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

Cabinet Committee Meetings

18. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of times Cabinet committee A (Economy) met to date in 2019. [26562/19]

19. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach the number of times Cabinet committee A (Economy) met in 2019. [27846/19]

22. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Taoiseach the number of times Cabinet committee A (Economy) has met since January 2019. [29530/19]

23. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of times Cabinet committee A (Economy) has met to date in 2019. [29687/19]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 18, 19, 22 and 23 together.

Cabinet Committee A was scheduled to have its first meeting of 2019 on Monday 1 July, which was unfortunately postponed due to the extended European Council meetings.

Cabinet Committee A covers issues relating to the Economy such as Jobs, the Labour Market, Competitiveness, Productivity, the Digital Economy and Pensions, and rural issues under the Action Plan on Rural Development, all of which are regularly discussed at full Government meetings where all formal decisions are made.

Questions Nos. 20 and 21 resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 22 and 23 answered with Question No. 18.

Question No. 24 resubmitted.

Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements

25. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to Prime Minister May regarding the progress in the Northern Ireland talks recently. [26857/19]

26. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken in June 2019 to Prime Minister May regarding progress in the Northern Ireland talks. [27637/19]
27. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Theresa May recently. [28084/19]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 25 to 27, inclusive, together.

I saw Prime Minister May most recently at the Special meeting of the European Council on 30 of June, 1 July and 2 July. I also saw her at the European Council meeting in Brussels on 20 and 21 June. I did not have any formal bilateral meetings with the Prime Minister during these meetings.

However, I spoke by phone with the Prime Minister on 19 June when we discussed the ongoing political talks in Northern Ireland and Brexit. We agreed that talks were at a pivotal stage and we agreed to push for a resolution before the summer break. The Tánaiste is heavily engaged in the Northern Ireland talks and keeps me fully informed of developments.

The Prime Minister also updated me on the current situation in Westminster regarding Brexit and noted that significant numbers in Parliament still want to avoid a “no deal” outcome.

**Cyber Security Policy**

28. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on cybersecurity policy in his Department. [28212/19]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department has put in place safeguards to mitigate the threats and risks to its information and communications technology systems in so far as is possible. My Department uses industry leading security products to filter email and web traffic to automatically stop spam, viruses, and other malicious agents from infecting the network.

My Department maintains ongoing contact with the Computer Security Incident Response Team in the National Cyber Security Centre who provide regular guidance and advice relating to current internet security alerts and threats.

The response to cyber threats continues to be a whole-of-Government challenge with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment leading on the development of a new National Cyber Security Strategy.

*Questions Nos. 29 and 30 resubmitted.*

**Departmental Communications**

31. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the social media policy of his Department. [29116/19]

**The Taoiseach:** It is important to communicate across a variety of platforms, including social media, to ensure transparency and clarity for all citizens. The Government Information Service is now required to provide a 24/7 service to media organizations, on all topics of public interest, and with short response times. The social media channels for my Department are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube.

The central objective for these channels is to report objectively the work of Government and, over time, to provide a valuable archive of information. The social media activity in the Department is governed by strict operating principles.
The following are the main operating principles governing the use of these social media channels:

that the content consists of

· News stories and press releases
· Speeches and statements from the Taoiseach and Government Ministers
· Photos and videos from Government events and the Taoiseach’s engagements
· Live tweeting of Government events, and
· Other content as deemed appropriate

The use of social media platforms is not intended as a means of contacting the Taoiseach directly or of submitting press queries. These activities are handled by other means. Following or retweeting another account does not imply an endorsement of any kind.

All staff in my Department who update social media channels are bound by the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Question No. 32 resubmitted.

European Council Meetings

33. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the special meeting of the European Council from 30 June to 2 July 2019. [29115/19]

35. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the EU Council meeting held from 30 June to 2 July 2019; and the issues that were discussed. [29522/19]

36. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the agreed candidates to hold the key EU posts following the EU Council meeting held on 2 July 2019 and if he has met or spoken to them since then. [29523/19]

37. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his meeting with Chancellor Merkel at the special EU Council meeting from 30 June to 2 July 2019 and the issues discussed. [29527/19]

38. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Taoiseach if he met with the Prime Minister of Czechia, Mr. Andrej Babiš when he attended the special EU Council meeting from 30 June to 2 July 2019; and if so, the issues that were discussed. [29529/19]

39. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the recent meeting of the European Council held from 30 June to 2 July 2019. [29688/19]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 35 to 39, inclusive, together.

I attended a special meeting of the European Council in Brussels from Sunday 30 June to Tuesday 2 July.

The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, convened the meeting with a view to agreeing an approach to the high-level appointments to the EU institutions that will arise in the coming period.
The positions of President of the Commission; President of the Council; President of the European Central Bank; and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, will all fall to be filled in accordance with the Treaties.

Our discussions were based on our shared objective of reflecting the diversity of the EU - including the need to ensure gender, geographical and political balance - and of ensuring suitable and qualified people in these posts.

We agreed that the current Belgian Prime Minister, Charles Michel, should be our next President of the European Council, that Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell be nominated as candidate for the next High Representative for Foreign Policy, and that Christine Lagarde, currently the Managing Director of the IMF, should be our candidate for the next President of the ECB.

We also agreed to propose the current German Defence Minister, Ursula Von der Leyen, as President of the European Commission.

Ms. Von der Leyen is an experienced and eminently suitable candidate, and I hope that the new European Parliament will elect her as Commission President on 15 July.

Since the special meeting of the European Council, the European Parliament elected David-Maria Sassoli as its new President.

I engaged with most of my counterparts, including Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Babiš, over the course of the three days in Brussels. Our discussions focused on the high-level appointments, although we also exchanged views on other EU and international issues. I also had a bilateral meeting with the new Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, and spoke by phone with President Anastasiades of Cyprus, who was unable to attend the meeting.

I spoke with Prime Minister Michel following the meeting, and congratulated him on his election as the next President of the European Council.

The other candidates for the high-level appointments were not present at the meeting. However, I look forward to working very closely with them over the period ahead.

Question No. 34 resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 35 to 39, inclusive, answered with Question No. 33.

Question No. 40 resubmitted.

British-Irish Council

41. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the recent meeting of the British-Irish Council. [29118/19]

43. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the British-Irish Council meeting in Manchester; the issues discussed; if decisions were taken; and the bilateral meetings he had. [29521/19]

44. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent meeting with the First Minister of Scotland, Ms Nicola Sturgeon. [29686/19]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 41, 43 and 44 together.
I attended the 32nd British Irish Council (BIC) Summit which was hosted in Manchester by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt. Hon David Lidington MP on Friday 28 June. I was accompanied by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton TD.

First Ministers from Scotland, Wales along with Heads of Administration from the Crown Dependencies also attended the summit meeting.

The discussion at the summit covered key political developments for Administrations since the last summit in November. The discussion focused largely on the implications of Brexit, particularly for relationships across the islands. The Council also discussed the current political situation in Northern Ireland and I again reiterated my regret that Northern Ireland, until the Executive is restored, continues to be without political representation in this important forum.

Building on the shared goal of decarbonising our economies, Minister Bruton took part in a thematic discussion to explore how best we can facilitate the transition by smartening our energy systems. Ministers explored policy approaches to enabling this transition, the facilitation of key technologies, smart energy at a local scale and funding for innovation.

The Council also received an update on the BIC Marine Litter event held in Glasgow in February.

I took the opportunity to have bilateral discussions with Rt. Hon David Lidington, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and with First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford who was attending his first summit meeting. In all meetings we exchanged views on issues of mutual interest and continued co-operation with discussions focusing mainly on Brexit and its impacts on business and citizens. We also spoke on developments in Westminster and Brussels.

At my meeting with FM Sturgeon we also discussed developments in relation to Rockall and agreed that our shared aim is to resolve differences in a way which benefit both countries, and to develop further an already strong bilateral relationship.

Following the summit I officially opened the new ESB energy offices in Manchester where I attended Enterprise Ireland’s first Business CEO Roundtable with Irish companies operating in the UK’s “Northern Powerhouse” region. I also met with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham and visited the Sisk development at Circle Square.

Question No. 42 resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 43 and 44 answered with Question No. 41.

Questions Nos. 45 and 46 resubmitted.

**Taoiseach’s Meetings and Engagements**

47. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the meeting he held with church leaders on 4 July 2019; the issues that were discussed; if there was progress on the new covenant between church and State that he announced in 2018; and if religious schools were discussed. [30015/19]

**The Taoiseach:** A Plenary Meeting with Churches, Faith Communities and Non-Confessional Organisations was held on Thursday 4 July 2019 in Dublin Castle. Discussion at the Meeting focused on three main themes: effective structured dialogue; inclusive and diverse communities; and education.
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The Meeting offered a good opportunity to discuss what a new relationship between Church and State might look like.

The Report of the Plenary Meeting will be finalised at a later date.

| Questions Nos. 48 to 60, inclusive, answered orally.

Child and Family Agency Staff

61. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress made regarding the recruitment and retention of social workers within Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29682/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The recruitment and retention of social workers continues to be a significant challenge for Tusla in 2019. Tusla is one of many employers of social workers in Ireland and it is competing with other employments that are often perceived as less challenging.

Tusla’s new Strategic Workforce Planning Model will be accompanied by a renewed focus on retention of social workers and other key staff. This approach should ensure better outcomes for children and for Tusla’s recruitment work.

In 2019, Tusla Recruit, its dedicated in-house recruitment function, has managed 16 social work specific campaigns such as:

- the Social Work Graduate Programme designed to recruit new graduates,
- the rolling campaign for Professionally Qualified Social Workers (PQSW),
- Social Work Team Lead,
- Senior Social Work Practitioner, and
- Principal Social Worker.

These campaigns have attracted approximately 550 applications from internal and external applicants to date. As at 31st May, 2019, Tusla was ahead of its 2019 social work recruitment schedule, with 114 new starter social workers appointed.

59 social workers resigned or retired during the same period, resulting in a net gain of 63 whole time equivalent social workers since the start of 2019.

In addition to Tusla’s Social Work Graduate Programme and its annual calendar of college campus visits, Tusla held its first Social Work Recruitment Open Day on the 14th of June. The Open Day provided an opportunity for potential applicants to learn about a career with Tusla from experienced frontline staff.

I also welcome the news that Tusla Recruit expects to launch online interviews from autumn 2019 to accommodate applicants, in particular those who may be abroad.

I understand Tusla has also established a Retention Steering Group to plan and implement an integrated approach to retention throughout the organisation via Tusla’s Health and Wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programme. The Group will:

- review current retention initiatives;
- identify opportunities and barriers to successfully retaining talent;

- act upon the findings of the Tusla’s Staff Retention Survey;

- harness insights and ideas from across the organisation to incorporate into policies and working practices; and

- consider successful initiatives developed by other Agencies.

The work of the Retention Steering Group will be an important input for the implementation of Tusla’s Strategic Workforce Planning Model. I note that the turnover rate for social workers at 31 May, 2019 is 7.17% compared to 8.44% for the same period in 2018. Hopefully this is an indication that Tusla is already reaping benefits from its actions in this area.

My Department has also taken the initiative to establish the Social Work Education Group, which is intended to provide a forum for Tusla and other stakeholders to raise issues and act upon possible actions to influence the future supply of social workers.

The first priority identified by the Group is the streamlining of student placements and I am pleased to confirm work has commenced on this.

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**Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige**

62. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cén pleán atá aici chun polasai don luathoideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm, mar atá molta ag Comhchoiste na Gaeilge na Gaeltachta agus na nOileán; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [30025/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I welcome the report recently launched by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands in relation to the challenges associated with running Irish medium childcare centres in the Gaeltacht.

A number of officials from my Department attended this launch on 25th June 2019, along with officials from Tusla and from the Department of Educations Early Years Education Policy Unit, who are co-located within my Department.

The Secretary General of my Department, along with a number officials, also appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands on 20th November 2018. The Secretary General had an opportunity to inform the Committee of the work being undertaken within my Department in relation to supporting and facilitating Irish-medium early learning and care services to operate through Irish.

In particular, my Department has committed to a range of actions under the Action Plan for the Irish Language 2018-2020 which are designed to affirm the importance of the role that early learning and care settings can play in fostering Irish language proficiency. The aim of these actions is to build on existing measures, supports and partnerships in the area of Irish-medium early years education and further improve supports and services.

The report launched by the Committee, and the various recommendations contained within, is currently being examined by my Department in the context of the commitments we have already made under the five year Irish language action plan.

In relation to the specific recommendation referred to by the Deputy that the Department
of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills agree a policy on Irish medium and Gaeltacht early years education, officials from my Department liaise closely with officials from the Department of Education and Skills on many issues, including in relation to the five year Irish language action plan and the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022.

**Early Childhood Care and Education**

63. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the work she is undertaking to improve pay and conditions in the early years sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29381/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** A key priority for me as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is seeking to ensure high quality early learning and care services for children, which includes having a valued and stable workforce.

It is part of the reason I have fought so hard for increased investment. I have pushed for investment to address affordability and access for parents, but also quality for children and the 26,000 staff working in centred based childcare.

Current pay rates, and the availability of only part-time / part-year contracts for many who work in the sector, do not reflect the level of responsibility that early learning and care professionals hold, nor the value of their work. We have a long way to go to rectify this situation, but I can assure the Deputy that I am doing everything in my power.

As the State is not the employer, I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions. I have instead repeatedly called for the sector to pursue a Sectoral Employment Order, which offers a viable mechanism to establish appropriate wage levels. My Department will readily cooperate with such a process when it is underway.

In the interim, I have introduced a range of measures to support employers to improve pay and conditions.

These include a 7% increase in ECCE capitation in 2018; higher capitation payments for graduates and Inclusion Coordinators; annual Programme Support Payments to recognise administrative demands; support for School-Age Childcare which will make it easier to offer full-time employment contracts; and a pilot measure to fund participation in CPD.

I have set out my vision for the sector, and a roadmap to achieve it, in First 5. This strategy commits to a Workforce Development Plan, to raise the profile of careers in the sector and to ensure sufficient numbers of staff at all levels.

The Steering Group for the Workforce Development Plan met for the first time on 30th May, and the Stakeholder Group held its first meeting earlier this week. First 5 also commits to develop a new funding model for the sector, which may open up new mechanisms to influence pay and conditions.

**Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries**

64. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes; the date by which it will make its final report; and if she is satisfied by the progress of the Commission to date. [29824/19]
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes has issued five interim reports to date, all of which I have published.

It is important to acknowledge that the terms of reference for the Commission envisage multiple lines of inquiry on complex issues relating to a number of quite different institutions over a period of more than three quarters of a century.

The Commission submitted its Fourth Interim Report in December of last year. In it the Commission advised that it would not be able to issue its final report within the previously agreed time frame, and it requested an extension of one year to allow it to complete its work in full.

The Government has agreed to this extension request and the Commission is now due to complete its work by February 2020.

In my view the public interest, and most importantly the interest of former residents, is best served by facilitating the Commission to conduct the comprehensive analysis required to make accurate and robust findings on the extensive range of sensitive issues before it.

The Commission is of course, independent in its work, and I am careful not to interfere in any way with its progress. I share the wish of all interested parties to see the Commission concluding its work by the agreed deadline of February next.

Recreational Facilities

65. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if consideration will be given to becoming involved and funding the supervised playground at Library Road, Dún Laoghaire (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30023/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I regret to inform the Deputy that the only funding provided by my Department for playgrounds is in the area of capital grants for play and recreation. Applications for this scheme are made through the Local Authority Play and Recreation Network.

I understand that the playground referred to by the Deputy is a private facility which has not been in receipt of funding from either my Department or its agencies.

My Department has never funded the supervision of this playground by Crosscare, and the supervisory posts referred to in the Deputy’s question would not meet the criteria for any funding scheme operated by my Department.

I regret that I could not give the Deputy a more favourable reply.

Child and Family Agency Funding

66. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if financial containment by organisations is having an impact on services (details supplied). [29934/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I understand that the Deputy’s question relates to financial containment and financial challenges facing Tus-
In 2019, Tusla has an allocation of some €787 million for the provision of its full range of services, an increase of 4.1% over its funding for 2018. Tusla’s funding has increased from €609m in 2014, a rise of some 29.3% over five years.

