private rented sector. It should be noted that a landlord or an agent acting on behalf of a landlord is not legally obliged to enter into a tenancy agreement with a HAP recipient. However, on 1 January 2016, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 introduced “housing assistance” as a new discriminatory ground. This means that discrimination in the provision of accommodation or related service and amenities against people in receipt of rent supplement, HAP or other social welfare payments is prohibited. If a person feels that they have been discriminated against by a landlord or their agent, they can make a complaint under the Equal Status Acts to the Workplace Relations Commission.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) 2018 Annual Report states that it dealt with 1,711 queries from the public last year relating to the Equal Status Acts. 22% of these related to “housing assistance”, which equates to approximately 376 complaints.

Misunderstanding of the scheme is often to blame for such discrimination and it highlights the need for the State to continue to explain and outline the many benefits of HAP to landlords. My Department and local authorities have been involved in a range of national and local communications actions to clarify the operational benefits of HAP to landlords and agents.

At the end of Quarter 1 2019, over 45,900 eligible households were being supported through HAP, with over 27,100 individual landlords and agents providing accommodation via the scheme. The number of complaints referred to above equates to less than 1% of the total households being supported.

My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of HAP and consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme outlined under Rebuilding Ireland.

Local Authority Housing Rents

688. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the new differential rent scheme is due to be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27483/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): 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.

Planning Guidelines

689. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the revised rural housing guidelines will be published. [27520/19]

704. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the revised rural housing planning guidelines will issue taking into account the Flemish Decree judgment of the European Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28013/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 689 and 704 together.

Following engagement between the European Commission and my Department regarding the European Court of Justice ruling in the “Flemish Decree” case, a working group was established to review and, where necessary, recommend changes to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The working group comprises senior officials from the Planning Division of my Department and senior officials from the Planning Divisions of local authorities, nominated by the local government sector.

Taking account of the engagement with the European Commission regarding revisions to the 2005 Rural Housing Guidelines and subject to the completion of the ongoing deliberations by the working group, I will be in a position to finalise and issue to planning authorities revisions to the 2005 Guidelines that take account of the relevant European Court of Justice judgment.

Commercial Rates

690. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the powers available to local authorities to grant rates relief to a business expanding its operation and as a consequence its employment potential; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27521/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan) : Supporting economic development and enterprise objectives in their own areas, and on a regional and national basis, is a core objective of local authorities. Commercial rates income is critical to meet the cost of services provided by local authorities in supporting local communities and businesses.

The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in setting of valuations for rating and the Valuation Office is currently engaged in a national revaluation programme, the first such revaluation in over 160 years. Up to date valuations are important to ensure that the levying of rates is on a fair, equitable and consistent basis across all economic sectors and parts of the country.

Local authorities levy rates on commercial properties in accordance with the Commissioner’s valuation. The annual rate on valuation (ARV) is a reserved function decided by elected members in the annual budget. My Department has, in recent years, requested local authorities to exercise restraint in setting ARVs and they have responded positively.

In overall terms, while economic activity has been expanding significantly in recent years, the overall rates income of local authorities nationally has remained relatively unchanged. Furthermore, I understand that of the revaluations conducted to date, under the revaluation programme, approximately 60% of ratepayers have had their liability for rates reduced and ap-

proximately 40% have experienced an increase.

In order to ensure that the revaluation promotes equity across sectors and areas, but is also a revenue neutral exercise in overall terms, the Minister may limit the total amount of rates collectable within a local authority in the year following a revaluation to that collected in the previous year, subject to minor adjustments.

In terms of specific reliefs, the Local Government (Rates) Act 1970 allows rating authorities to make waiver schemes in respect of specified classes of property, subject to the consent of the Minister. Furthermore, the Local Government (Rates) Bill 2018, which passed Committee stage in the Dáil last week, contains a provision, for the introduction of rates alleviation (waiver) schemes by local authorities to support important policy objectives contained in local, economic, community and land use plans. The Bill is a key legislative priority of my Department.

Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

691. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the steps he is considering in the context of the Budget Statement 2020 to ensure that every child will live in secure and affordable housing; if short and strict time limits will be brought forward for homeless families to be rehoused from emergency accommodation and fund the necessary measures in budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27566/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Addressing homelessness is a priority for the Government. In 2016, the Government published the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness. Rebuilding Ireland is designed to significantly increase the supply of social housing by 50,000 homes in the period to 2021, double the output of overall housing to at least 25,000 homes per annum by 2020, support all tenure types (social, private and rental), and tackle homelessness comprehensively. The Plan is underpinned by over €6 billion in funding. By the end of Quarter 1 2019, 78,000 households had been supported under Rebuilding Ireland and this figure is expected to reach 100,000 by the end of 2019.

The Government has increased the budget available to local authorities to deliver homeless services to €146m in 2019, an increase of over 25% on the 2018 allocation. Local authorities and their service delivery partners work with households experiencing homelessness to identify and secure exits from emergency accommodation to independent tenancies, within the shortest possible timeframe. Rebuilding Ireland is delivering very significant results in supporting exits from homelessness. In 2018, 5,135 adults exited homelessness into independent tenancies, an 8.6% increase on 2017. Securing housing solutions for all households experiencing homelessness will continue to be a priority for my Department.

Local Authority Housing Waiting Lists

692. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons on the housing waiting list in County Mayo; and the average waiting time on the list. [27672/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each local authority area are set out in the statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA). Since 2016,

the Summary process has been carried out on an annual basis.

The SSHA report includes breakdowns by each local authority across a range of categories. Details on the length of time spent on the record of qualified households (waiting lists) can be found at tables 2.8 and A1.8. It should be noted that the SSHA is a point in time exercise and does not necessarily reflect the dynamic nature of entry to and exit from the list.

The most recent summary, which was carried out in 2018, details the number of households on all local authority waiting lists, including Co. Mayo, as at 11 June 2018 and can be found on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2018_-_key_findings.pdf.

The SSHA for 2019 is currently in progress and I expect to be in a position to publish the report later in the year.

Housing Agency

693. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons who applied for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan; the number who have been successful and drawn down funds; and the funding provided to County Mayo for the scheme. [27674/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Agency provides a central support service, which assesses applications for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan on behalf of local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities to approve or refuse applications. I have asked the Agency to compile figures on the numbers of applications that it has assessed since the scheme began. The most recent figures, as at the end of May 2019, indicate that 4,193 applications have been assessed by it since the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme launched in February 2018. Of these, the Agency had recommended 2,153 applications (51%) for approval.

In addition to this, my Department publishes information on the overall number and value of (i) local authority loan approvals and (ii) local authority loan drawdowns. Information up to the end of Quarter 1 2019, including in relation to number and value of mortgage drawdowns, 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> .

The final allocation assigned to Mayo County Council for mortgage and home improvement loans in 2018 was some €5.45m.

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 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 and process applications and issue loans.

Housing Data

694. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of new housing developments delivered in County Mayo in 2018; and the number of units that will be delivered in 2019. [27675/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): CSO data has confirmed that there were 316 housing completions in Mayo in 2018, which represented an increase of 31% on 2017 levels. Excluding single dwellings the numbers of new dwellings completed totalled 78 in 2018 compared to a total of 50 in 2017. There were also commencement notices for 380 dwellings submitted in Mayo in 2018, which represented an increase of 18% on 2017 levels.

In relation to social housing construction activity, my Department publishes comprehensive status reports on a quarterly basis of all social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas. The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of March 2019 and contains information on the progress of over 20,300 new social housing homes, which are currently approved and progressing through planning, design and construction, as well as homes delivered to end March 2019.

The report shows that Mayo County Council and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have a social housing construction programme of 38 projects or schemes already complete or at planning, design, tender or construction stage, which will deliver 310 homes when complete.

This report can be found at the following link <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q1-2019/>

In addition, data in relation to social housing targets and delivery on a local authority basis, across all delivery streams under Rebuilding Ireland, can be found on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>

In addition, 2019 targets have been provided to each local authority, outlining their individual target under build, acquisition, leasing, HAP and RAS and a full breakdown of these targets is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link:

<http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/social-housing-targets-2019/>.

Housing Finance Agency Funding

695. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to release further funds to local authorities under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; the timeline for a decision; if he will release same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27822/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): When the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) 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 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 and process applications and issue loans.

Housing Assistance Payment

696. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a person applies for HAP has to qualify for social housing in the county in which he or she is applying for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27833/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The flexibility of HAP as a social housing support is one of the scheme's key characteristics and was one of the primary benefits envisaged at the outset of the scheme. With this in mind, guidelines on inter authority movement were introduced in 2017 to allow for local authorities to facilitate movement of HAP households from one local authority area to another in cases where a HAP tenant, currently on a local authority waiting list, wishes to access rented accommodation with HAP support in another local authority area. Inter authority movement is subject to certain conditions.

Additional guidance issued in April 2019. Households eligible for social housing support are now provided with the opportunity to avail of HAP in any local authority area, subject, of course, to the current Social Housing Income Eligibility Bands or confirmation that the applicant's income is below the threshold in the new local authority.

Given that such flexibility facilitates better utilisation of all private rental stock for social housing purposes and supports the maximum activation potential of HAP households by removing geographical barriers to employment (such as loss of housing support or time on a transfer list), all local authorities have been requested to give appropriate consideration to these requests.

HAP tenants continue to be dealt with by their originating local authority. However, the rent limits will be those that apply in the local authority where the property is situated. The originating local authority will engage with the relevant new local authority to facilitate eligible requests for inter-authority movement.

Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

697. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will review the maximum grants available under the housing aid for older people grant, mobility aids grant and housing adaptation grant in view of the significant increases in construction costs and the cost of materials in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27855/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The maximum grant amounts payable under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme were reviewed in 2013 and I have no plans at this point for a further review. The average individual amount paid under this scheme is currently lower than the maximum permitted and the current arrangement seeks to spread the benefits of the available funding to a higher number of recipients. My main focus in respect of these grants is increasing the funding, with €71.25 million available nationally in 2019, an increase of some 8% on the 2018 allocation.

I am conscious of the benefit accruing from these grants, particularly in terms of facilitating older people and people with a disability, to remain living independently in their own homes. This is recognised in the Programme for Government and as a consequence, funding has been increasing year on year since 2014. As part of the annual budgetary process, consideration will be given in future years to increasing further the funding for these grants in line with both Rebuilding Ireland and the Government's Policy Statement on Housing Options for Our Ageing Population, which is available on my Department's website at the following link: https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/housingoptionsforanageingpopulationeng_web.pdf.