In common with many other public agencies, Tusla faces challenges in delivery of a quality service for children and families within a finite budget. In its Business Plan for 2019, Tusla identified a number of challenges, relating to the increasing cost of some services, and the continuing shortage of social workers and other professionals in the labour market.

Among the key drivers of costs for Tusla is in the area of residential services for our most vulnerable young people - those whose needs can only be met in a residential environment rather than with a foster family.

Another key driver relates to the increasing number of child protection and welfare referrals. For example in April, 2019, Tusla received 4,903 child protection and welfare referrals which is an increase of 852 (21%) since January 2019. This reflects a pattern of increasing referrals over time, which Tusla is dealing with.

The monthly average number of referrals in 2019 to date is some 5% higher than the monthly average in 2018.

Tusla is working with my Department to ensure that it provides a full range of services within budget.

In relation to staffing, Tusla continues its work to recruit sufficient numbers of staff including social workers. In this context, it is important to note that all necessary funding has been provided for social worker and social care worker posts.

The challenge in this area lies in the ability to recruit and retain staff rather than the availability of resources to fund them.

My Department will continue to work closely with Tusla in relation to service and funding issues throughout the current year.

**Community Development Projects Funding**

67. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the community projects supported by her Department; the reason for the projects receiving funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30024/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** A key priority for my Department is to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. In that regard, there are a wide variety of community projects supported directly by my Department.

These range from projects supporting early learning and care, local youth projects and community projects supporting the Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures national outcomes.

The most significant in terms of funding are:

The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) which provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. It is a universal and demand-led scheme, available to all children within the qualifying age range in each
of the two years before they commence primary education.

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that every eligible child can fully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality early learning and care.

Community Childcare Schemes which targets support parents on a low income to avail of reduced childcare costs at participating community childcare services, including the Childcare Education Training and Support Programme, the Community Employment Childcare Programme and the After School Childcare Programme.

Other projects supported by my Department include:

- Targeted Youth Funding Schemes which targets disadvantaged youth;
- Supporting Youth Information Centres across the country which provide access to information on rights, benefits health and welfare issues;
- Children and Young People’s Services Committees which support local community projects under my Department’s Better Outcome, Brighter Futures Strategy and Healthy Ireland initiatives;
- A variety of projects under the Dormant Account Action Plans including projects under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative; Youth Employability Initiative; Peer support relating to inter country adoption; Intervention to protect young people from the influence of organised crime in communities; and the Big Brother Big Sisters Mentoring Programme;
- The Area Based Childhood Programmes which aims to strengthen and develop prevention, early intervention, and family support services;
- City and County Childcare Committees which act as a local agent in the delivery of national early learning and childcare programmes;
- National Voluntary Childcare Organisations which support and represent 4,500 early education and childcare providers; and
- Childminder Development Grant and the Parent and Toddler Grant.

Youth Services

68. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to a report into an organisation (details supplied); and the way in which the issues raised in the report can be addressed. [29960/19]

72. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the number of staff in an organisation (details supplied) that are not based in the main centre of the organisation due to health and other reasons. [29961/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 and 72 together.

The role of the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) is to support the provision, co-ordination, administration and assessment of youth services in their functional area and to provide such information as may be required by myself as Minister for Children and Youth Af-
fairs.

As the Deputy is aware the CDYSB is a sub-committee of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board.

As such, any organisational concerns in relation to the CDYSB fall under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills and my colleague Minister McHugh.

I have not seen, nor been made aware of, the contents of any report in relation to the CDYSB, nor was any such report commissioned by my Department. It would not be within my remit to commission any report into a sub-committee of an ETB.

I must stress that any organisational or staffing matters in relation to CDYSB would be in the domain of the CEO of City of Dublin Education and Training Board, which falls under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills.

Child Protection

69. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to issues in respect of a service (details supplied) used by Tusla. [29933/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I understand the Deputy’s question to be about the practice methodology used by Tusla to carry out its child protection and welfare function.

In 2017, a decision was made by Tusla to adopt the Signs of Safety as the first national child protection methodology for Ireland. I understand that the implementation of Signs of Safety is well underway, and I have been informed by Tusla that it has been well received by frontline practitioners and by management.

The practice is safety-oriented and strengths-focused, and encourages practitioners to engage in a meaningful way with children and families. Signs of Safety focuses on the use of evidence and current research to inform planning, and I have been advised that the reception among social workers has been positive.

Tusla has engaged in a significant program of training for practitioners and practice leaders, delivered by the co-creator and leading experts in the practice through a series of themed, intensive workshops.

Signs of Safety is an evidence-based practice, and part of the implementation of the practice is to assess at a national level how successful that implementation has been.

Quality Assurance audits in relation to Signs of Safety were commenced in November 2018. The first audit focused on the rollout of Signs of Safety, and found that more than two thirds of files sampled showed evidence of its use. I have been informed that the next phase of auditing will evaluate the quality of social work practice and decision making over time, using the methodology.

Affordable Childcare Scheme Data

70. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the level of uptake by providers for the affordable childcare scheme in County Cork; when a list
of the providers in the county will be available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30026/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) is set to open in October 2019. It is a new, user-friendly scheme to help parents meet the cost of quality childcare. The development of the Scheme is a significant move forward in delivering quality, accessible, affordable childcare to families throughout Ireland.

Providers are currently being invited to sign a contract to participate in the National Childcare Scheme. To date, almost 2,300 providers have signed up for the Scheme, of which 168 are located in Cork County, and 49 are located in Cork City. A provider search function will be available as part of the Scheme’s online system.

To support providers, I have launched a National Childcare Scheme Capital Grant Initiative. This initiative offers a capital grant to participating service providers for the purchase of qualifying ICT hardware and software.

Applications are also open for a National Childcare Scheme Transitional Support Payment. This payment is available to providers who sign a contract for the National Childcare Scheme and is intended to support them in meeting the administrative requirements associated with transitioning to the new Scheme.

I will continue to work intensively to deliver this landmark scheme which will alter the landscape of childcare in Ireland, support families, provide a sustainable platform for investment and, crucially, allow us to continue to invest in giving our children the best start in life.

**Childcare Services Funding**

71. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase the level of grant aid to assist in the provision of childcare facilities both for community and private childcare providers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29899/19]

86. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase the level of grant aid to assist in the provision of childcare places; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there is a need in some communities to undertake large scale projects either in the expansion of existing childcare facilities or in the provision of new childcare facilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29897/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 71 and 86 together.

I am committed to ensuring that early learning and care and school age childcare is affordable, accessible and of a high quality. As the Deputy is aware, good progress has been made in this regard, with an increase in investment in this area of 117% over the past four budgets (increasing from €260m in 2015 to nearly €574m in Budget 2019).

Within these four budgets, a significant amount of exchequer funding was made available for childcare providers, whether private or community / not for profit organisations, to apply for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare capital grants. Capital funding is aimed at increasing the capacity of existing services, creating new services, and maintaining and improving existing services.
Each year my Department reviews the capital programmes as a whole and determines the priorities for Early Learning and Care and School Age Capital grants. This consideration necessarily has regard to many factors, including the financial resources available.

In 2019, my Department focused the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Capital programme on the expansion of early learning and care places for 0-3 year olds, and school age childcare places where this is most needed.

The capital strands have been made available to achieve the strategic priorities for 2019 as determined by my Department, having regard to the funding available. These were developed using analysis of the current state of the childcare sector, learnings from previous capital programmes and feedback and input from stakeholders, including childcare providers and Pobal.

The approved Early Learning and School Age Capital funding for 2019 was made available to childcare centres, crèches and other childcare facilities across three strands, as follows:

**Strand A (Early Learning and Care): New places for 0-3 year olds**
- €3.7m total approved (€50k max. grant)
- 87 applications approved for funding
- 1,321 new 0-3 places to be created: 205 0-1 places, 1,116 1-3 places

**Strand B (Early Learning and Care): Fire safety improvements (community only)**
- €0.3m total approved (€15k max. grant)
- 33 applications approved for funding

**Strand C (School Age): New places for school age children**
- €2.2m total approved (€20k max. grant)
- 118 applications approved for funding
- 2,308 new school age places to be created.

The capital funding has been awarded following the completion of a very competitive application and appraisal process.

Pobal have notified all applicants of the outcomes of the Capital decisions.

In addition to the annual capital programme, I negotiated that childcare be identified as a strategic priority in the National Development Plan (2018-2027). €250m in capital funding was secured for childcare under the Plan. This represents the kind of large scale investment in the sector by the State that has not been seen since the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) that concluded in 2010.

This investment will be essential to respond to the increased capacity we expect as the new National Childcare Scheme is introduced. The NCS will radically change how this country supports the cost to parents of early learning and care and school age childcare.

Research is on-going to determine areas of specific need that the NDP funding will address when it comes on stream in the coming years. The exact shape and priorities of this funding is currently being developed and information will be made public as it becomes available.

*Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 68.*
73. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if assistance will be provided to two childcare facilities providing childcare services to up to 120 families that may have to relocate during renovations at a centre (details supplied). [29692/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Hartstown Montessori and Little Sparrows Preschool are private childcare services which operate on the grounds of Hartstown Community Centre. I understand that remedial works are required in respect of key elements of the building. I also understand that the provision of childcare by these services may be disrupted while the renovations are carried out.

I would strongly recommend that the services contact Fingal Childcare Committee to seek support. DCYA funds 30 Childcare Committees across the country to support providers and parents. The local childcare Committee is an important source of expertise and information for providers and their local knowledge often proves helpful in addressing challenges.

Additionally, my Department oversees an integrated Case Management system operated by Pobal in cooperation with the local Childcare Committee. A dedicated team assess services facing sustainability challenges, and may be able to offer advice and non-financial support in respect of the specific circumstances reported by these services. I would therefore recommend that the services in question also contact Pobal. However, I do note that while my Department does provide funding to assist childcare providers through specific challenges to their sustainability, such as emergency relocations, these supports are currently only available to community not for profit services.

In the event that the services are unable to remain open while renovations are carried out, the local Childcare Committee will offer assistance to parents in finding alternative places for their children should this be required.

**Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries**

74. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to engage with the Mother and Baby Home Collaborative Forum; and her further plans for the next phase, for example, the appointment of a new chair. [29962/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Following the receipt of the Collaborative Forum’s first report, I signalled the opportunity to take some time to reflect upon the learning from the process to date. In this way the mandate of the Forum can be refined to further enhance the State’s engagement with former residents. The Forum itself also suggested a revisiting of these matters.

Delivering its first report within 6 months was a significant achievement and reflected the strong commitment and dedication of Forum members to this task. It was understandable therefore that the former Chair and a small number of members signalled their intention to step down when the first report had been finalised and they have subsequently done so. I am actively considering a suitable appointment to these current vacancies to ensure the continuity of the process.

I am currently examining how best to conduct a focused interim evaluation which involves the Forum members and considers important issues relating to the Forum’s composition and mandate.
I plan to engage directly with Forum members on the future of the Forum in the coming weeks. Further response on this will be available following my engagement with Forum members.

**Childcare Services Regulation**

75. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of her commitment to devise more appropriate Tusla registration standards for childminders; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29823/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am strongly committed to supporting positive reform of the childminding sector to enable more parents access affordable and high quality early learning and care and school age childcare. I intend to develop regulations for childminders that are proportionate and appropriate to the home setting in which childminders work.

The current Regulations (both for early learning and care settings, and for school-age childcare settings) are not tailored for childminders, and the extension of regulation to childminders will require a full review of these Regulations.

My officials are at the final stages of developing a Childminding Action Plan, which I hope to publish shortly in draft form, for the purpose of public consultation.

The Action Plan will cover a period of approximately 10 years, and aims to improve access to childminding as one means of delivering affordable, quality early learning and care and school-age childcare. My intention is to work towards an expanded workforce with many more registered childminders available. This will support the growing demand for childcare.

The Action Plan will enable parents who use childminders to benefit from subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme. The Action Plan will also aim to bring childminders into the mainstream of regulation, funding and support, and to recognise childminders for the valuable work they do for children and for parents.

In relation to registration standards, the Action Plan will support the quality assurance of childminders and the safeguarding of children by extending the scope of regulation and inspection to all paid, non-relative childminders.

In doing so, my priority will be to ensure that regulation and inspection are proportionate and appropriate for childminders. Public consultation will form an essential part of this process, and I look forward to working closely with stakeholders - and with childminders in particular - in the review and reform of the Regulations.

**Youth Services Provision**

76. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address the lack of provision of services for youth in Newcastle, Dublin 22 in view of the growth of the youth population in the area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29690/19]

79. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the lack of youth services in mid-western areas of Dublin; the steps she will take to address the issue in view of the negative impact it has on an area with the highest growth in terms of youth population; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29689/19]
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 76 and 79 together.

The overall budget allocation for the youth sector in 2019 is €60.4m in current funding. This is an increase of €8.5m from the youth funding provided in 2016. This level of funding supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the youth work sector. The additional funding will be used to support programmes in areas where there are disadvantaged young people and where there is a pressing need for targeted services to meet the needs of young people.

The Targeted Youth Funding Scheme has been allocated €35.18 million for 2019 to provide out of school supports to young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by strengthening their personal and social competencies. Young people aged 10 to 24 years of age who are described in the National Youth Strategy as marginalised, disadvantaged or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through the new scheme.

This reform will provide an opportunity to identify need and to focus funding on young people most in need of intervention. Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed in 2017, which mapped youth service provision across the State as well as an Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and a Service Requirement tool which was designed in collaboration with the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector and was officially launched in January 2019. This mapping will assist the Department and the relevant ETB in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

I understand that for 2019, 19 youth projects and a youth and community centre in the area referred to in the Deputy’s question collectively received in the region of €1.5m through the Targeted Youth Funding Scheme.

In 2018, 17 local youth clubs received in the region of €28,500 through the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme. It is estimated that a similar amount of funding will be utilised by local youth clubs in 2019.

Childcare Costs

77. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which the new national childcare scheme will improve childcare options for working families after it launches in October 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30011/19]

84. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to further expand the national childcare scheme after it launches in October 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30012/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 84 together.

Through the National Childcare Scheme and a range of other measures, I am committed to changing Ireland’s childcare system from one of the most expensive in the world to one of the very best. In designing the National Childcare Scheme, extensive research and consultations have been carried out to ensure that this goal is achieved and that the Scheme can help as many families as possible.
The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support. The Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. In this way, it aims to combat the poverty traps which may exist within the existing schemes, and to make work pay for parents. Many parents will see an increase to the level of subsidy they currently receive.

By making this shift and by tangibly reducing the cost of quality childcare, the Scheme aims to improve children’s outcomes, support lifelong learning, make work pay and reduce child poverty. It is also designed to have a positive impact on gender equality in relation to labour market participation and employment opportunities.

The Scheme has already been enhanced to expand the benefits for working families. As part of Budget 2019, the income thresholds used for assessing the level of subsidy to which a parent may be entitled were raised.

The significant increase in the Scheme’s maximum net income threshold from €47,000 to €60,000 per annum enables some families with a gross income of €100,000 to qualify for income-related subsidies. It means that an estimated 7,500 more children will benefit from the scheme relative to the original proposals. Over 40,000 other children, already eligible, will see increases to their subsidies.

I am also very pleased that I have managed to adjust the lower income threshold, meaning that maximum subsidy rates will now be paid to all families with a net annual income of up to €26,000 (up from €22,700). This ‘poverty proofs’ the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the very highest subsidy rates under the scheme. It will also make work pay for parents in employment or training as they will now be able to avail of help with their childcare costs.

Over the last four budgets, investment in childcare has risen by nearly 117%. However, I acknowledge that more investment will be needed. Historic under-investment in early learning and care has created a situation that has no quick solution. The new National Childcare Scheme will establish a sustainable platform to enable us to continue investing for years to come. The Scheme is designed to be flexible, allowing income thresholds, maximum hours and subsidy rates to be adjusted in line with Government decisions and as more investment becomes available.