Departmental Reviews

698. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by him; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27885/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of the live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by my Department and the currently envisaged timeframe for completion of each, are set out in the table.

Questions - Written Answers

Title of live Study/Review/Research	Completion Timeline
Irish Affordable Cost Rental Housing Market (Being commissioned by the EIB/URBIS on behalf of the Department)	End 2019
Traveller Accommodation Expert Review	July 2019
Development of Cost Optimal Calculations and Gap Analysis for Directive 2010/31/EU on the European Performance of Buildings (Recast)	July 2019
Architectural Services - Standard Internal Dwelling Layouts	30/09/19
An Assessment of First Time Buyer Housing Affordability at the County Level. (This research will be an output of the Department's research collaboration agreement with the Economic and Social Research Institute.)	Quarter 3, 2019.
Irish House Price Sustainability: A County-Level Analysis(This research will be an output of the Department's research collaboration agreement with the Economic and Social Research Institute.)	Quarter 3, 2019.
Credit Access in the Irish Mortgage Market: Scoping the Role of Public Lending(This research will be an output of the Department's research collaboration agreement with the Economic and Social Research Institute.)	Quarter 3, 2019.
Value for Money Review of Homeless Services	Quarter 3, 2019.
Review of Social Housing Income Eligibility Thresholds	Timeline is dependent on the progress of other parallel initiatives on housing affordability.
Based on demographic projections to 2031, an examination the potential of the following three settlement types to meet the housing and associated service needs of older people: 1. A small / medium sized town 2. A suburban area 3. An inner city /urban centre Within each of the chosen locations map the: 1. Existing land use and ownership 2. Vacant sites and buildings 3. Existing housing 4. Existing and proposed infrastructure and services. 5. Any proposed new housing and other developments 6. Deliver proposals demonstrating the capacity of each of the areas to meet the future housing needs of older people. [In conjunction with the Housing Agency, Fingal County Council, Meath County Council and Mayo County Council]	September 2019
A research project which will examine the housing circumstances and attitudes of households composed of homeowners aged 55+. A particular focus will be the factors which might inhibit or encourage such households to seek properties better suited to their circumstances, typically, right-sizing. [Co-funded by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service and being undertaken by this Department and the Department of Finance.	September 2019
A baseline questionnaire to all Local Authorities to ascertain the steps they have taken to provide housing options for older people and the barriers they have met, if any, regarding same.[In conjunction with Age Friendly Ireland]	September 2019
Periodic Critical Review of Valuation Tribunal	End 2019
Review of Schedules 3 and 4 of the Valuation Act (Valuation Act 2001)	End 2019
Local Authority Elected Members Role & Remuneration Review	September 2019
Research into experiences of female councillors in the 2019 Local Elections	End 2019
Health Research Board Analysis of data on fire-related deaths using coronial data	September 2019
Marine Institute – Data Integration for Improved Spatial Analysis and Representation	July 2019
Marine Institute – Marine Spatial Planning Data Governance	July 2019
Marine Institute – Data prioritisation and collection for Spatial Representation	Quarter 1, 2020

Title of live Study/Review/Research	Completion Timeline
Marine Institute – Assess and Map Marine Ecosystems Services	Quarter 1, 2020
Marine Institute – Mapping the Potential Impacts of Climate Change	Quarter 1, 2020
Marine Institute – Best Practice on Modelling and Support Tools for Integrating Marine Spatial Data for Scientific and Technical Advisory Services	Quarter 1, 2020
Marine Institute – Development of Marine Invasive Species Surveillance Methods to Facilitate their Spatial Mapping in Irish Nearshore and Foreshore Waters and Benthic Habitats	Quarter 1, 2021
Determination of micro-litter content of 95 coastal sediment samples in support of Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) implementation.	Quarter 2, 2020
A study of the population genetic structure of seals and the identification of appropriate MSFD parameters in Ireland	Quarter 4, 2020
Climate Adaptation Plan - Water services and water quality	Quarter 3, 2019
Shannon fish passage project at Ardnacrusha & Parteen	Quarter 2, 2020
Inland Fisheries Ireland inventory of barriers to fish migration	Quarter 3, 2021
Working Group on the review of wider investment needs relating to Rural Water Services. The review is being carried out in two Strands.	Strand 1 – Completed Q1 2019 Strand 2 – Preliminary Report: Q4 2019 Final Report: Q2 2020

Departmental Reports

699. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the documents published by his Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27916/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of the policy documents and strategies published in 2016 and 2017 by my Department are included in the Department's Annual Reports. These reports can be found at the following link on the Department's website:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/search/archived/current?query=annual%20report>

The publications in any given year are listed in an Appendix at the end of each Report.

The 2018 Annual Report will be published shortly and will again set out details of my Department's key publications last year.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

700. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social and affordable homes built in County Cavan in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and the number of social and affordable homes that are planned to be built in the county up until 2022. [27996/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Data in relation to social housing delivery, including build data, across all local authorities, for the period 2016 to end March 2019 are published on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social->

housing-provision .

My Department also publishes comprehensive status reports on a quarterly basis of all social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas. The most recent of these reports covers the period up to the end of March 2019, and contains information on the progress of over 20,300 new social housing homes, which are currently approved and progressing through planning, design and construction, as well as homes delivered to end March 2019.

The report shows that Cavan County Council, and the Approved Housing Bodies they are working with, have a social housing construction programme of 25 projects or schemes already complete or at planning, design, tender or construction stage, which will deliver 170 homes when complete. This report can be found at the following link <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q1-2019/>.

National social housing delivery targets have been set under Rebuilding Ireland out to 2021. The 2019 build targets along with 2018-2021 overall social housing targets on a local authority basis, across all delivery streams under Rebuilding Ireland, can be found on my Department's website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/social-housing-targets-2019/> .

While the delivery of affordable housing is being supported through the Serviced Sites Fund in those parts of the country which have an identified affordability issue on the basis of assessments carried out by local authorities, those areas do not include County Cavan.

Local Authority Housing Rents

701. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the local authorities that consider the carer's allowance as part of income when calculating rent for a local authority property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27999/19]

702. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the local authorities that consider the working family payment as part of income when calculating rent for a local authority property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28000/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 701 and 702 together.

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 a rent scheme is an executive function and is subject to broad principles set out 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;

- 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.

Since 1986 when rent setting was devolved to individual local authorities, different ap-

proaches have been taken to rent charging and setting across the country. While local authorities generally follow the Household Means Policy (which applies for assessment of eligibility for social housing) there is variation in the extent to which they apply the income disregards set out in that policy in their Differential Rent Schemes and differing approaches are taken to income sources such as the Working Family Payment or the Carer's Allowance. My Department does not hold data on the exact approaches taken by individual local authorities as the methodology for calculating rents is a matter for individual housing authorities in the first instance.

Considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft national differential rents framework for the purposes of section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Such a framework has as its main aim the harmonisation of local authority rents, including a set of standardised income disregards, whilst retaining the general principle of rents related to household income.

This work is now being examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, to review the disparate systems of differential rent for social housing in place across local authorities. The overall objective is to ensure that housing supports are fair and sustainable and prioritise those on lowest incomes. I expect that the review will be completed in the near future.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

703. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the revised terms of the tenant incremental purchase scheme 2016 will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28012/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 set 1 January 2016 as the commencement date for the introduction of the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme for existing local authority houses. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

In line with the commitment given in the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, a review of the operation of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase (Incremental) Scheme has been completed and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

Following consideration of a number of implementation issues arising, I expect to be in a position to publish the Review shortly. I intend to bring a comprehensive package of social housing reform measures to Government in the near future and the relevant recommendations made in the Review of the Tenant Purchase Scheme will be progressed as part of that process.

Question No. 704 answered with Question No. 689.

Local Authority Housing Data

705. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding provided to Kerry County Council to purchase social houses in 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of units purchased; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[28054/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details of the number of properties that have been acquired by local authorities for social housing, including by Kerry County Council, in 2018 and to the end of Quarter 1 of 2019, are published and available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>. Further details for 2019 will be published on a quarterly basis as the year progresses.

The funding provided to Kerry County Council for the purchase of social housing for 2018 was €7,597,113. For 2019, a total of €980,710 has been provided to the Council up to the end of the first quarter in respect of completed social housing acquisitions.

Water Charges

706. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason Irish Water treats householders as if they are businesses and charges them for water they use in their property if the householder has a rainwater harvesting system which they rely on exclusively for agricultural purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28153/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I refer to the reply to Question No. 210 of 20 June 2019 which sets out the statutory position in relation to charging arrangements for relevant customers of Irish Water, who may be able to assist further with this matter.

Proposed Legislation

707. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the fire services Bill will be brought forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28162/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English) : The Fire Services Act 1981 provides for the establishment of fire authorities and the organisation of fire services and for fire-fighting, as well as life safety and the protection and rescue of persons and property and related matters. The Act was amended in 2003 by Part III of the Licensing of Indoor Events Act 2003, primarily to clarify the responsibility of 'persons having control' of premises and to strengthen the powers of fire authorities to prosecute offences and serve notices.

The Report of the Fire Safety Task Force, established in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and overseen by my Department's National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management, makes a number of recommendations for enhancing the current fire safety system. I have accepted the Task Force's recommendations and, as a result, my Department is currently considering making some additional fire safety regulations under the existing legislative provisions. It is also considering if amendments are required to primary legislation to ensure that the Fire Safety Task Force Report and its recommendations are fully implemented. Separately, my Department is also reviewing the regulatory regime in respect of funfairs.

The Fire Services Act 1981, as amended, is generally considered fit for purpose but I will bring forward proposals for amending legislation, arising from these reviews, later this year.

Written Answers Nos. 708-725

Commercial Rates Data

708. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of counties and local authority areas that have not been revaluated for commercial rates to date; the reason these counties were not revaluated; when they will be revaluated; if some counties were revaluated twice or more whilst other counties were not revaluated; if so, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28168/19]

709. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the counties that have had a total review of their commercial rates valuations based on the Valuation Act 2001; the date in each case these revaluations have been carried out; the date that counties that have had more than one revaluation under the Act had these carried out; the reason other counties have not had such a revaluation; the counties involved; the projected date for all such counties to have their total rates revaluation review completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28283/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 708 and 709 together.