Aftercare Services

78. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of young adults engaging with the aftercare service; and the estimated number of children in care at 16 years of age identified as likely requiring the services of aftercare teams on turning 18 years of age in each of the years 2020 to 2022. [29937/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Each year, approximately 500 young people leave care on reaching 18 years of age.

At the end of Q4 2018, the most recent date for which data has been published, there were a total of 2,496 young people receiving aftercare supports from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. 64% were in education or training, and 78% had an aftercare plan.

Of the young people who had been assessed as needing an allocated social worker, 92% have had one allocated.
A new set of metrics have been developed by Tusla to reflect the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015, and the revised Tusla Aftercare Policy. Reporting on the new metrics commenced in Q2 2018, and are available on Tusla’s website. The new data indicates that 393 referrals were reported for aftercare from Q2 to Q4 2018.

I have asked Tusla whether it is possible to provide the estimates in the format requested by the Deputy.

*Question No. 79 answered with Question No. 76.*

**Area Based Childhood Programme**

80. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of progress made in disadvantaged communities through the ABC programme and the prevention, partnership and family support programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29746/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme is a prevention and early intervention initiative targeting investment in effective services to improve the outcomes for children and families living in a number of specific areas of disadvantage.

Established in 2013 in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government to adopt an area-based approach to tackling child poverty, the ABC Programme was designed as a time-bound, co-funding agreement led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in conjunction with The Atlantic Philanthropies, originally in the amount of €29.7m for the period 2013-2017. As of 31 December 2018, the total funding provided to the ABC Programme was €38.7m. Of this, €23.85m was provided by DCYA and €14.85m by The Atlantic Philanthropies. With the closure of The Atlantic Philanthropies operations in Ireland, DCYA is now the sole funder of the ABC Programme.

In November 2017, my Department initiated a process, in consultation with key ABC Programme stakeholders, to consider options for sustaining the work of the ABC Programme within a new vision for a community based prevention and early intervention programme from 2019 and beyond. Following these consultations, the decision was taken to transfer the current ABC Programme to Tusla from September 2019 as part of the national Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS). For 2019, a budget of €9.5m has been allocated to the ABC and PPFS Programmes. €8.2m has been ring-fenced for the ABC Programme in 2019. A further €1.3m has been allocated for the PPFS Programme which will include two new national roles to support the ABC Programme.

The Development and Mainstreaming Programme for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) is a programme of action being undertaken by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, as part of its National Service Delivery Framework. The programme seeks to strengthen and develop Tusla’s prevention, early intervention and family support services.

PPFS was subject to an evaluation study by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, published in September 2018. The evaluation found that Tusla is developing a greater focus on prevention and that the agency’s organisational culture is increasingly inclusive of families, in line with the vision for PPFS. PPFS is currently undertaking a review process to ensure it delivers the best possible prevention and early intervention programme for children, young people and their families in the future, and to enhance the connectivity and alignment with the ABC programme as it completes its transition into Tusla.
In addition, a working group was established in May 2018 to support the transition into this new national structure that can build on the achievements to date in both the ABC and PPFS Programmes, and strengthen Tusla’s prevention and early intervention operations. This working group held its eighth meeting on 25 June 2019.

As part of this national structure, the ABC Programme will take a renewed focus on addressing child poverty and inform the delivery of prevention and early intervention initiatives, improving the lives of children and families throughout Ireland. In recognition of the need to further develop this mandate, research is being led locally and nationally by the Child and Family Research Centre to explore the potential of the ABC programme operation into the future in the context of the new organisational structure and the expectation that the programme will renew its emphasis on tackling child poverty. The outputs from this will include a document to inform the longer-term development of the ABC programme and a set of local area reports to guide future operation of the ABCs locally within their new organisational context.

Data Sharing Arrangements

81. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the client identification service has been halted; when it will be rectified under the Data Protection Act 2018; and when co-operation will be re-established between agencies. [29935/19]

   **Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am assuming that the question relates to the cooperation between Client Identity Services of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and both Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland for the purposes of information and tracing services.

   I became aware earlier this year that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection had notified both Tusla and the AAI that the CIS could no longer assist in processing data for those agencies, on the basis that there was no statutory basis to do so. I engaged with my colleague, Minister Doherty, in an effort to have this service re-installed, and a meeting took place at official level. My understanding of the position of that Department is that the co-operation cannot be re-established until the data sharing is underpinned in statute. The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 contains provisions to allow the sharing of data of third parties, for the purposes of information and tracing, and the enactment of that Bill will be the solution to the current difficulties.

   I am aware of the impact of the cessation of cooperation from the CIS on current information and tracing services. This in my view adds to the urgency attached to the enactment of the Information and Tracing Bill, and Deputies will be aware of my on-going efforts to reach consensus on that Bill, to allow it progress to enactment.

   I would like to put on record my appreciation of the cooperation and assistance of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to date. I recognise that compliance with GDPR obligations is the reason that the current service has had to been discontinued, hopefully on a temporary basis, and I look forward to the service resuming when the necessary statutory safeguards are in place.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

82. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to address the issues of the former residents of the Bethany Homes; and if she will make a statement
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): At their request, I have held a number of meetings with former residents of Bethany Home and their advocates in recent weeks. I welcomed the opportunity to engage and listen to the experiences and frustrations of those in attendance.

I was delighted to accept an invitation to visit the memorial in Mount Jerome Cemetery to the children who died in the Bethany Home.

One of the key issues raised by Bethany survivors is their desire for immediate access to a fast tracked financial redress scheme for the benefit of Bethany Home survivors.

At the meetings, there was discussion around the 2002 Residential Institutions Redress Scheme and the various calls for it to be re-opened and extended. I explained that the decision not to extend the Scheme has been reviewed by this and previous Governments without change.

I understand the disappointment and anger regarding this decision.

Bethany Home was one of the first institutions identified for inclusion when the scope of the investigation by the Commission of Investigation was being decided and its specific terms of reference were informed by concerns in relation to the care and welfare of children in this institution.

Given that these specific matters have not been central to any previous inquiry, it is not feasible at this interim stage in the Commission’s work, to pre-empt its findings and recommendations. Its final report is due to be completed by February 2020.

In the interim I am committed to on-going engagement with former residents of these institutions. I have engaged with the community of former residents, their families and advocates on this issue and I established the Collaborative Forum. Bethany Home survivors are represented in the membership of the Forum. The recommendations of the Forum have recently been published and Government has committed to advancing a number of measures in response to identified issues of concern.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

83. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of funding for the provision of supports for special needs children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29375/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Officials in my Department were in contact with the Deputy’s office, and I understand that the question specifically relates to supports for children with special needs to take part in school-age childcare.

My Department does not currently provide such supports. The Deputy may be aware that AIM - the Access and Inclusion Model - provides both universal and targeted supports for the meaningful participation of children with disabilities in the ECCE pre-school programme. The third year of AIM’s operation is just ending, and work on a 3-year evaluation of AIM will shortly commence. A review at the end of the first year of AIM, conducted by external consultants, was very positive, and indeed AIM has won a number of national awards.

The Government made a commitment in First 5 to consider enhancements to, or extension of, AIM to other groups of children. Such an extension might involve younger children (such
as under-3s) or children attending school-age childcare services, or it might involve children with additional needs other than a disability. However, any decisions on extension or reform of AIM will depend on the findings of the 3-year evaluation, other relevant developments, and the securing of necessary resources.

The Deputy may also be interested to know that on 21st May I launched a public consultation on the future regulation and quality standards for school-age childcare, and this consultation ended last week. The consultation included an open call for submissions, an online survey, a focus group session with school-age service providers, and an Open Policy Debate with a wide range of stakeholders. The consultation has provided rich information for consideration by my Department, and the findings may provide additional input into consideration of future supports for accessing school-age childcare.

*Question No. 84 answered with Question No. 77.*

### Affordable Childcare Scheme

85. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the national childcare scheme; her plans to ensure low income families availing of targeted supports will not be negatively affected by the roll out of the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29680/19]

88. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to ensure that no lone parent or low income family will lose money due to changes to the childcare scheme she is planning to introduce; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29382/19]

90. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the implementation of the affordable childcare scheme. [29822/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 85, 88 and 90 together.

The National Childcare Scheme is fundamental to delivering quality, accessible, affordable childcare to families throughout Ireland.

I am pleased to say that we are making good progress on the development of the Scheme. Many of the major elements are now in place in preparation for the Scheme’s opening in October 2019.

Following the enactment of the Childcare Support Act 2018, detailed secondary legislation and policy guidelines are now being finalised for my approval and signature.

I have formally appointed Pobal as Scheme Administrator under section 3 of the Act. This has enabled Pobal to open a Parent Phoneline. The phoneline is now available to assist parents or guardians with any queries on the new National Childcare Scheme.

Providers have been invited to sign-up for the Scheme and I am delighted that, to date, over 2,300 have done so.

A national communications campaign is underway. As part of this, my Department launched a dedicated website, which has received over 185,000 hits, and distributed over 60,000 parent information booklets nationwide. It also delivered a nationwide training programme to over 3,500 Early Years professionals.
In September and October, my Department will undertake further training for providers and will run a large multimedia information campaign to ensure parents are aware of their potential entitlements.

Of course the development of the Scheme is highly complex and has thrown up challenges. This would be expected with a scheme of this size which will benefit so many families across Ireland.

We are designing a highly innovative supporting IT system for the Scheme so that we have the option of a user-friendly, paperless, automated assessment process for parents. While the main IT system to deal with online applications is largely built, work is continuing on the supporting structures to deal with postal applications. With this in mind the experts overseeing development of the Scheme have recommended a phased launch approach.

In accordance with the expert advice, we are working towards delivery online, on time, in October. The paper based system will be available in January for those who do not wish to apply online.

I believe that this is the best way to proceed, so that the maximum number of parents can benefit from the new scheme at the earliest possible date.

The Deputy has also asked about supporting low income parents.

The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support. The Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. In this way, it aims to combat the poverty traps which may exist within the existing schemes, and to incentivise work and training or education for those parents who can engage in same.

Many parents will see an increase to the level of subsidy they currently receive. For example, a family with a child aged two in full-time care (40 hours) and currently benefiting from the maximum subsidy of €145 per week under CCS Band A, would see their subsidy increase to €174 per week, an additional subsidisation of €1,500 per annum.

I have also worked to poverty-proof the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the highest subsidy rates under the Scheme. Indeed, international reports have stated that the Scheme will significantly address affordability for lower income families, with analysis showing that Ireland will, for example, change from being the most expensive country in the OECD for childcare for lone parents, to 11th position.

Finally, arrangements are also in place to ensure that no one loses out in the initial transition to the new Scheme. Once the National Childcare Scheme launches, families can choose to switch over to the new Scheme or can continue to access their current targeted supports (i.e. effectively remain on their current payment) until the end of August 2020. My Department has committed to a review of the scheme one year after its commencement, and again at three years, but we will be closely monitoring the scheme and its impact on families from day one.

Question No. 86 answered with Question No. 71.

Family Support Services

87. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Government is committed to supporting parents in caring for young children at home in a range of ways.

Within my remit as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the policy priorities are to provide access to high quality and affordable Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC), whether parents work or are in education full time or part time, or look after their children at home full-time. These policies seek to support children’s optimal development, to support families, and to ensure that families can choose options to best suit their needs and preferences.

All children are eligible to avail of two years of universal pre-school, without cost. Almost 108,000 children are currently participating, many of whom are children of stay-at-home parents.

Current targeted ELC and SAC subsidy schemes are available to families where parents are in receipt of certain social welfare payments, medical cards, or GP Visit cards, many of whom are stay-at-home parents.

A universal subsidy is available to all parents of children from six months until their child becomes eligible for universal pre-school, regardless of whether parents are working outside the home or not. The National Childcare Scheme which will be open for applications later this year will make subsidies available on the basis of family income and will also be available to stay-at-home parents.

My Department also provides funding for parent and toddler groups to organise activities for parents and children in the community to support their development through play. Both working parents and stay-at-home parents participate. 449 groups were supported in 2018.

My Department is also developing a new model of parenting services covering key stages of child development and taking account of parents and children in a range of contexts and parenting relationships.

More widely across Government, there are various initiatives that support stay-at-home parents. A child benefit payment of €140 per child per month is available for all children. Budget 2019 announced an increase to the home carer tax credit to €1,500 per year.

There have also been a number of new measures to support parents to spend time at home with children in their early years. Two weeks of paternity leave and benefit for fathers was introduced in 2016. In 2017, there was an extension to maternity leave and benefit to mothers of babies born prematurely. Budget 2019 announced the introduction of a new paid parental leave scheme which will be available to both fathers and mothers from later this year.

First 5, a Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, published in November 2018, includes over 150 actions including a broad a range of measures to support families given their fundamental importance in shaping children’s experiences and outcomes. The First 5 Implementation Plan, published in May, sets out how these actions, many of which will benefit stay-at-home parents, will be progressed in the coming three years.

Question No. 88 answered with Question No. 85.
89. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the discussion she has had with the Minister for Health or Ministers of State in relation to youth mental health challenges in view of the high rate of youth suicide; the co-ordinated steps being taken by both Departments to try reducing the incidence of youth suicide and self-harm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29378/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I share the Deputy’s concern regarding the issue of youth mental health; and indeed it is a subject that needs to be tackled through a whole of society response - one that includes the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

While this is an issue that is led by the Department of Health, I recognise that other departments and agencies are critical in supporting the Department of Health as part of a concerted response to address the area of youth mental health. As such, and following collaboration with Minister Daly, who has responsibility for this brief, both departments established a Working Group in 2018 to scope connectivity in the area of youth mental health.

The group is made up of senior officials from both Departments with representatives from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the Health Service Executive.

The key objective of the working group is to examine psychological and mental health services for children and young people with the aim of agreeing a clearer continuum of provision and strengthening alignment between providers.

In order to secure the best possible output it is essential to establish complete and up-to-date information on current provision. My officials have been working with Tusla to establish greater clarity around existing service availability and provision, with a view to ensuring that all respective inputs from the agencies provide a comprehensive overview of provision in this area. Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 Tusla has responsibility for services relating to the psychological welfare of children and families but not for more acute services focusing on complex developmental issues and disabilities and more severe mental health problems. Community-based psychological services are delivered by the HSE with financial support from Tusla. Tusla also deliver specific psychological services through the Assessment Consultation Therapy Service (ACTS). ACTS provides multidisciplinary consultation, assessment and focused interventions to young people with complex needs.

Tusla and the HSE have in place both a Memorandum of Understanding and a Joint Protocol for inter-agency collaboration among the two organisations. Discussions are ongoing between the two organisations to ensure collaboration is effective and sustained.

A key initiative that will inform the further advancement of the work of the group is the Youth Mental Health Pathfinder Project, being led by the Department of Health. The operationalisation and resourcing of this Pathfinder Project is, I understand, currently under consideration by the Department of Expenditure and Reform. As this project represents the key development to ensure and enhance a robust response to support youth mental health, it is important that the work of the Working Group and indeed our respective departments align with this initiative. It is anticipated that the work advanced to date by the Working Group will directly inform the work of the Pathfinder Project and its programme of work. Centralising the work in this way will provide a clear overview of existing provision and proposed plans from across the relevant departments and agencies so as to identify gaps in provision, areas of alignment and areas for further development.

My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and with colleagues in our respective agencies, will continue to support efforts in addressing this crucial issue in a strategic
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and collaborative response, with the key aim of ensuring aligned and accessible youth mental health policy and service provision.

*Question No. 90 answered with Question No. 85.*

**Children in Care**

91. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that residential centres for vulnerable children are adequately staffed and resourced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29683/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Approximately 6% of the 5,989 children in care in Ireland live in residential settings. In April 2019 this amounted to 370 young people. Individual residential settings care for small numbers of children, often no more than two or three.

All centres are inspected against the relevant standards and regulations and the majority of inspections show evidence of positive relationships between staff and young people, and that the needs of the young people being met. In addition, Tulsa registers private centres and conditions are placed on the registration of private centres who fall below the standards expected, for instance the number of children in the centre. Centres that are struggling to meet standards do not survive in such a regulated environment.