The Commissioner of Valuation has responsibility under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 to maintain a valuation list for each Local Authority, of all commercial properties in that Local Authority area, which is then used to calculate the rates due from individual ratepayers. The Commissioner is independent in the performance of his functions including the selection of rating authority areas for revaluation.

The Valuation Office is currently engaged in a national revaluation programme, the first revaluation of all rating authority areas in over 160 years. The revaluation activity, on a local authority by local authority basis, is set out in the following table. Overall, the Programme involves the valuation of some 150,000 properties. When a Local Authority area is revalued it must be revalued again within a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 10 years. Moving to the 5-10 year cycle represents a significant step forward for the rateable valuation system.

In terms of the process, the Commissioner makes a valuation order, to formally commence the process in each area, a valuation date is set, and the new rateable valuations are then assessed and set by reference to the market conditions and business environment that prevailed on this date. Ultimately, the new valuation list for the Local Authority area is completed and published.

Significant progress is being made on the Programme and the current phase, known as “Reval 2019”, will see new valuations published on 17 September 2019 to become effective from 2020 onwards. Following on from “Reval 2019”, I understand that the Commissioner intends to sign Valuation Orders before the end of 2019 in relation to Donegal, Mayo, Galway City, Galway County, Clare, Kerry, Cork City and Cork County. This will conclude the first revaluation of all rating authority areas.

In relation to second valuations, Fingal County Council is undergoing a second revaluation in 2019 and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown will undergo a second revaluation in 2020.

Questions - Written Answers

Rating Authority	Date of signing of Valuation Order	Valuation Date	Publication Date of Valuation List
South Dublin	07/11/2005	30/09/2005	31/12/2007
Fingal	15/03/2007	30/09/2005	31/12/2009
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	27/06/2008	30/09/2005	31/12/2010
Dublin City	05/05/2011	07/04/2011	31/12/2013
Waterford City	12/12/2011	28/10/2011	31/12/2013
Waterford County	12/12/2011	28/10/2011	31/12/2013
Dungarvan Town	12/12/2011	28/10/2011	31/12/2013
Limerick City	29/03/2012	01/03/2012	31/12/2014
Limerick County	29/03/2012	01/03/2012	31/12/2014
Kildare	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Leitrim	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Longford	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Offaly	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Sligo	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Westmeath	23/11/2015	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Roscommon	26/01/2016	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
South Dublin (2nd Re-valuation)	29/07/2016	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Carlow	23/09/2016	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Kilkenny	23/09/2016	30/10/2015	15/09/2017
Cavan	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Fingal (2nd Revaluation)	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Louth	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Meath	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Monaghan	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Tipperary	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Wexford	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Wicklow	06/10/2017	15/09/2017	17/09/2019*
Laois	22/12/2017	30/10/2015	26/10/2018

*Projected date

Ministerial Meetings

710. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has met with officials from Cork City Council in 2019 regarding the funding of a centre (details supplied). [27499/19]

714. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of times she has engaged with officials formally regarding a centre (details supplied) since April 2019. [27498/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 710 and 714 together.

Officials in my Department are engaged on an ongoing basis with Cork City Council regarding the development of the centre to which the Deputy refers and continue to discuss all aspects

around the public funding elements of the project with Cork City Council Officials. My most recent meeting on the project, at which Cork City Council was represented, was on the 26th March last, and officials have met on a number of occasions since then.

Wildlife Conservation

711. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of compensation payments for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27730/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Natterjack Toad pond creation scheme was launched in 2008 and is administered by my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service. The scheme is aimed at farmers and landowners and involves the creation of suitable breeding habitats for the Natterjack toad, an endangered species which in Ireland is found only in Kerry. This project has been very effective so far with over 100 new ponds dug for toads within the species' historical range around Castlemaine Harbour and Castlegregory.

Landowners participating in the scheme typically enter into a 5 year agreement with my Department. The agreement requires landowners to manage the ponds and maintain the surrounding habitat in a condition suitable for the toads, and to meet several grazing and pond management requirements. In return, the landowner is paid a grant of €500 per annum per pond. There have been 52 landowners involved over the life of the scheme and 35 of these agreements are active at present.

As there is a limited budget available for the scheme, it was not possible to offer new agreements for phase 3 to all previous participants. Furthermore, in cases where a landowner has not fully met the requirements of the scheme, their agreement may not be renewed.

The first phase of 5 year agreements were signed in 2008 and a number of participants, who had met the requirements of the scheme in phase 1, were invited to participate for a further 5 years in phase 2.

Phase 2 agreements, again clearly stated as being for a 5 year period, were signed by landowners in March 2013. Final payments for the second phase were made to landowners at the end of 2017. The landowner in question is not participating in the current phase of the scheme.

Wildlife Conservation

712. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) will receive a payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27837/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Natterjack Toad pond creation scheme was launched in 2008 and is administered by my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service. The scheme is aimed at farmers and landowners and involves the creation of suitable breeding habitats for the Natterjack toad, an endangered species which in Ireland is found only in Kerry. This project has been very effective so far with over 100 new ponds dug for toads within the species' historical range around Castlemaine Harbour and Castlegregory.

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Wildlife Conservation

713. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when payments will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28177/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Natterjack Toad pond creation scheme was launched in 2008 and is administered by my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service. The scheme is aimed at farmers and landowners and involves the creation of suitable breeding habitats for the Natterjack toad, an endangered species which in Ireland is found only in Kerry. This project has been very effective so far with over 100 new ponds dug for toads within the species' historical range around Castlemaine Harbour and Castlegregory.