The Deputy asks about staffing and resourcing in residential centres. I have been concerned to learn that in some centres there is a high turnover of staff and a dependency on agency staff. I am also aware of injuries sustained by some staff in the course of their work and the impact this has on stability in the centre.

Residential care is a small, but vital part of our care system and the basis for successful outcomes for the young people who live in residential settings relies on the experience, quality and resilience of the management and staff group in each centre.

My officials have been engaged with Tusla on the challenges posed in residential care and work is ongoing to provide a greater level of assessment and therapeutic input to the centres from the ACTS Team (Assessment, Counselling, Therapy and Support Team).

I also welcome CORU’s upcoming accreditation of Social Care Courses and registration of Social Care Workers, as I believe this will lead to the enhancement of professional social care as the lead profession in working with troubled young people.

**Adoption Legislation**

92. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to complaints made by natural parents regarding invasion of privacy in relation to an adopted person seeking contact with the natural parent; the way in which she can address these concerns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29958/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I have received a considerable amount of correspondence on the issue of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016, including from natural parents and people who were adopted as children. If the Deputy has a specific case in mind I would encourage them to send any relevant correspondence on to me.
I am aware that there are cases where natural parents have concerns about invasion of privacy in the context of an adopted person seeking contact. In particular I am conscious of cases where natural mothers fear that they will have no say as to whether they could be contacted.

It is important to bear in mind that the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 is concerned with individual’s access to information, rather than establishing contact between people. Notwithstanding this, the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 recognises that there can be a conflict between the right to privacy of one party, and the right to information on the part of another. The Bill seeks to balance these rights. I have engaged at length with the Attorney General on this very issue.

The Deputy will be aware that I recently informed the Seanad that the legal advice available to me is that the natural parent’s constitutional right to privacy must be reflected in the legislation. I am currently engaging with members of the Oireachtas and with stakeholder groups to reach a consensus on balancing these rights which will allow the legislation to progress.

Pending the outcome of these engagements, I hope to be in a position to bring the Bill back to Seanad Éireann in the autumn.

Child and Family Agency Data

93. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff employed under an initiative (details supplied) by county; and the grades of staff employed. [29936/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to inform the Deputy that as the data requested is not readily available my officials have requested that Tusla respond to you directly on this matter.

Youth Services Funding

94. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a progress report will be provided on the development of a single targeted youth funding programme; her views on whether funding is targeted at the most disadvantaged areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [29747/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Implementation of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Funding Programmes been a priority for my Department for some time and represents a significant multistrand change management programme.

Replacement of the existing four targeted schemes with a fit for purpose single targeted scheme is one of the key recommendations of the review. In July 2018 I brought the high-level scheme outline to Government for Information; this outline was arrived at following detailed consultation with the sector and young people, relevant evidence review and a sampling process. The outline stated that young people aged 10 to 24 years of age who are described in the National Youth Strategy (NYS) as marginalised, disadvantaged or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through the TYFS.

This outline has since provided the basis for further development of the scheme, the final drafting process of which is currently underway. In addition to development of the new scheme, significant other changes have been introduced including; in January of this year, four fund-
ing streams were successfully collapsed in to one scheme in advance of the introduction of the new scheme in 2020. In April 2019, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed between my Department and each of the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and the process of transferring funds to their functional ETB area began on a phased basis.

Throughout this reform my Department has been engaging proactively with the stakeholders and sample services in relation to various component of the new scheme. In 2018, 6 ETBs participated in a trial and co-design of the Area Profile, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement Tool (APNARS). The tool is designed to enable Education and Training Boards (ETB), who have a mid-level governance role in the new youth funding scheme, to gather and use available demographic data and local knowledge to produce an area profile of their ETB functional area to enable better targeting of services for young people. Based on the information gathered, the ETB analyse the needs of young people in the area and consider the extent to which these needs are being met within existing youth service provision. Completing the tool provides ETBs with a systematic and evidence-informed assessment of needs to inform judgements about priorities for service provision. It also ensures that youth services/projects funded under the new scheme are focused on working to meet the identified needs and key issues in the area in line with the stated objectives of the new scheme. The tool also provides a standardised national template for producing an area profile, needs assessment and Service Requirement document across all ETBs. The tool is a critical component in an evidence-informed approach to providing well targeted services to young people. Service Requirement documents will issue from ETBs to services/projects who are applying for funding through the grant application process on the targeted groups and key issues that are priority.

Unemployment Data

95. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Taoiseach the number of jobless households by county in tabular form. [30415/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household survey which provides quarterly statistics on employment and unemployment and is the official source of labour market estimates in the State.

The quarterly LFS labour market estimates 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 most recent figures available from the LFS are for the first quarter (Q1) of 2019.

The quarterly LFS results include the following jobless household indicators. The indicator “Proportion of persons aged 18 - 59 years living in jobless households” is calculated as the share of persons aged 18 - 59 who are living in households where no one is in employment. Students aged 18-24 years who live in households composed solely of students (persons who have indicated that their Principal Economic Status is Student) of the same age class are not included. The indicator “Proportion of persons aged 0-17 years living in jobless households” is calculated as the share of persons aged 0 - 17 who are living in households where no one is in employment. The table below shows the LFS jobless household indicators classified by sex, age group and NUTS-3 region in Q1 2019.

**LFS jobless household indicators classified by sex, age group and NUTS-3 region, Q1 2019**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUTS-3 Regions</th>
<th>Q1 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Border</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid-West</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South-East</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South-West</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTS-3 Regions</td>
<td>Q1 2019</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-East</td>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 0-17 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of male persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<td>Proportion of female persons aged 18-59 living in jobless household (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of persons aged 18-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion of all persons aged 0-59 living in jobless households (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Data

96. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons that are considered underemployed by county in tabular form. [30416/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household survey which provides quarterly statistics on employment and unemployment and is the official source of labour market estimates in the State.

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 most recent figures available from the LFS are for the first quarter (Q1) of 2019.

The concept of underemployment used by the Central Statistics Office occurs when a person in employment is willing and able to work more hours than they currently do. Thus, a person is underemployed if they are in employment and if they both want to work more hours than they currently do and are available to work more hours than they currently do.

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the detailed International Labour Organisation (ILO) status (full-time/part-time status and underemployment status) of the number of persons in employment by NUTS-3 Region.

In Q1 2019 there were 2,301,900 persons in employment in the State and of those 172,300 were full-time underemployed and 106,900 were part-time underemployed giving a total of 279,100 persons who were underemployed in the State.

**Table 1: Detailed ILO status for persons in employment (Full-time/Part-time, Underemployed) classified by NUTS-3 Region, Q1 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUTS-3 Region: Region of residence</th>
<th>Detailed ILO status</th>
<th>Q1 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Border</td>
<td>Full-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>132.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
<td>141.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTS-3 Region: Region of residence</td>
<td>Detailed ILO status</td>
<td>Q1 2019</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Part-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>182.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Full-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>149.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>15.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
<td>167.3</td>
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<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>33.2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Part-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
<td>46.3</td>
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<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
<td>26.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>213.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-West</td>
<td>Full-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>154.5</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
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<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
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<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
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<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
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<td>Total Employed</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
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<td>NUTS-3 Region: Region of residence</td>
<td>Detailed ILO status</td>
<td>Q1 2019</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
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<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
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<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>187.5</td>
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<td>South-West</td>
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<td>233.2</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
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<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
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<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>52.8</td>
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<td>14.1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>329.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Full-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>506.2</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>[6.6]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
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<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
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<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>100.4</td>
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<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
<td>135.9</td>
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<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
<td>82.6</td>
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<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>704.9</td>
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<td>Mid-East</td>
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<td>242.3</td>
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<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTS-3 Region: Region of residence</td>
<td>Detailed ILO status</td>
<td>Q1 2019</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Full-time employed</td>
<td>272.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time - does not wish to work more hours</td>
<td>48.0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)</td>
<td>[4.4]</td>
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<td>Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Part-time Underemployed)</td>
<td>16.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Part-time employed</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>341.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Midland                           | Full-time - does not wish to work more hours                                         | 92.1    |
|                                   | Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)        | *       |
|                                   | Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)      | 9.0     |
|                                   | Total Full-time employed                                                             | 102.5   |
|                                   | Part-time - does not wish to work more hours                                         | 14.3    |
|                                   | Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)        | *       |
|                                   | Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Part-time Underemployed)      | 8.5     |
|                                   | Total Part-time employed                                                             | 24.2    |
|                                   | Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)                                        | 17.5    |
|                                   | Total Employed                                                                      | 126.7   |

| State                             | Full-time - does not wish to work more hours                                         | 1637.6  |
|                                   | Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)        | 19.1    |
|                                   | Full-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Full-time Underemployed)      | 172.3   |
|                                   | Total Full-time employed                                                             | 1828.9  |
|                                   | Part-time - does not wish to work more hours                                         | 338.1   |
|                                   | Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is not available (Not underemployed)        | 28.0    |
|                                   | Part-time - wishes to work more hours and is available (Part-time Underemployed)      | 106.9   |
|                                   | Total Part-time employed                                                             | 473.0   |
|                                   | Total Underemployed (Part-time and Full-time)                                        | 279.1   |
|                                   | Total Employed                                                                      | 2301.9  |

*Estimates for numbers of persons or averages where there are less than 30 persons in a cell are not produced as estimates are too small to be considered reliable.

Parentheses [ ] indicate where there are 30-49 persons in a cell, estimates are considered to have a wider margin of error and should be treated with caution.

Data may be subject to future revision.

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

Reference period: Q1 January -March.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

97. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Taoiseach if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares. [30191/19]

**The Taoiseach**: Neither the Department of the Taoiseach nor the Taoiseach on behalf of the Department hold shares in any entity.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

98. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Taoiseach the contracts in which his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; and the duration of each contract. [30249/19]

**The Taoiseach**: My Department does not procure any security services. The National Economic & Social Development Office (NESDO), which is the only body under the aegis of my Department, does not procure any security services.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

99. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department holds shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30181/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe)**: There are no shares held in any entity in the name of the Minister for Defence or the Department of Defence.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

100. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the contracts in which his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30239/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe)**: I am advised that when a military installation is closed and is surplus to requirements all military responsibility for the installation ceases and my Department takes responsibility for maintenance and security.
In the case of former Columb Barracks, Mullingar, which closed in 2012, it was necessary for my Department to arrange to put security arrangements in place in order to prevent the premises being vandalised and becoming the focus of anti-social behaviour and to address any possible health and safety issues. Accordingly, my Department entered into a negotiated contract with Mullingar Lakeland Security Ltd to provide these services. These arrangements continue to apply and it is intended will remain in place until the Land Development Agency (LDA), which has confirmed its interest in the property, formally take ownership of the site.

Defence Forces Strength

101. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength of the Permanent Defence Force by rank and gender across the three services in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30375/19]

103. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits to the Permanent Defence Force to date in 2019 with regard to the three services; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30377/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 101 and 103 together.

The most recent figures, as of 31 May 2019, give the whole-time equivalent strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) as 8,751 personnel. The requested breakdown is provided in the attached tables.

The military authorities have advised that, as of 30 June 2019, 185 personnel have been inducted, as detailed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Inductions</th>
<th>General Service Recruits Male</th>
<th>General Service Recruits Female</th>
<th>General Service Recruits Total</th>
<th>Direct Entry Male</th>
<th>Direct Entry Female</th>
<th>Direct Entry Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruitment and inductions will continue throughout 2019 to ensure the Defence Forces retain the capacity to operate effectively across all roles.
10/07/2019

WTE (WHOLE TIME EQUIVALENT) STRENGTH OF THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE 31 MAY 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Air Corps</th>
<th>Naval Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIG</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WTE STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE 31 MAY 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Air Corps</th>
<th>Naval Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIG</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WTE STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE 31 MAY 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Air Corps</th>
<th>Naval Service</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIG</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defence Forces Reserve Strength

102. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength of the Defence Forces Reserve with regard to the three services by rank; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30376/19]

104. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional recruits to the Defence Forces Reserve to date in 2019 with regard to all services; the gender breakdown of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30378/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 102 and 104 together.

The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) is comprised of the First Line Reserve (FLR), the Army Reserve (AR) and the Naval Service Reserve (NSR). The Government appreciates the service of the Reserve Defence Force and recognises its importance in contributing to Ireland’s defence capability. The White Paper on Defence is clear that there is a continued requirement to retain and develop the RDF and it is currently on a development path arising from the recommendations of the White Paper.

As of 31st May 2019, the substantive strength of the First Line Reserve is 290 personnel, as
SUBSTANTIVE STRENGTH OF THE FIRST LINE RESERVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMATION</th>
<th>OFFR</th>
<th>NCO</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMY</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR CORPS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVAL SERVICE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of 31st May 2019, the effective strength of the AR is 1577 personnel and the effective strength of the NSR is 124 personnel. This is detailed by rank in the following table:

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF THE ARMY RESERVE & NAVAL SERVICE RESERVE BY RANK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LT COL</th>
<th>CDMT</th>
<th>CAPT</th>
<th>LT</th>
<th>TOTAL OFFR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>BQMS</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>CQMS</th>
<th>SGT</th>
<th>CPL</th>
<th>TOTAL NCO</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>TOTAL EFFECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>1577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>1701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effective female breakdown of the RDF for the same period is as follows:

EFFECTIVE FEMALE STRENGTH OF THE ARMY RESERVE & NAVAL SERVICE RESERVE BY RANK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LT COL</th>
<th>CDMT</th>
<th>CAPT</th>
<th>LT</th>
<th>TOTAL OFFR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>BQMS</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>CQMS</th>
<th>SGT</th>
<th>CPL</th>
<th>TOTAL NCO</th>
<th>PTE</th>
<th>TOTAL EFFECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A key ongoing challenge for the AR and NSR is to recruit and retain personnel. I am very much aware that there continues to be a shortfall between the current strength figures and those of the establishment which provides for 4,069 personnel. Recruitment to the AR and NSR is continuing. I am advised by the military authorities that as of 30 June 2019, a total of 66 new recruits have been inducted into the RDF in 2019. Of these, 57 (3 female) have been inducted into the AR and 9 (2 female) have been inducted into the NSR. A total of 129 new recruits were inducted to the AR and NSR in 2018.

Supports being provided to maximise recruitment to the Reserve include the use of social media and outreach activities by RDF members. Permanent Defence Force (PDF) recruit exit interviews now contain information on applying for membership of the RDF.

I would like to assure the Deputy that I remain committed to the ongoing development of the RDF within the framework set out in the White Paper for Defence.

Question No. 103 answered with Question No. 101.

Question No. 104 answered with Question No. 102.
105. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of suspect devices the Army bomb disposal unit has dealt with by county to date in 2019, in tabular form. [30379/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána have primary responsibility for the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. The Defence Forces Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams respond when a request for assistance is made by An Garda Síochána in dealing with a suspect device. The number of EOD callouts, which include viable devices, hoaxes, false alarms, post-blast analysis and the removal of unstable chemicals in laboratories, dealt with to date, by county, are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>Number of Callout to Suspect Devices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAVAN</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLARE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORK</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUBLIN</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALWAY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KERRY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILDARE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KILKENNY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAOIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMERICK</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOUTH</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAYO</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEATH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFALY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSCOMMON</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERFORD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WESTMEATH</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICKLOW</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Naval Service Operations**

106. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of days spent at sea by members of the Naval Service Reserve to date in 2019. [30380/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I am informed by the military authorities that members of the Naval Service Reserve have spent a total of 55 days at sea to date in 2019.

**Brexit Preparations**

107. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his EU counterparts have discussed the action they will take if the new Prime Minister
of the UK does not apply for an extension to the UK leaving the European Union on 31 October 2019; and the plans for such a scenario. [30017/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Any extension of the Article 50 process beyond 31 October would have to be based on a UK request, which remains a matter for the UK. Should the UK not ratify the Withdrawal Agreement, and in the absence of an agreed extension of Article 50, then the UK will leave with EU with no deal on 31 October.

In such circumstances, the EU would apply the contingency measures the European Commission and Member States have been preparing over the past two, and more, years and have been adopted in recent months.

At the EU level, this work has been set out in five European Commission Communications, the latest of which was published on 12 June, as well more than 90 Brexit preparedness notices and 8 question and answer documents. In the lead up to the 29 March deadline, the European Union adopted 18 primary legislative measures on a unilateral temporary basis to mitigate the worst effects of a no-deal Brexit, in a range of areas, from transport, fisheries, social security and PEACE/INTERREG funding, to education (Erasmus), mobility and trade.

At a national level, we continue to advance our extensive and detailed Brexit contingency work, including with our EU partners, to make sure Ireland is ready to the greatest extent possible.

This work is set out in detail in the updated Contingency Action Plan published yesterday. The Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update reflects the extensive work which has taken place on a whole-of-Government basis to prepare for a no-deal Brexit, and the work that will take place between now and 31 October. The Action Plan shows that while extensive mitigation work has taken place, the impacts of a no-deal Brexit will still be profound. This is an exercise in damage limitation.

Key areas for continued work will include preparing for Budget 2020, additional infrastructure for ports and airports, a new phase of the Government’s Brexit communications including an intensified engagement focussed on individual businesses.

**Election Monitoring Missions**

108. *Deputy Joan Collins* asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff by grade and location involved full-time in the operation of the election observation roster; his plans to increase the number of staff and to have all staff located in the same location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30125/19]

109. *Deputy Joan Collins* asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a review of the election observation roster is being undertaken; if so, if this review will include consideration of the provision of reasonable accommodation to observers with disabilities during the application process and subsequent phases; if persons committed and interested in election observations matters will be invited to participate in the review of the roster; when the review will be completed; if steps to form a new roster will be put into place shortly after the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30126/19]

110. *Deputy Joan Collins* asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the annual Irish Aid budget and the budget for the election observation roster in each of the past six years in tabular form; the reason the election observation budget has not been increased in
111. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the names of the members appointed to the 2018 election observation roster; the number of members who passed and failed security clearance, respectively; if those who failed have been allowed to undertake missions abroad; if his attention has been drawn to concerns that a number of the old 2013 roster members who did not go on elections missions in the previous six years of the old roster have now been reappointed to the new roster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30127/19]

112. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he conducted research in 2018 into the way in which other countries selected and recruited election observers, in particular the deployment of former politicians; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that half do not have former politicians on their selection panels and that those that do treat them like all other observers; the rationale for the policy to reserve 5% of the roster places for former politicians; the reason this policy was not detailed in the call to proposals that issued in 2018; if the place on the roster becomes vacant in the event that a former politician on the roster is re-elected to public office; the way in which vacancies on the roster are filled; if vacancies on the roster have been filled to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30129/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 to 112, inclusive, together.

The elections desk is based within the Development Cooperation and Africa Division of my Department. Staffing of the elections desk is proportionate to its budget and that of the Division as a whole, whose purpose is to deliver on the objectives set out in *A Better World*, the Government’s policy for international development published in February 2019. A review of the management of the election roster will be conducted by the Department’s independent Evaluation and Audit Unit later this year.

The budget of the Irish Aid programme (known as Vote 27: International Cooperation) of my Department from 2013 to 2019 is set out in the following table. The table also includes the election observation budget. A new five-year roster was established in January 2019 and will run its course. The increase in the budget for election observation in 2018 was in part to offset the costs of the mustering exercise which allowed the establishment of that new five-year roster. A mid-year review of the election observation budget is carried out each year and, if necessary, prudent and proportionate to other calls on the international development budget, additional funds may be allocated.

As the security vetting of the persons short-listed to the new roster continues, the position regarding the disclosure of the list of names of the new roster remains as stated in the responses to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 73 of 29 May and 117 of 25 June 2019. Roster members are only circulated with information on election observation missions once they have completed National Vetting Bureau, or equivalent, procedures.

The issue of reasonable accommodation has been addressed in the responses to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 60 of 23 January, 153 of 5 February, 65 of 6 February, 58 of 7 February, 124 of 12 February, 100 and 105 of 26 February, 117 and 119 of 5 March, 74, 76 and 81 of 6 March, 68 of 12 March, 157 of 26 March, 115 of 16 April, 73 of 29 May 2019 and 119 of 25 June 2019, and in the Information Note attached to this response.
A characteristic of the Irish roster has been the broad base of expertise which Irish volunteers have brought in its different iterations since it was first established. Each new mustering is an opportunity to refresh the roster, and to extend the opportunity to volunteer to a range of new potential observers of differing backgrounds. Election observers who have been elected to national office bring unique perspectives into observation missions, which can enhance their quality and credibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Vote 27 International Cooperation Budget (in € million)</th>
<th>Election Observation Budget (in € million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>497.08</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>479.16</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>476.62</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>486.43</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>486.61</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>500.13</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>544.93</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Departmental Shareholdings**

113. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30185/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Neither I as Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, nor my Department, hold shares in entities.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

114. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30243/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** For the provision of security services, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is currently in contract with Manguard Plus Limited, General Secure Logistics Service (GSLS) and Information Security Assurance Services Ltd. The details sought in relation to these particular contracts are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Contract Start Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Procurement Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Security Assurance Services Ltd.</td>
<td>On-site ICT Security Advisory Service</td>
<td>8 August 2017</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>EU Level – Advertised in the Official Journal of the EU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Contract Start Date</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Procurement Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manguard Plus Ltd.</td>
<td>On-site Security Guarding (Dublin, Limerick, Cork)</td>
<td>1 August 2017</td>
<td>1 year (extended once)</td>
<td>Dept of Public Expenditure and Reform Multi Supplier Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Secure Logistics Service (formerly Traenors)</td>
<td>Secure transport of cash</td>
<td>9 September 2014</td>
<td>1 year (extended annually)</td>
<td>Selected following a competitive tender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At both EU and national levels, public procurement is governed by a comprehensive regulatory and policy framework. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade adheres to the principle of competitive tendering in respect of its contracting for services, supplies and works. The applicable law and guidance is set out in the Public Sector Procurement Regulations published in 2016 under S.I. 284 of 2016, which implemented the European Directive (2014/18/EC) as well as the Circulars and Guidelines issued by Government. Implementation of these policies and principles ensures the Department gets best value for money and ensures that in general a competitive process is carried out in an open, objective and transparent manner. The Department is also required to use central Government frameworks when available.

**Northern Ireland**

115. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken to his UK counterpart regarding the Northern Ireland Budget (No. 2) Bill 2017-19 that was on the legislative schedule in Westminster recently. [30013/19]

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.

I have been working intensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in recent weeks in the talks at Stormont to support the leaders of the political parties in finding an agreement that will get all of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement up and running again.

Absent the power-sharing Executive and Assembly to agree and pass a budget for Northern Ireland, the UK Government has introduced legislation to provide authority for expenditure in Northern Ireland, including through the Bill referred to. This is further compelling evidence of the urgent need to get the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland in place again. Budgetary and other decisions in relation to the delivery of public services and the full range of devolved policy issues need to be made by the power-sharing Executive and Assembly, elected by and accountable to all of the people of Northern Ireland.

While the specifics of a budget for Northern Ireland are not for the Government to engage on, I have had extensive discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the difficulties raised by the continuing absence of the devolved institutions and on how both Governments can continue to work together and do everything possible to secure an agreement that will get all institutions of the Agreement working again.

All five political parties have engaged constructively with that objective in the talks at Stormont over the last number of weeks. Progress has been made across a range of important issues.
However, some key outstanding issues remain and finding final agreement on these issues will require genuine and courageous dialogue between the party leaders. The two largest parties have a particular responsibility to reach an accommodation to secure the formation of a new power-sharing Executive.

The two Governments have called on the parties to continue to participate in this dialogue with each other towards a sustainable accommodation for all. The Governments and the leads of the Working Groups will also continue to engage with all the parties in discussions on the outstanding issues. The Governments will have to make an assessment before long on whether it is possible to move quickly in this period to final agreement.

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

Human Rights

116. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to support the UN binding treaty on business and human rights in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30367/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Inter-Governmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises was established on foot of a resolution to the Human Rights Council in 2014, led by a number of developing countries, including Ecuador and South Africa.

Four sessions of the Inter-Governmental Working Group have taken place to date. In advance of the fourth and most recent session in October 2018, Ecuador circulated the zero draft of a legally binding instrument. The next session of the Group will take place in October 2019 and Ireland will work with our EU partners to look at how we might actively and constructively engage in the negotiation process, notwithstanding our serious concerns about the way in which the work of the Group has been conducted to date. While we are open to looking at options for progress on a legally binding treaty, we believe that all economic operators should be treated in a non-discriminatory manner. The draft treaty that has currently been circulated focuses on transnational corporations and it is Ireland’s view that any new treaty should cover both companies engaged in purely domestic operations as well as transnational corporations.

We would wish to see essential human rights principles reflected in any possible instrument, which should reaffirm the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and stress the primary responsibility of States under existing human rights obligations to protect against human rights violations.

Ultimately, if it is to achieve its objectives, any legally binding instrument should enjoy broad support among UN Member States to ensure its effectiveness as well as international coherence in the framework of business and human rights. On this point, I would note that of the 21 countries which to date have adopted National Plans on Business and Human Rights, 16, including Ireland, are EU Member States. We would like to see any new initiative build on, rather than duplicate, existing measures such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. Above all we believe that it should be rooted in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. In this regard, we are of the view that the UN Working Party on Business and Human Rights and the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights provide
appropriate fora for consideration of any new initiatives.

**Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme**

117. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the review of medical qualifying criteria for a primary medical certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30124/19]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Budget 2020**

118. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he has identified hidden fiscal
space for budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30286/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As I have stated on many occasions, an undue focus on the concept of fiscal space, which is calculated based on “one size fits all” European rules, is not appropriate for Ireland. Government budgetary policy is correctly formulated based on what is right for the economy given our position in the economic cycle, rather than a narrow, literal interpretation of what is legally 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.

Accordingly, the net fiscal space represents the resources net of various pre-commitments and other unallocated resources contained in the indicative budgetary package of €2.8 billion for 2020. However, if utilised this would adversely impact on the headline general government balance.

**Economic Policy**

119. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he has commissioned an analysis of the way to improve the capacity of automatic stabilisers to protect public revenues and stabilise expenditure in the event of an economic downturn; if consideration has been given to the impact that linking social welfare benefits to employment incomes would have on this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30288/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Firstly, let me emphasise the important role which automatic stabilisers play in smoothing the economic cycle. In the absence of discretionary policy intervention, the fixed level of welfare payments, for example, means that the welfare system stimulates aggregate demand within the economy relatively more during a downturn than during a period of expansion. This effect is what is known as an ‘automatic stabiliser’, where the tax or welfare system effectively ‘leans against the wind’ in a counter-cyclical manner. In this regard, it is worth noting that linking welfare payments to wage developments in the economy could represent a pro-cyclical policy action, serving to reduce the operation of automatic stabilisers. This is because the level of payments would rise in line with income increases, i.e. in an upturn, and decrease as incomes fall, i.e. in a downturn.

In addition, it is important that, as Minister for Finance, I continue to have the discretion to respond to cyclical changes in the economy. A commitment to wage indexation of this nature would significantly curtail this discretion, as it would absorb substantial budgetary resources. In fact, the ESRI has examined the impact of indexing both the tax and welfare system to wage inflation, with a recently published report estimating that this would cost the Exchequer some €1.2 billion annually.

For these reasons, whilst the Roadmap for Pensions Reform includes a commitment specifically in relation to the indexation of State Pension payments, indexation is not being considered as an across the board measure to support the operation of automatic stabilisers.

**Help-To-Buy Scheme**

120. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Finance if the help to buy scheme will be extended to March 2020. [30122/19]
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 is due to be examined in the context of the forthcoming Budget and Finance Bill process. It would be premature to anticipate the outcome of such an examination.

**Mortgage Lending**

121. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if a mortgage provider can make the age of a house a condition of granting a mortgage to an applicant that qualifies in every other way as a first-time buyer and not a first-time buyer, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30172/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Subject to compliance with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements governing the provision of mortgage credit to consumers (including the requirements in relation to ‘Knowing the Consumer and Suitability’ and to make a thorough assessment of the consumer’s creditworthiness and to calculate the market value of the residential property which will act as security for a mortgage loan), the decision on whether or not to provide mortgage credit to potential customers remains a commercial decision for lenders. Each lender will also have its own individual credit lending policies and lenders will also make their lending decisions in the context of such policies. Therefore, when assessing an application for mortgage credit the lender assesses the borrower’s creditworthiness and suitability for the loan and will also take into account other matters as necessary or considered appropriate to the consideration of an application for mortgage credit; this will or could include the value or condition or other relevant matter associated with the property which will act as security for the mortgage loan.

However, if a consumer (including a potential consumer) is concerned or unhappy with how their mortgage application has been dealt with by a firm regulated by the Central Bank, there are clear processes in place in the Consumer Protection Code 2012 for handling complaints and complaints resolution. In addition, where a consumer is not happy with the response received from the regulated firm he/she can escalate his/her complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO). The FSPO has the statutory powers to investigate complaints against financial services providers.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

122. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30184/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The following are Irish companies in which I, as Minister for Finance, am a shareholder:

- Allied Irish Bank - 71% of ordinary shares in issue
- Bank of Ireland - 14% of ordinary shares in issue
- Permanent TSB - 75% of ordinary shares in issue
- IBRC – 100% of all preference and ordinary shares
Home Building Finance Ireland – 100% of all shares in issue
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland - 100% of all shares in issue
Aer Lingus – One ‘B’ Share

For clarity, it should be noted that the shareholdings in AIB and BOI are part of the Directed Portfolio held within the Irish Strategic Investment Fund under direction from the Minister for Finance.

The following are shareholdings in international bodies under international agreements:

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – Irelands Shareholding 0.14%
- Asian Development Bank - Irelands Shareholding 0.57%
- Council of Europe Development Bank - Irelands Shareholding 0.88%
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - Irelands Shareholding 0.3%
- European Investment Bank - Irelands Shareholding 0.57%
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development - Irelands Shareholding 0.34%
- International Development Association - Irelands Voting Power 0.37%
- International Finance Corporation - Irelands Shareholding 0.05%
- International Common Fund for Commodities - Irelands Shareholding 0.53%
- International Monetary Fund – Irelands Quotashare 0.723%
- Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency - Irelands Shareholding 0.4%

The value of Ireland’s shareholding in the European Stability Mechanism and the European Financial Stability Facility are €1,273,188,572 and €452,616 respectively.

Regarding shares held in a personal capacity, the Deputy will be aware that details of registerable interests of Members of the Oireachtas are available on the Oireachtas website at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/register-of-members-interests/

Departmental Contracts Data

123. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30242/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In response to the Deputy’s question, my Department has not engaged in the contracting of security services in respect of buildings occupied by staff.

12 of the 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department are not engaged in contracts for the provision of security services. These are the Credit Review Office, the Credit Union Advisory Committee, the Credit Union Restructuring Board, the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal, the
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, the National Treasury Management Agency, the National Asset Management Agency, Home Building Finance Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and the Tax Appeals Commission.

The offices of the National Treasury Management Agency, the National Asset Management Agency, Home Building Finance Ireland and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland are located in the same building and do not have contracts in place for the provision of security services. In the case of both their current and new premises, building security is provided via the landlord.

Separately, NAMA has contracts in place to provide security for certain lands secured against NAMA loans and details of these contracts are included in the attached table.

The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council does not directly contract a security services provider; as part of a shared service agreement, the ESRI provides reception and security services to the Fiscal Council.