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Question No. 714 answered with Question No. 710.

Creative Ireland Programme

715. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the proposal by an organisation (details supplied) to establish a culture card or subsidy to enable every child to have access to at least one community arts or cultural opportunity each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27567/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I note with interest the proposals received. My Department and the bodies under its aegis have taken practical steps to provide such opportunities to children and young people.

My Department recently supported Cruinniú na nÓg which took place on the 15 June 2019. Now in its second year, this national day of creativity for children and young people included free access to over 700 events across the country such as workshops, exhibitions and performances, with a special focus on starter workshops to encourage young people to try something new. Further information is available at <https://cruinniu.creativeireland.gov.ie>.

Cruinniú na nÓg is part of the Creative Ireland Programme which seeks to ensure that every child in Ireland has practical access to tuition, experience and participation in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. Another element of the Programme is the Creative Youth Plan which was launched in December 2017 and includes the Creative Schools pilot project, currently underway, and which is a partnership between my Department, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council. Creative Schools, which will have 300 schools participating from September this year, will see each school developing a bespoke school plan to embed arts and creativity and explore new links with artists and cultural organisations, both locally and nationally. To assist this, each participating school is being awarded €2,000.

In addition, a pilot group of Education and Training Boards are developing new Creative Youth Partnerships to extend the reach of the Creative Youth plan to the non-formal sector. The ETBs in question are Laois/Offaly, Limerick/Clare and Kerry.

The Deputy should also note that the National Cultural Institutions have a general policy of free admission for children while access to all our National Parks is free. The OPW additionally provides free educational visits to heritage sites for schools provided certain conditions are met, while children under the age of 12 have free access to a huge number of OPW managed sites. Further information on access to heritage sites can be found here: <http://www.heritageireland.ie>

Departmental Expenditure

716. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the 2019 budget allocation for the island scholarship scheme; the number of scholarships the allocation will cater for in 2019; the number of scholarships availed of over the 2016 to 2018 period on an annual basis; and the budget allocation for each year in tabular form. [27603/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table:-

Year	Expenditure	Total number of students who availed of the fund
2016	€135,000	34
2017	€125,037	40
2018	€152,103	30

Year	Expenditure	Total number of students who availed of the fund
2019 to date	€ 81,783	30

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

717. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) will receive a payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27832/19]

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.

My Department is currently processing annual payments for 2019 under the scheme and it is expected that the payment will issue to the applicant in due course.

Departmental Reviews

718. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of live studies, reviews and research undertaken or commissioned by her; and the date by which each study, review and research is scheduled to be completed. [27878/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Details of ongoing studies, reviews and research undertaken and commissioned by my Department are set out in the following table.

Title	Commenced	Expected Completion
2016 Heritage Council Review – Assessment of Implementation	2019	2019
Post-Project Review of the Arts and Culture Capital Enhancement Support Scheme 2007-2009 (ACCESS II)	2019	2019
Towards a Roadmap for the Creative Industries	2019	2020
Youth Singing in Ireland	2018	2019
Review and analysis of the revenue generating capacity of Ireland's National Parks	2019	2019
Wild Nephin Conversion Plan	2016	2019
Bio-security review of the Skellig Islands	2019	2019

Title	Commenced	Expected Completion
Arachnid, Killarney National Park Study	2019	2019
Killarney National Park Rhododendron review	2019	2019
Study on impacts of fires in Killarney National Park	2019	2019
Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge	2015	2019
Athbheithniú ar Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga (Review of Language Assistants' Scheme)	2018	2019

For completeness, I would also advise the Deputy that, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Science & Biodiversity Unit is required, as part of its remit, to carry out scientific monitoring and survey work on 59 habitats (which range from mountain tops and bogs, to coastal and deep sea environments), over 100 species of plants and animals and over 200 species of birds. The NPWS utilises a mixture of in-house expertise and contracted experts working closely with the scientific unit to carry out this large volume of work on an ongoing basis. My officials will be happy to respond to any request from the Deputy for further detail in respect of this work.

Departmental Reports

719. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the documents published by her Department since 1 January 2016 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [27902/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Details of documents published by my Department during the period specified by the Deputy are set out below. These are available on my Departments website.

2019

- Ireland's Biodiversity Sectoral Climate Change Adaptation Plan.
- Draft Climate Change Adaptation Sectoral Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage

2018

- Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027,
- Ireland's Audio-visual Action Plan (AV plan),
- 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 – Action Plan 2018-2022,
- The National Parks' Tourism Interpretative Masterplan
- Consultation document on Heritage Ireland 2030.

2017

- The Creative Ireland Programme,
- The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021
- The National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation Management Plan 2017-2022

2016

- The National Peatlands Policy.

Aquaculture Data

720. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the findings of an underwater archaeology report will be published in respect of an area (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28004/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department asked for an underwater archaeological assessment to be undertaken in this case in response to a request for its comments on new aquaculture proposals for the area. I understand that the assessment report has recently been submitted to the Department and that the Department's observations will shortly be provided to the developer. Publication of the report would be a matter for the developer.