Details of the security services contracts for the remaining bodies are in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodies under the remit of the Department of Finance</th>
<th>Contracts for provision of security services</th>
<th>Name of contractor</th>
<th>Procurement process</th>
<th>Duration of contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of Comptroller and Auditor General</td>
<td>Provision of Front of House Services</td>
<td>Synergy Security Solutions</td>
<td>Mini-competition under National Framework Agreement for the provision of Security Services.</td>
<td>24/04/1917 – 30/04/2020. Possibility of extension for a period or periods of up to 12 months with a maximum of two such extensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of security systems maintenance services</td>
<td>The contractor name cannot be disclosed due to the nature of their work in maintaining security systems at the Currency Centre.</td>
<td>Tender between vendors under a Framework Agreement.</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provision of security management at the Central Bank’s ASP Enquiry</td>
<td>FSH Consulting</td>
<td>Quotation process in accordance with the Central Bank’s procurement policy to 3 firms as the overall value is less than €50,000.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodies under the remit of the Department of Finance</td>
<td>Contracts for provision of security services</td>
<td>Name of contractor</td>
<td>Procurement process</td>
<td>Duration of contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Bank Commission</td>
<td>Provision of static guard services</td>
<td>Aramark</td>
<td>Open Tender (published on e-tenders).</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarm Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>McDonald Group Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud View Remote CCTV</td>
<td></td>
<td>McDonald Group Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT – Anti virus software</td>
<td></td>
<td>MJ Flood</td>
<td>The value of each contract is below the threshold for the EU procurement rules to apply. FSPO received quotes from one or more competitive suppliers.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman</td>
<td>ICT – Mimecast</td>
<td>MJ Flood</td>
<td>The value of this contract is below the threshold for the EU procurement rules to apply. NAMA received a competitive quote for the services.</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investor Compensation Company DAC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Investor Compensation Company occupies the same premises as the Central Bank. Please refer to Central Bank above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Asset Management Agency</td>
<td>Security for certain lands secured against NAMA loans.</td>
<td>K-Tech Security and Property Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Revenue Commissioners</td>
<td>Static security, Opening /Closing service, Key holding, Alarm response</td>
<td>Noonan Services Group/ Bidvest</td>
<td>Awarded after a mini competition from an OGP Framework.</td>
<td>2 years Option of 2 x 12 Month Extensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Insurance Industry Regulation**
124. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the measures which will be taken to address issues (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30262/19]

**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 either to consumers or businesses.

However, I acknowledge the general problems faced by many consumers, businesses, community and voluntary groups, in relation to the cost and availability of insurance. I also appreciate that there is some frustration about the perceived pace of reform. Unfortunately, there is no single policy or legislative “silver bullet” to immediately stem or reverse premium price rises. This is because there are many constraints faced by the Government in trying to address this issue in particular the fact that for constitutional reasons, it cannot direct the courts as to the award levels that should be applied and for legal reasons it cannot direct insurance companies as to the pricing level which they should apply in respect of businesses seeking insurance.

However, I wish to re-emphasise how important this issue is for the Government. The Deputy will be aware that 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, including hoteliers. As part of this exercise, there has been extensive interaction with interested stakeholders, including the body mentioned in the details supplied, and 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 also published the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance. This Report makes a further 15 Recommendations with 29 associated actions. There has been significant work to date in implementing the recommendations of the two reports, including the following:

- the progression of the Judicial Council Bill in order to implement recommendation of the Personal Injuries Commission regarding award levels in this country, including a judicial recalibration of the existing Book of Quantum guidelines;

- 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;

- commencement of the 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). The Government is determined to continue working to ensure that these positive pricing trends can be extended to other forms of insurance, including those relevant to businesses.

With regard to the urgency of setting up the Judicial Council, Minister of State D’Arcy has worked closely with the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr Charlie Flanagan TD to progress the Judicial Council Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas as a matter of priority. I am therefore pleased that the Bill was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 9 July, and I expect it will be signed into law by the President shortly. Now that the Bill has been passed, it will be a matter for the Judiciary to put in place the Judicial Council and to establish the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. While the Government cannot interfere in their deliberations, I would hope that the Judiciary will recognise the importance of this issue and prioritise it accordingly by targeting an end of year completion date for an initial set of guidelines, which take account of the PIC’s benchmarking report.

With regard to a zero tolerance approach to fraud, I believe that one of the key achievements of the CIWG is increased coordination and cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the insurance industry with regard to tackling fraud. This includes the reporting of suspected fraud, as well as to how that fraud is recorded on the PULSE system. In addition, Garda Commissioner Drew Harris has decided for operational reasons to investigate insurance fraud at the divisional level, rather than establish a centralised insurance investigation unit, which may not be in a position to investigate incidents at a local level to the same extent. I understand that this approach is aligned with a general divisional-focused Garda model and that the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) will guide divisions and provide training in the investigation of insurance fraud. I believe it is important to accept the expert view of the Garda Commissioner in this matter and I understand that An Garda Síochána provided further detail on their approach at the Joint Oireachtas Committee for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach on 9 July. I am confident that this marks a key turning point in how insurance fraud will be investigated by An Garda Síochána in the future. There has also been recent success under *Operation Coatee*, which targets insurance-related criminality.

With regard to the final point made, there have neem a number of measures already introduced that will improve the Irish claims process, such as reform to PI AB, as well as the amendments to Sections 8 and 14 of the Courts and Civil Liability Act 2004. I believe that a key potential outcome of the recalibration of award levels through Judicial Council Guidelines is that there should be lower and more consistent award levels given. If consistency of awards can be applied in a broad sense, particularly for soft tissue injuries, it should have two very significant effects. The first is that there should be less reason for cases to go to litigation, as the level of awards granted by the courts will be aligned with those provided by PIAB; this in turn should mean a reduction in legal costs; and secondly, a stable claims and awards environment should mean that the reserves put aside by insurers to meet future claims would not have to be regularly adjusted to reflect new developments, such as increases in award levels.
In conclusion, I believe that the level and consistency of awards form a vital part element of our efforts to address the personal injuries claim process and the cost and availability of insurance. I would like to assure the Deputy that the Cost of Insurance Working Group will continue to focus on implementing the recommendations of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance in parallel with implementing those from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance. I am hopeful that the cumulative effects of the completion of the two Reports’ recommendations will include increased stability in the pricing of insurance for businesses and a more competitive insurance market.

**Government Expenditure**

125. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the additional resources for commitment to spending increases or taxation reductions available in budget 2020 if the projected 0.4% GGB surplus was reduced to nil; the estimated impact it would have on the structural deficit and expenditure benchmark; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30289/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I can advise the Deputy that the additional resources for commitment to spending increases or taxation reductions available in Budget 2020, if the projected 0.4% General Government Balance surplus was reduced to nil, would be c. €1.2 billion (as outlined in Table 10 of the Stability Programme Update 2019).

The subsequent estimated impact on the structural deficit would be a deterioration of 0.4 percentage points to a minus 0.8 per cent of GDP.

As noted above, a c. €1.2 billion general government surplus is projected for 2020. If this were reduced to nil (i.e. additional expenditure of c. €1.2 billion), it would equate to a breach of the expenditure benchmark by €1 billion given that net fiscal space for 2020 is €0.2 billion (as set out in the Summer Economic Statement 2019 - Annex 1, Table A1).

**Summer Economic Statement**

126. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated impact of the €0.5 billion committed to the Rainy Day Fund in 2020 in the SES being used for expenditure would have on the expenditure benchmark and structural deficit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30290/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Annex 1 of the June 2019 Summer Economic Statement (SES) shows the impact on expenditure benchmark compliance of, ceteris paribus, using the €0.5 billion committed to the Rainy Day Fund for additional expenditure; a deviation of €0.3 billion in 2020. In terms of the structural balance, using the Department of Finance’s GDP-based alternative methodology for calculating the output gap, the structural deficit would move from a projected 0.1 per cent of GDP in 2020 to 0.3 per cent.

Both of these estimates are based on an orderly Brexit scenario. However, a disorderly exit cannot be ruled out, with a severe impact on the public finances. For this reason, the SES contains both orderly and disorderly Brexit budgetary scenarios. The Government will decide in September – based on information available at the time - which scenario will form the basis for Budget 2020.

**Help-To-Buy Scheme Expenditure**
127. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the help to buy scheme in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; the projected full year cost in 2019; the number of purchases supported in each year and the projected full year numbers for 2019; his plans to extend the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30291/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Help to Buy incentive (HTB) was announced in Budget 2017 and backdated to apply from 19 Jul 2016.

I am advised by Revenue that the cost of the scheme by each year of its operation is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost (€M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019*</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*to 31 May 2019

At the end of 2017, 5,392 HTB claims had been approved, this includes a number of claims in respect of the period 19 July 2016 to 31 December 2016. 4,957 claims were approved in 2018 and 2,388 in the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 May 2019.

HTB is a demand led incentive and, as such, it is not possible to give a precise estimate of cost outturn or claims for 2019.

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 is due to be examined in the context of the forthcoming Budget and Finance Bill process. It would be premature to anticipate the outcome of such an examination.


### Budget 2018

128. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the additional yield in 2018 and the projected yield in 2019 to date from the decision to increase commercial stamp duty by 4% to 6% in budget 2018; if a comparison between the projected yield as forecast in budget 2018 and the outturn and the reason for any difference will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30292/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Budget 2018 in fact provided for the stamp duty on non-residential property to increase from 2 per cent to 6 per cent. It had been reduced to the flat 2 per cent rate in Budget 2012 (with effect from December 2011).

I am advised by Revenue that net receipts of Stamp Duty associated with all types of property for 2018 amounted to approximately €660 million, compared to a target of €785 million. It is tentatively estimated that around €488 million of these receipts related to non-residential
property.

While a monthly profile covering Stamp Duty on non-residential property only isn’t prepared, for the full year 2019 receipts are forecast to be €565 million. The forecast for all property (residential and non-residential) is €750 million.

While the 2018 receipts of €660 million do represent a 16% or €124 million shortfall against target, it should also be noted that they represent a €279 million or 73% increase on the 2017 figures.

Based on the information available, it is estimated that the shortfall against target is attributable to a combination of reduced activity in other property categories, as well as a lower than expected yield on the residential side due to the prevalence of the forward purchasing model.

The use of taxation policy instruments have long been recognised as a potential tool to discourage speculative investment in property markets. For example, in the July 2016 IMF Staff paper on Ireland, reference was made to the use of property taxes (either based on capital or market value, or annual rental value) and cyclical transactions taxes as tools that could help dampen the boom phase of a real estate cycle as well as discouraging speculative activity.

The low 2 per cent flat rate that applied to non-residential property transactions for almost 7 years prior to the Budget 2018 increase was introduced at a time when activity levels were very low. It can be viewed as a departure from the much higher rates that had applied over the preceding fourteen years and was justified by the exceptionally difficult market situation and lack of commercial output that applied at the time of its introduction.

With the Commercial Real Estate (CRE) market performing strongly, the disjoint between available yields and overall viability considerations between the residential and commercial sectors, and given the policy desirability of re-balancing construction activity towards residential investment and avoiding overheating in the construction sector, it was appropriate to increase the rate of stamp duty applying to non-residential property to 6 per cent in Budget 2018.

The increase of the non-residential stamp duty rate in Budget 2018 has contributed to a dampening of any potential for overheating in the commercial element of the construction sector and has encouraged a greater focus on increased home building. The measure has therefore contributed to the ongoing balancing and stabilisation of the Irish property market, which has seen an increase in construction in the residential sector and a moderation in price increases in the sector.

**Tax Data**

129. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to date of the CGT entrepreneur relief by year and projected cost in 2019 and 2020; if he expects to make future changes to this relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30293/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is assumed the Deputy is referring to Capital Gains Tax (CGT) Entrepreneurial Relief as provided for in section 597AA of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This provision was introduced in the Finance Act 2015 and provides relief from Capital Gains Tax for individuals disposing of business investments in certain circumstances.

entrepreneur-relief-statistics.aspx. The most recent year for which data are presently available is 2017.

For the Deputy’s convenience, the information available is presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost € million</th>
<th>Number Availed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost of the relief is dependent on a number of variables, such as the number of individuals availing of the relief at a particular point in time or the potential gain on the disposal of assets. There are therefore a number of factors which impact on take up and in projecting the cost of the scheme for future years and it is therefore difficult to provide costs for 2019 and 2020.

In general, consideration of Capital Gains Tax changes, including any changes to individual CGT reliefs, are undertaken within the annual Budgetary and Finance Bill process. As is normal, the Deputy will appreciate that I cannot comment on any possible changes in advance of the 2020 Budget. In addition, it would be impossible for me to comment on any possible changes in respect of future Budgets.

Departmental Programmes

130. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the costs to date in 2019 from the key employee engagement programme; the number of persons that have used the scheme to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30294/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Returns for 2019 will not be filed with Revenue until 2020. In addition, options may be exercised for up to 10 years from the date of grant.

In relation to the cost of the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) to date, as no exercises of options have taken place to date, there has been no cost to the Exchequer in this regard. KEEP provides for an exemption from income tax, USC and PRSI on any gain realised on the exercise of a qualifying share option. Where share options are exercised, and the shares subsequently sold, the taxpayers involved will be subject to Capital Gains Tax on the disposal. I am advised by Revenue that it is not certain when the first exercises will occur. Generally, a key employee must hold the option for 12 months prior to exercise and therefore 2019 will be the earliest date that individuals are likely exercise their options to acquire shares in the qualifying companies.

I am also advised by Revenue that 10 companies granted qualifying share options under the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) to 87 employees during 2018 (the first year of the scheme).

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that my Department recently carried out a public consultation process in relation to KEEP (along with other tax incentives which can support to SMEs). The purpose of the consultation process was to provide an opportunity for interested parties to participate in a discussion which is intended to help ensure that KEEP fulfils its role in an efficient and effective manner.

**Tax Yield**
10 July 2019

131. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the yield to date in 2019 from the employer PAYE compliance measures announced as part of budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30295/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In each Budget since Budget 2016, I have introduced a series of ‘compliance measures’ among the taxation policy changes. These are specific Revenue programmes or initiatives aimed at raising tax collection through enhanced taxpayer compliance. In each year I have also assigned additional resources to Revenue to help them to deliver these measures.

The Budget 2016 compliance measures were projected to yield an additional €75 million to the Exchequer. Revenue analysis indicates that the target of €75 million was exceeded. Conservative estimates show the measures in total yielded between €120 million and €150 million. Revenue’s analysis is published at [https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2016-compliance-measures.pdf](https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2016-compliance-measures.pdf).

Budget 2017 compliance measures were projected to yield an additional €130 million to the Exchequer. Revenue analysis shows the target of €130 million was exceeded. Estimates prepared on a conservative basis indicate the measures may have yielded over €210 million in the year. Revenue’s analysis is published at [https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2017-compliance-measures.pdf](https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2017-compliance-measures.pdf).

Budget 2018 included further compliance measures projected to yield an additional €100 million to the Exchequer. This included an additional €50 million from employer compliance projects in preparation for PAYE Modernisation. I am advised by Revenue that analysis of Budget 2018 measures is currently underway and will be published in October. PAYE Income Tax receipts in 2018 were €14.5 billion, €235 million ahead of target. I am advised that Revenue’s preliminary analysis suggests employer compliance programmes have contributed to this surplus and it is likely from the evidence reviewed so far that the €50 million target has been exceeded.

Budget 2019 includes compliance measures of €50 million from employer PAYE compliance initiatives following the new real-time arrangements (PAYE Modernisation) becoming operational from 1 January 2019. While it is too early to assess the projection, as it reflects a target for the whole year, I am confident based on previous years’ experience that it will be achieved.

**General Government Debt**

132. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated Exchequer borrowing requirement for 2019; the requirement in 2018; the projected borrowing requirement for 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30297/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I can advise the Deputy that the Exchequer recorded a surplus in 2018 of €0.1 billion, the first underlying surplus achieved since 2006 assisted *inter alia* by a strong corporation tax performance.

Turning to this year, the projected borrowing requirement is -€2.1 billion with the continued expansion of the National Development Plan; the refinancing of Irish Water’s commercial loans with more competitively priced State funded debt and a projected €0.5 billion payment to the Rainy Day Fund contributing to this deterioration in the Exchequer position. For 2020 it is projected that an Exchequer surplus of €0.4 billion will be recorded, with an expected contribution from NAMA helping to boost the cash position.
Further detail on the Exchequer balance, including projections to 2024, are available in the Summer Economic Statement 2019 as set out in table 3 therein.

**General Government Debt**

133. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the gross and net General Government Debt for 2018; the projected end-of-year amounts for 2019 and 2020; the Exchequer cash and other assets including ISIF cash and non-equity investments and the other cash and assets held by source; the amounts as a percentage of GDP and GNI; if the information will be provided in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30298/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As previously stated, my Department does not publish GNI forecasts, it does, however, publish forecasts in respect of nominal GDP and GNI*. Gross and net debt as a percentage of each of these variables are set out in the following table.