Forbairt Calaí agus Céanna

721. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir le forbairt na gcéibheanna ar Inis Meáin agus ar Inis Oírr; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [28010/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta, tá forbairt na gcéanna atá luaite san áireamh sa liosta tograí atá clúdaithe sa Phlean Forbartha Náisiúnta 2018 - 2027.

Maidir le Cé an Chaladh Mhóir, Inis Meáin, tá Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe i dteagmháil le geallsealbhoirí faoi láthair i dtaobh a gcuid mianta d'fhorbairt na cé agus tá Cás Gnó i leith na forbartha á réiteach ag an gComhairle faoi réir théarmaí an gCód Caiteachais Poiblí. Déanfar cinneadh críochnúil faoi scóip na forbartha amach anseo i gcomhthéacs na n-acmhainí airgeadais a bheidh ar fáil do mo Roinn sna blianta amach romhainn agus na n-éileamh éagsúla ar na hacmhainí sin.

Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil dul chun cinn maith déanta maidir le forbairt Ché Inis Oírr. Le cúnaimh airgid ó mo Roinn, tá innealtóirí comhairleacha ceaptha ag Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe i ndáil leis an togra a fhorbairt. Ach an oiread le haon togra eile ar an scála seo, beidh gach chéim d'fhorbairt Ché Inis Oírr le meas i gcomhthéacs an tsoiláthair airgid a bheidh ar fáil do mo Roinn ag an am sin agus faoi réir na bhforálacha atá san áireamh i gCód Caiteachais Phoiblí an Rialtais.

Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge

722. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá le déanamh i mbliana i bhfeidhmiú na Straitéise Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [28011/19]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne): Dírím aird an Teachta ar an bhfreagra a thug mé ar Cheist Dála Uimhir 55 ar an 12 Meitheamh 2019 maidir leis an ábhar seo. Mar a thug mé le fios sa bhfreagra sin, is é an Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 a d'fhoilsigh mo Roinn i mí Meithimh 2018 an mapa bóthair atá leagtha amach chun cúram a dhéanamh d'fheidhmiú na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge don tréimhse cúig bliana

ó 2018 go dtí 2022.

Is ann a leagtar amach cad atá beartaithe a dhéanamh sa tréimhse sin chun tuilleadh cúraim a dhéanamh den Ghaeilge agus den Ghaeltacht mar a bhaineann sé leis na naoi réimse gnímh faoi leith atá luaite sa Straitéis.

Mar atá ráite agam go minic roimhe seo, ag croílár an Phlean Gníomhaíochta, tá na bearta comhaontaithe a leagtar amach ann. Tá breis agus 180 díobh ann, a chuirfear i bhfeidhm i gcomhar le os cionn 60 páirtí leasmhar. Leagtar an bhéim is mó ar an méid a dhéanfar go sonrach ar bhonn comhpháirtíochta thar 5 bliana. Tá tráthchlár ama luaite le gach beart agus luaitear chomh maith, ar ndóigh, na páirtithe a bheidh freagrach as na bearta a chur i bhfeidhm.

Tá Coiste Stiúrtha, atá freagrach as monatóireacht agus tuairisciú a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm agus ar dhul chun cinn an phlean bunaithe ó mhí na Samhna agus bhí trí chruinniú den choiste go dtí seo. Tá sé i gceist go bhfoilseofar tuairisc bhliantúil maidir le dul chun cinn, tar éis don tuairisc a bheith faofa ag an Rialtas. Ina thaobh sin, tá beartaithe go bhfoilseofar an chéad tuairisc bhliantúil i bhfómhar na bliana seo a chuimseoidh an tréimhse 12 mhí ó foilsíodh an Plean Gníomhaíochta (Iúil 2018 go Meitheamh 2019).

Tugtar spléachadh thíos ar a bhfuil déanta le gairid agus ar a bhfuil beartaithe sa ghearrtréimhse maidir le cur i bhfeidhm an phlean:

- Maidir leis an bpróiseas pleanála teanga: As an 26 Limistéar Pleanála Teanga atá ainmnithe sa Ghaeltacht, tá 14 plean teanga ceadaithe go dáta faoin bpróiseas. Mar thoradh air sin, tá 9 Oifigeach Pleanála Teanga agus 3 Oifigeach Cúnta fostaithe sa Ghaeltacht chun na pleananna sin a chur i bhfeidhm. Tá súil ag mo Roinn go mbeidh suas le 23 plean in iomlán ceadaithe faoin bpróiseas faoi dheireadh na bliana seo. Ina thaobh sin, tá soláthar €550,000 breise ar fáil don phleanáil teanga do 2019, rud a fhágann go bhfuil €3.2m in iomlán ar fáil i mbliana.

- Maidir le Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga: Ar mhaithe le tacú tuilleadh le feidhmiú an phróisis agus an pholasaí don oideachas Gaeltachta, d'fhógair mé le gairid go raibh allúntas suas le €3.6m in iomlán thar thréimhse 3 bliana ceadaithe agam faoi Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga. Bainfear leas as an infheistíocht bhreise seo chun go mbeidh scoileanna Gaeltachta atá páirteach sa Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta in ann cúntóirí teanga a bheith acu ar feadh sé seachtaine breise in aghaidh na scoilbhliana feasta. De thoradh seo uile, beidh cúntóirí teanga in ann dul i mbun oibre feasta nuair a thosaíonn an scoilbhliain seachas níos faide isteach sa bhliain mar a tharlaíodh go dtí seo i gcásanna áirithe. Tiocfaidh an beart seo i bhfeidhm san fhómhar ó thús na scoilbhliana nua.