It should be noted that for 2018, figures are based on finalised CSO outturns for GDP. However, the CSO has not published finalised figures in respect of GNI*, therefore for 2018 projected GNI* as set out in the Stability Programme Update (SPU) 2019 is applied for the purpose of responding to this question. Furthermore, 2019 and 2020 figures are anchored to the official fiscal forecasts set out in the SPU 2019.

Exchequer cash and other assets, Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) cash and non-equity investments and other cash and assets held by general government are combined as Excessive Debt Procedure (EDP) debt instruments assets below as the level of granularity of each is unavailable for forecasts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Gross General Government Debt (billions)</td>
<td>206.2</td>
<td>205.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Gross General Government Debt % of GDP</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>Gross General Government Debt % of GNI*</td>
<td>107.3</td>
<td>101.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>EDP debt instrument assets (billions)</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>EDP debt instrument assets % of GDP</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>EDP debt instrument assets % of GNI*</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1=A1-B1</td>
<td>Net General Government Debt (billions)</td>
<td>177.6</td>
<td>177.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2=A2-B2</td>
<td>Net General Government Debt % of GDP</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3=A3-B3</td>
<td>Net General Government Debt % of GNI*</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Budget Timetable**

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134. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the procedure for delaying the budget beyond 8 October 2019 if required; the legal requirements under Irish and EU law to ensure a budget is published and passed; the specific dates in this regard; if it is permissible to delay the announcement of the budget for 2020 beyond 31 October 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30299/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As a member of the European Union, Ireland is subject to the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). As part of the SGP, the so-called ‘two-pack’ Regulations were introduced in 2013. This included Regulation (EU) No. 473/2013 on ‘common provisions for monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficit of the Member States in the euro area’. In particular, Article 4 relates to a ‘common budgetary timeline’ and requires that “the draft budget for the forthcoming year for the central government and the main parameters of the draft budgets for all the other subsectors of the general government shall be made public annually not later than 15 October”.

As a European Regulation, the legislation became directly effective in Ireland from the date of its adoption, on 21 May 2013. Thus, the legal requirement under both Irish and EU law that requires us to publish our budget by 15th October every year has its basis in the same European Regulation. There are no legal grounds, however, to delay the announcement of the annual budget beyond the 15 October.

In terms of the specific enactment of the actual budgetary measures, Article 4 of the above mentioned Regulation further provides that the “budget for the central government shall be adopted or fixed upon and made public annually not later than 31 December”.

In line with the requirements of the Regulation, last month the Government agreed that Budget 2020 will take place on Tuesday 8 October 2019. This allows for the budgetary measures to be presented and debated in the Oireachtas, in advance of the formal transmission to the European Commission of the Draft Budgetary Plan, by 15 October 2019.

**State Assets**

135. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of Exchequer cash and liquid assets currently on hand; the reason for such a large amount; the carrying cost of this for 2019; the amount of debt and bonds to be refinanced or paid in 2019; the amount of debt raised in 2019 to date by the NTMA; the amount expected to be raised in the rest of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30302/19]

136. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if the State is carrying large cash reserves in the event of a hard Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30304/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 and 136 together.

I am advised by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) that the Exchequer cash/liquid asset balances were just over €25 billion at end-June 2019.

It is important to give some context to this large balance.

The NTMA is continuing with its strategy of pre-funding to meet future redemptions. It adopts a prudent approach to the Exchequer’s funding requirement which gives it confidence that it can meet the Exchequer’s funding needs, irrespective of the risks – such as Brexit – that might emerge.
The NTMA issued €10.4 billion of benchmark bonds in the first half of the year. This means that almost 75% of the minimum of the €14-€18 billion 2019 bond funding range has already been completed. This issuance had a weighted average yield of just below 1.2% and a weighted average maturity of 18.5 years. There is a bond auction of €1 billion scheduled for tomorrow, 11 July and a further auction planned for September. The NTMA also raised €0.3 billion earlier this year through the issue of an inflation linked bond, bringing total medium and long-term issuance so far this year to close to €11 billion.

Over the next 15 months there are three Government bond maturities totalling €23 billion. Over that same period five tranches of the UK bilateral loan will mature. This brings total medium and long-term debt maturities to over €25 billion in that time.

It is important to note that increased activity in short-term markets means that over half of the current cash balance is funded from short-term debt; some of which will be repaid before year-end.

The NTMA has already repaid one bond this year – €7.1 billion in June – and there is a second bond maturity of €6 billion in October. The first tranche of the UK bilateral loan matured in April and two more tranches will mature before year-end; one this month and one in September. Each maturity amounts to £0.4 billion.

The cost of holding cash balances has been mitigated by the favourable interest rate environment which has allowed the NTMA to issue short-term debt at negative interest rates. The estimated cost of the portion of the cash funded from medium to long-term bond issuance is approximately €1 million per month per €1 billion of borrowing.

The NTMA have advised me that the cash balances will decline in the coming months such that it expects to hold approximately €13 billion at year-end.

**Tax Credits**

137. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the value of payable refundable research and development tax credits paid out by the Revenue Commissioners in each year since 2009 to 2018 to companies that did not pay corporation tax in each year; the estimated refunds or payable amounts to be paid out in 2018 and to date in 2019; the cost of the tax credit in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30305/19]

138. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies that claimed payable refundable research and development tax credits in each year since 2009 to date; the highest refund paid out in each year in tabular form; the average value of a refund in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30306/19]

139. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the projected savings in 2019 and 2020, respectively, if the research and development tax credit was no longer refundable or payable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30307/19]

140. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the outstanding liability to the State from refundable payable research and development credits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30308/19]

141. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons in each year since it was introduced who have had their personal income tax bill reduced through the use of the research and development tax credit; the average amount by which income tax bills
were reduced in each year; the highest amount in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30309/19]

142. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the companies that have benefitted from payable refundable research and development tax credits and not paid corporation tax in that year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30310/19]

143. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the reason no supporting document in respect of qualifying research and development activity is required at the point of filing the CT1 form when claiming such repayable tax credits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30311/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 to 143, inclusive, together.

I am advised by Revenue that detailed statistical information in respect of the Research & Development (R&D) credit is available at https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/r-and-d-tax-credits.aspx for 2012 to 2017 (earlier years are not readily available and estimates of refunds for future years are not prepared).

Regarding Questions 30305/19, 30306/19 and 30310/19, the published statistics include the cost of repayable tax credits (page 3). Where there is no Corporation Tax liability in a given year, a company may claim to have the credit paid to them in 3 instalments over a period of 33 months. The following table shows the number of companies and the average refund amount. Due to Revenue’s obligation to observe confidentiality for taxpayer information, it is not possible to show the highest refund.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Companies</th>
<th>Average Refund €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>127,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>215,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>305,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>349,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>230,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>147,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding Questions 30307/19 and 30308/19, it is not possible to accurately estimate the savings if the R&D tax credit was no longer payable, which would require an estimate of the outstanding liability to the State from refundable payable research and development credits, as information in respect of either the outstanding current liability or future expenditure is not available from tax returns. However, on the basis of claims from the 2017 tax returns, it is tentatively estimated that the full year gain from abolishing the refundable credits aspect of the R&D tax credit could be in the region of €150m.

Regarding Question 30309/19, information in respect of relief for key employees engaged in research and development activities is available on the tax returns for the years 2013 to 2017. Tax returns for later years are not yet available. The number of individuals claiming the relief for the years 2013, 2015 and 2017 was less than 10 in each of these years, with a cost in each year of less than €0.05 million. For 2014 there were 25 individuals with an average claim of €2,721. For 2016 there were 11 individuals with average claim of €4,438 The highest claim cannot be provided due to Revenue’s need to protect taxpayer confidentiality.

Finally regarding question 30311/19, I am advised by Revenue that companies currently claim the R&D tax credit when making their self-assessed tax return. Accordingly, there is no need for them to provide supporting documentation at the point of claim.
Revenue carries out a programme of targeted risk driven compliance interventions on self-assessment tax returns. Claims for the R&D tax credit fall within the scope and is one area of focus for this programme. Revenue is of the view that this is the most effective way for them to ensure that only valid claims for the research and development credit qualify as repayable tax credits.

**Betting Regulations**

144. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the additional and total yield that has accrued to date in 2019 from increasing the betting tax from 1% to 2%; the projected yield for the year; the areas to which the revenue raised is apportioned for 2019; the amount allocated to the horse and greyhound training fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30312/19]

145. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if a breakdown is available of the sports on which bets are placed from which the betting duty is raised; if he will amend the appropriate legislation to secure this or request the relevant companies to provide the data in a usable format; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30313/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 145 together.

Betting Tax is paid on a quarterly basis and in arrears (i.e. the returns received in April 2019 cover the period January to March 2019. The first quarter returns yielded €22 million and it is estimated that €11 million of this amount arose from the increase in the rate to 2%. The second quarterly returns for 2019 covering the period April to June are due later this month.

Overall, Betting Tax is expected to yield €91 million in 2019 (which incorporates returns made in respect of the fourth quarter of 2018, based on the 1% rate), an increase of €39 million compared to the €52 million collected in 2018. Most of the forecasted increase is due to the change in the rate.

Betting duty receipts go to the Central Fund. Section 12 of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001 provided that the Horse and Greyhound Fund would each year be financed by an amount equal to the revenue from excise duty on off-course betting in the preceding year or the year 2000 funding levels increased by reference to the Consumer Price Index, whichever was greater. This formula applied for the years 2001-2008. However since 2009, the level by which the Fund is to be increased has been decided by the Minister for Agriculture in the context of the annual budgetary process.

I am advised by Revenue that a breakdown is not collected from Bookmakers of the events on which bets are placed for the purposes of Betting Duty. Betting Duty is applied based on a rate of 2% of the value of any bet entered into with a bookmaker. It is not necessary for Revenue to collect information on the underlying events linked to bets which are liable to Betting Duty.

Accordingly, I have no plans to amend legislation for the purposes of collecting information on the events giving rise to bets which are liable to Betting Duty.

**Knowledge Development Box**

146. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of claimants of the
Knowledge Development Box in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in tabular form; the projected number of claimants in 2019 and 2020 respectively; the cost in each year to date; the projected cost in 2019 for tax planning purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30314/19]

147. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the value of intellectual property subject to the KDB tax rate; his plans to extend the scheme; his plans to review the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30315/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 146 and 147 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the most recent data on the annual cost and the number of claimants of the Knowledge Development Box (KDB) for the years 2016 and provisional figures for 2017 are published on page 18 of Revenue’s paper on 2018 Corporation Tax payments and 2017 Corporation Tax returns. This information is available at www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/ct-analysis-2019.pdf.

In this regard, the Deputy may be aware that a claimant company has a period of up to 24 months to make a claim for KDB relief. It is anticipated that companies will make use of the 24 month time frame available. Therefore more claims in respect of the year ended 31 December 2017 may be made by September 2019.

No data in respect of 2018 will be available until the Corporation Tax returns for the accounting years ended in 2018 are filed and analysed. Likewise, data on later years are not currently available.

I am further advised that, due to the small number of KDB claims and Revenue’s obligation to protect the confidentiality of taxpayer data, it is not possible to provide further information on claimants.

As the KDB was introduced for accounting periods ending on or after 1 January 2016 it has not been subject to an ex post evaluation yet. The KDB has a sunset clause of 31 December 2020, therefore an ex post evaluation of the relief will occur prior to Budget 2021. This allows my Department time to monitor the relief and assess its continued relevance.

**Banking Sector Data**

148. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the mechanism for calculating the bank levy; the way in which it is apportioned between institutions; the estimated yield that would result in 2019 from doubling the value of the levy and individual charge that would apply to each relevant bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30316/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that section 126AA of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 imposes an annual levy on banks for each of the years 2017 to 2021 that is intended to raise a fixed amount of €150 million in each year. This fixed amount is apportioned between the banks on the basis of the amount of deposit interest retention tax (DIRT) paid by a particular bank in a specified year (the base year). The amount of the levy paid by a particular bank must therefore change whenever the base year changes. A change in the base year necessitates a change in the rate of the levy to ensure that the overall fixed amount of the yield is maintained.

The levy is currently charged at the rate of 59% of the DIRT paid in the 2015 base year, the base year for the years 2017 and 2018. The year 2017 is the base year for the years 2019 and
2020. In 2017 approximately €88 million DIRT was paid which was significantly lower than the amount paid in 2015. If left unchanged, the current rate of 59% would yield only €52 million when the levy for 2019 is due to be paid on 20 October 2019. The doubling of the current rate to 118% would yield approximately €104 million. The rate required to maintain the €150 million yield for the years 2019 and 2020 is 170%.

I announced in May that, to ensure that the €150 million yield is maintained, I intend to bring forward a Financial Resolution on Budget night 2019 increasing the rate of the levy to 170% to be charged on DIRT payments made in 2017. This will be subject to the enactment of Finance Bill 2019.

I am also advised by Revenue that, under section 851A Taxes Consolidation Act 1999, confidential taxpayer information may only be disclosed by Revenue in certain specified circumstances. These circumstances do not include the details of DIRT payments made by the banks who are subject to the bank levy. I cannot therefore provide details of the amount of the levy that currently applies, or that will apply, to individual banks.

Banking Sector Data

149. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the dividends received from the public shareholdings in Irish banks in 2018; the manner in which the revenue was used; the projected dividends expected in 2019; his policy on the use of dividends from the State shareholdings in financial resolutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30317/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The State’s shareholding in Allied Irish Banks and Bank of Ireland are directed investments under the Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) and it receives dividends from these investments. The state’s shareholding in PTSB is held by the exchequer, the bank has not paid a dividend in recent years.

The following dividends were received by the ISIF in 2018 and 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irish Banks</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIB</td>
<td>€232m</td>
<td>€328m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOI</td>
<td>€17m</td>
<td>€24m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that the dividend received by the ISIF in each year relates to the previous financial year in the banks. Hence the dividend received in 2018 relates to AIB’s/BOI’s 2017 financial year etc.

The ISIF allocates the dividends received into its discretionary portfolio for investment. Under the ISIF’s investment strategy ISIF investments must be made on a commercial basis and in a way that supports economic activity and employment in the State. The latest strategy was announced on 1st February 2019 and can be found at https://isif.ie/news/press-releases/ireland-strategic-investment-fund-announces-new-investment-strategy-to-focus-on-5-key-priority-themes-and-publishes-update-on-2018-investment-performance.

The Deputy should note that the Government is not permitted to make withdrawals from the Discretionary Portfolio before 2025. Beyond 2025, the ISIF can make a dividend payment of up to 4% per annum to the Exchequer. Further details can be found in this publication on the ISIF from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO): https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBudgetOffice/2019/2019-02-14_an-overview-and-analysis-of-the-ireland-strategic-investment-fund_en.pdf.
150. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the dividends received from publicly owned enterprises and semi-State companies in 2018, in tabular form; the projected dividends in 2019; if he has requested additional or special dividends in 2019; his policy on these dividends; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30318/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The following table lists the dividends paid to the Exchequer by commercial State-sponsored bodies in 2018. Expected dividends from individual bodies is commercially sensitive information, however, as per the *Stability Programme Update 2019*, I have budgeted for a total of €249.4 million in dividend receipts in 2019, of which €68.6 million has been received to end-June.