- Maidir le hearnáil na gcoláistí samhraidh: D'fhógair mé dhá thogra nua le gairid chomh maith chun tacú tuilleadh le córas na gcoláistí samhraidh. Faoin gcéad bheart dar teideal, DEIS Gaeltachta, tá ciste ar fiú €50,000 curtha ar fáil chun cabhrú le lucht freastail iar-bhunscoileanna DEIS na tíre freastal ar chúrsa i gceann de na coláistí Gaeilge atá aitheanta ag mo Roinn. Ina theannta sin, d'fhógair mé ciste nua faoi leith dar teideal, ERASMUS Gaeltachta, faoina bhfuil ciste ar fiú €250,000 curtha ar fáil le cabhrú le hinstiúidí tríú leibhéal seimeastar sa Ghaeltacht a thairiscint do mhic léinn dá gcuid.

- Tá €980,000 breise curtha ar fáil do Chlár Tacaíochtaí Pobail agus Teanga de chuid mo Roinne féin do 2019. Ciallóidh sé sin go bhfuil ciste breise ann chun cabhrú tuilleadh le gnóthaí teanga agus pobail sa Ghaeltacht. Fágann sé seo go bhfuil soláthar iomlán de €9.692m ar fáil do 2019.

- Tá Coiste stiúrtha bunaithe ag an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige chun monatóireacht a dhéanamh ar fheidhmiú plean cuimsitheach don earnáil luathoideachais Gaeilge.

- Tá mo Roinn ag dréachtú Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) i gcomhar le hOifig an Ard-Aighne faoi láthair.

- Tá súil ag mo Roinn an Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge a fhoilsiú go luath

- Tá buiséad iomlán caipitil de €9.7m curtha ar fáil ag mo Roinn d'Údarás na Gaeltachta in 2019 le hinfheistíocht a dhéanamh i mbonneagar fiontraíochta agus gnó sa Ghaeltacht. .

- Táthar ag leanúint leis an obair leis na hinstiúidí ábhartha san AE chun tacú le deireadh a chur leis an maolú don Ghaeilge san Aontas Eorpach faoi 2021.

- Tá dul chun cinn suntasach déanta ag an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir le cur i bhfeidhm an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-2022 - le gach iar-bhunscoil Ghaeltachta agus móramh suntasach na mbunscoileanna Gaeltachta rannpháirteach.

Níor mhiste a lua sa phlé seo ar fad faoin straitéis, ar ndóigh, go bhfuil úinéireacht thras-rannach aige agus go bhfuil an fhreagracht dá réir maidir lena cur chun feidhme ar na páirtithe leasmhara atá luaite leis na bearta éagsúla atá sainithe sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta.

Departmental Communications

723. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a licence will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28027/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department is not party to the document to which the Deputy refers.

Commercial licences and permits to operate class P5 boats at the location in question are advertised by way of tender. The person to which the Deputy refers applied under this tender process but has not subsequently provided the requisite documentation to allow a licence to issue. The Department has been in ongoing contact seeking the documents required and the applicant has been afforded time and opportunity to lodge the correct documentation. When the correct documents, including the requisite fee are lodged, I will then make a decision on whether to award the licence.

Legislative Process

724. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the proposed timetable for the passing of the Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2016 through all stages of the Houses of the Oireachtas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28053/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network, published in January 2014, provides detail on arrangements regarding turf cutting on each of the 75 raised bog natural heritage areas. The Review concluded that Ireland could more effectively achieve conservation of threatened raised bog habitat through focused protection and restoration of a reconfigured network which entails:

- i. The cessation of turf-cutting on 36 existing natural heritage areas, which will remain designated - this includes 7 sites to be divided, with part to be conserved and part de-designated;
- ii. The complete de-designation of 46 natural heritage areas - including the relevant areas of

the 7 sites to be divided - where it has been judged that their conservation potential is expected to be marginal and/or that restoration would be prohibitively expensive for the conservation benefits achieved. Domestic turf-cutting may continue on these sites, while larger scale or commercial turf cutting will continue to be regulated through other consent systems; and

iii. The designation as natural heritage areas of 25 currently undesignated raised bogs, which are in public ownership or where there is reduced turf cutting pressure. These sites are to be proposed for designation to make up for the loss of habitat within the natural heritage area sites where turf cutting is to continue.

The Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2016, to give effect to the outcome of the 2014 Review, was presented to the Dáil on 21 July 2016 and was passed by that House on 13 December 2018.

The Bill, as passed by Dáil Éireann, provides for me, as Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, to complete the 2014 Review of Raised Bog Natural Heritage Area Network and for a Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to conduct a review or reviews of blanket bog natural heritage areas, at his or her discretion.

The Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2016 has passed Committee Stage in Seanad Éireann and is now to be scheduled for Report Stage in that House.

Archival Material

725. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the new archives repository project will be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28163/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Archival Repository project will to deliver new and much expanded purpose-built storage facilities at the National Archives premises in Bishop Street, Dublin 8 and will build-in the potential to develop and construct additional storage in the future. It is funded by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht under Project Ireland 2040 with the aim of having this project completed in 2022.