Though a special dividend is expected from Ervia in 2019 in respect of the sale of Bord Gáis Energy, I have not requested any further special or additional dividends in 2019. Dividends are received to the Central Fund and are used for general expenditure.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial State Sponsored Body (CSSB) Dividends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Aviation Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,458,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity Supply Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33,056,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Port Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12,173,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coillte Teoranta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin Airport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Cork Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>714,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eirgrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ervia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139,089,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Waterford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon Foynes Port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>261,190,621</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VAT Exemptions**

151. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 42 of 3 December 2014, his views on whether the two supplements specified in the question, probiotics and glucosamine could legally qualify as zero rated food supplements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30362/19]

152. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the reason it is not possible to retain the zero rate of VAT on food supplements as a class of food products recognised by the State in legislation in view of the fact that this class of product has been sold at the zero rate of VAT since that rate was first introduced in 1973 and continues to be sold at that rate to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30363/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 151 and 152 together.
The standard rate of VAT applies to food supplements. However, a Revenue concession allowed the zero rate to be applied to certain types of vitamins, minerals and fish oils. Because of difficulties in interpretation, the Revenue Commissioners decided to remove this concession with effect from 1 March 2019 so that all food supplements will be charged at the standard VAT rate. However, independent of Revenue’s decisions on interpretation, I agreed during the recent Finance Bill to put in place a process, that will conclude in the 2019 Tax Strategy Group Paper, to examine some of the policy choices around the VAT treatment of food supplements. Revenue responded by delaying the withdrawal of its concessionary zero rating of the food supplement products concerned until 1 November 2019. This will allow time for the enactment of any legislative changes in the context of Budget 2020.

My Department has recently concluded the public consultation on the taxation of food supplement products. The consultation sought input from a wide range of interested parties, including health and nutrition experts as well as my colleague the Minister for Health, to ensure that any legislative changes brought forward are evidence based. Officials in my department reviewed the submissions received and this review was presented to a meeting of the Tax Strategy Group (TSG) on 9th July. The TSG Papers will be published on the Department’s website shortly.

With regard to Parliamentary Question No. 42 of 3 December 2014, and the two supplements specified in the Question, probiotics and glucosamine, the case remains that there is insufficient information provided to make a determination. If the Deputy could provide more information on the food supplements in question, the Revenue Commissioners can advise on their correct VAT treatment as appropriate.

It should also, however, be noted that human oral medicines, including certain folic acid and other vitamin and mineral products, licensed by the Health Products Regulatory Association will continue to apply at the zero rate of VAT. Infant foods will also continue to be zero rated.

**Garda Resources**

153. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding has been provided for the development of property and evidence management stores in the Kildare Garda division. [30166/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Capital Investment Plan for An Garda Síochána 2016 –2021, provides for funding for the provision of Property Exhibits Management Stores (PEMS) at several locations, including Naas Garda Station, Co. Kildare, which has been identified as the preferred location for the Kildare Garda Division.

**Northern Ireland**

154. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the authorities in Northern Ireland and with the EU Commission about the proposed PEACE PLUS programme; the projected timeframe for its introduction; the measures that will be included in the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30392/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Irish Government has consistently maintained its strong commitment both to the full implementation
of the current PEACE and INTERREG programmes and to a successor programme post-2020. My officials and I have worked to ensure that this important funding continues after Brexit.

I was pleased, therefore, that in May 2018, the European Commission included a proposal for a special new PEACE PLUS programme that will build on and continue the work of both PEACE and INTERREG in its proposals for 2021-2027 cohesion policy. I warmly welcome this proposal which is being advanced as part of the ongoing work on the draft cohesion policy regulations and the Multiannual Financial Framework. I also welcome the firm and reiterated commitment of the UK Government to the PEACE PLUS programme.

The PEACE PLUS programme will cover the 2021-2027 programming period. My officials have already commenced initial work with their counterparts in Northern Ireland and in the Special EU Programmes Body on preparations for this new programme. Detailed development work will take place during 2019 and 2020. The draft programme will then be submitted to the European Commission for approval and the aim will to be for the programme to begin as soon as possible after the start of 2021.

The specific themes and activities to be supported in PEACE PLUS will be established during the detailed programme development process co-ordinated by the Special EU Programmes Body. This process will include comprehensive stakeholder engagement and public consultation. The themes selected will be in line with the policy objectives and the overall thematic areas set out in the cohesion policy regulations.

**Budget Measures**

155. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding will be provided in budget 2020 to meet the potential costs of the claim regarding public service status for school secretaries and caretakers paid from the ancillary grant. [30130/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The budgetary allocations for 2020 will be decided by Cabinet as part of the annual estimates process and announced in the Budget in October. The prioritisation of measures, within that allocation, for the Education Sector is a matter for the Minister for Education and Skills.

**Flood Prevention Measures**

156. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the flooding prevention plans for Ballybofey and Stranorlar, County Donegal; if the allocated funding has been spent to date; the timeline for completing the project; his further plans for flooding prevention in the towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30133/19]

157. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the flooding prevention plans for Castlefinn, County Donegal; the budget for the works; if the funding has been spent to date; the timeline for the completion of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30134/19]

158. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the flooding prevention plans for Lifford, County Donegal; the budget for this project; if the funding has been spent to date; the timeline for the complete delivery of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30135/19]
159. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the flooding prevention plans for Glenties, County Donegal; the extent of the planned project; if a budget is secured for the proposed project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30136/19]

160. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the flooding prevention plans for Downings, County Donegal; the extent of intended flooding prevention plans for the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30137/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 156 to 160, inclusive, together.

Fifteen projects were identified in County Donegal in the Flood Risk Management Plans that I announced in May 2018. Following consultation and discussions between the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Donegal County Council (DCC), six of the Donegal projects have been selected to be progressed in the first phase of implementation.

The Plans set out the specific measures to tackle flood risk in each community and town, with proposed outline only design provided to protect against the 1 in 100 year flood event and with indicative preliminary cost estimates only provided. More definite estimates of projects costs will not be available until the more detailed project level design and procurement for each scheme is complete. Estimated costs for all of these projects have been included in OPW’s multi annual expenditure profiles.

**Ballybofey and Stranorlar, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Ballybofey and Stranorlar has an estimated early indicative cost of €1.92m and consists of hard defences and improvement of channel conveyance.

While the proposed flood relief scheme for Ballybofey and Stranorlar is not in the first phase of projects to be advanced, both the OPW and Donegal County Council will work closely to ensure that the project will be progressed as early as possible in the coming years and within the 10-year timeframe for the programme of investment.

I would mention also that funding of €157,500 was approved in 2018 under the OPW’s Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for interim flood relief works at Ballybofey and Stranorlar. The works comprise the removal of vegetation and trees on the embankment and construction of pumps / pumping areas. Funding will be provided to Donegal County Council on completion of works.

**Castlefinn, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Castlefinn is included in the first phase of implementation and has an estimated early indicative cost of €1.75m. The tender documents for the required design consultants are currently being reviewed. The proposed measures consists of a series of flood embankments and walls and associated drainage works.

**Lifford, County Donegal**

The proposed Lifford Flood Relief Scheme is included in the first phase of implementation and has an estimated early indicative cost of €5.9m. The proposed measures consists of a series of flood embankments and walls.

Tendering for the required engineering consultancy services has commenced and consul-
tants are expected to be appointed in quarter 4 2019.

**Glenties, County Donegal and Downings, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Glenties, Co. Donegal is in the first phase of implementation and has an estimated early indicative cost of €0.55m. The proposed measures consists of a series of flood embankments and walls and land use management.

The proposed flood relief scheme for Downings, Co. Donegal is in the first phase of implementation and has an estimated early indicative cost of €0.870m. The proposed measures consists of a series of flood embankments and walls.

The proposed schemes for Glenties and Downings are being progressed by Donegal County Council. The tender documents for these schemes are being finalised with the expectation that consultants will be hired in the coming months.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

161. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30189/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The following list sets out the entities in which the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform or the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform holds a share certificate:

- Coillte (Irish Forestry Board)
- Murphy’s Irish Seafood (formerly Fastnet Mussels Ltd)
- Kush Seafarms Ltd
- Irish National Stud
- Housing Finance Agency
- Ervia
- National Building Agency (currently being liquidated)
- EirGrid
- ESB
- Bord na Móna
- An Post
- Shannon Group (including Shannon Airport Authority Ltd., Shannon Commercial Enterprises Ltd., Shannon Heritage Ltd., together with the International Aviation Services Centre (IASC))
  - Dublin Airport Authority (incl. Cork)
  - Irish Aviation Authority
  - Dublin Port Company
Questions - Written Answers

- Cork Port Company
- Shannon Foynes Port Company
- Waterford Port Company
- Galway Harbour Company

The Deputy may wish to note that Statement 1.8(a) of the Finance Accounts lists the share capital acquired in companies. The latest details can be obtained at the following link: www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd07ee-finance-accounts-2017/.

Parking Provision

162. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of car parking spaces at office buildings provided by the Office of Public Works in tabular form. [30194/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I am advised by my officials that the number of car spaces at office buildings provided by the Office of Public Works is as follows:

- 5,739 car spaces associated with owned office accommodation
- 5,785 car spaces associated with leased office accommodation, including stand alone car parking.

Office of Public Works Data

163. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the capital budget allocation to the OPW in each of the years 2017 to 2019; the amount of the capital budget allocation spent in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30196/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Capital Budget Allocation and Spend allocation to the OPW for the years 2017 to 2019 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote 13 OPW</th>
<th>2017 Allocation</th>
<th>2018 Allocation</th>
<th>2019 Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€000</td>
<td>€000</td>
<td>€000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126,049</td>
<td>177,049</td>
<td>179,049</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 13 OPW</td>
<td>2017 Expenditure</td>
<td>2018 Expenditure</td>
<td>€000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123,649</td>
<td>174,333</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Savings within the 2017 capital allocation are primarily due to timing in placing the contract for the Integrated Workplace Management System. Savings within the 2018 capital allocation are primarily due to timing in planning approval for the commencement of some flood relief projects and the Home Relocation Scheme. The 2018 allocation includes a €22m supplementary estimate the majority of which related to the Papal Visit. Savings by the OPW in 2017 and 2018 on its capital allocation were vired for use by the Office on its current expenditure require-
Departmental Contracts Data

164. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30247/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department does not have any contracts for the provision of security services in respect of buildings in which its staff are located.

I have set out in the following tables the relevant details in respect of the bodies under the aegis of my Department.

### National Shared Services Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security Provider</th>
<th>Location of Service</th>
<th>Procurement Process</th>
<th>Duration of Services Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manguard</td>
<td>Clonskeagh</td>
<td>Open procedure in line with OGP Guidelines</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manguard</td>
<td>Tullamore</td>
<td>Open procedure in line with OGP Guidelines</td>
<td>36 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Office of the Ombudsman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security Provider</th>
<th>Location of Service</th>
<th>Procurement Process</th>
<th>Duration of Services Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noonan</td>
<td>Leeson Street Dublin 2</td>
<td>No current contract. Will be considered in context of relocation of premises later this year.</td>
<td>New contract can be entered into in January 2020 for new premises, if service required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### State Laboratory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security Provider</th>
<th>Location of Service</th>
<th>Procurement Process</th>
<th>Duration of Services Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apleona</td>
<td>Backweston Campus</td>
<td>The facilities management contract is managed by OPW.</td>
<td>The facilities management contract is managed by OPW.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neither the Public Appointments Service nor the Office of the Regulator of the National Lottery have directly engaged companies for the provision of security services.

The Office of Public Works will respond directly to the Deputy on this question, in line with Standing Order 42A.

**Budget 2019**
165. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual votes the €0.3 billion in carryover costs due to measures introduced in budget 2019 as outlined in the recent SES will be allocated to in tabular form; if the sums are already accounted for in the expenditure ceilings for each specific Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30277/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Carryover costs for 2020 are set out in Table 7 on page 43 of Expenditure Report 2019. These costs relate to current expenditure measures introduced in Budget 2019 which have further cost implications for 2020. These costs are set out in the table.

**Carryover Impact of Certain Budget 2019 Current Expenditure Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Impact in 2020 (€m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Affairs and Social Protection – Gross Cost of Social Welfare Package</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education – Funding for New Measures</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice – Funding for Garda Reform, including Recruitment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health – Funding for New Measures</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing – Gross Cost of HAP</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Additional Cost in 2020</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is usual, carryover costs will be reassessed as part of the Estimates 2020 process and allocated to specific Ministerial ceilings in Budget 2020.

Public Sector Pay

166. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual votes the €0.4 billion cost for public sector pay increases in 2020 provided for in the SES in tabular form; if it provides for the hiring of additional staff in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30278/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The amount of €0.4 billion included in the SES in respect of public service pay increases relates to public servants covered by the Public Service Stability Agreement. This amount will be included in the medium term expenditure ceilings published in the Mid-Year Expenditure Report, on an aggregate basis. Specific allocations will be made to individual Vote groups as part of the Estimates 2020 process and will be included in the Ministerial expenditure ceilings published in Budget 2020.

These allocations will be made based on existing staff numbers. As is usual, any decisions with regard to the recruitment of additional staff would have to be made within allocated pay ceilings and will be a matter for individual Departments.

Departmental Budgets

167. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Departments, agencies and individual votes the €0.5 billion in demographic costs as outlined in the SES will be allocated to in tabular form; if he will provide a copy of specific reports submitted to him from individual Departments outlining the demographic requirements in each case; the
breakdown by Department and sector for the hiring of additional staff or the expansion of existing schemes in each case; the projected demographic requirements in each of the years 2021 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30279/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Current estimates of certain demographic pressures in the areas of Health, Social Protection and Education were set out in Expenditure Report 2019 and included in the pre-committed current expenditure baseline for the period to 2021. These costs are set out again on an aggregate level in the recently published Summer Economic Statement. For 2020 and 2021, an allocation of €0.5 billion is set out to meet demographic pressures. The amounts allocated for 2020 are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Estimated Demographic Pressures 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>€m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Affairs and Social Protection</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This paper covers a number of areas of expenditure, including pensions, child benefit, education provision and health schemes such as the Nursing Home Support Scheme. These pure demographic costs are factored in to Ministerial Expenditure Ceilings for Health, Social Protection and Education.

As part of the 2019 Spending Review process, an update of this paper is due to be published in the coming months. This forthcoming paper will again look at the key areas of Health, Social Protection and Education and will examine demographic pressures in these areas over a ten year period. In light of this publication, demographic estimates will be reassessed as part of the Estimates 2020 process.

Capital Expenditure Programme

168. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the areas to which the €200 million allocation in the SES for the expenditure reserve will be allocated; the amount which will be allocated to the national children’s hospital and the national broadband plan, respectively; if the €200 million will be capital expenditure that recurs annually; the way in which it will be profiled for beyond 2020; if the capital allocations to specific Departmental vote groups will be updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30284/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As set out in the Summer Economic Statement (SES) an expenditure reserve of up to €0.2 billion is to be established in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements liable to arise in connection with the National Broadband Plan and National Children’s Hospital. No decision has been made at this time regarding the specific allocation of this reserve as the funding of additional costs in relation to these projects will be considered as part of the Budget 2020 estimates process, reflecting the most up-to-date position relating to capital spending at the time. Beyond 2020, the SES
reflects the impact on the General Government Balance of additional expenditure in respect of the National Broadband Plan.

**Fiscal Data**

169. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the projected additional fiscal space for budget 2020 from savings on the live register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30285/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The allocation for Live Register spending in 2020, as with all other lines of expenditure, will be considered during the forthcoming discussions on the Estimates process. In this context, my Department will also prepare a Live Register analysis paper to inform these discussions. As usual this paper will be published on Budget day.

**Capital Expenditure Programme**

170. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the areas by vote group to which the €0.7 billion increase in capital expenditure as outlined in the SES will be allocated in 2020; if this is already included in the expenditure ceilings; if he expects to change these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30287/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The multi-annual capital investment ceilings by Ministerial Vote Group for the period 2019 to 2022 were published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019 and are set out below. These include provision for the €0.7 billion increase in capital expenditure provided for in the National Development Plan and referenced in the recently published Summer Economic Statement (SES).

In the SES an expenditure reserve of up to €0.2 billion is being established in 2020 to accommodate funding requirements for the National Broadband Plan and the National Children’s Hospital.

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<tr>
<th>Capital Envelope</th>
<th>2019</th>
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<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
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Coastal Erosion

171. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the OPW expects to agree a template and parameters for a coastal monitoring programme (details supplied). [30399/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW is currently preparing a plan for regular coastal monitoring surveys to be undertaken at a number of coastal sites that are considered to be at risk of coastal flooding and/or coastal erosion. These surveys will provide important and detailed information to assist with the ongoing monitoring of local rates of coastal erosion and to inform associated risk assessments. One such site includes the coastline from Portrane to Rush, County Fingal.

The OPW expects to be in contact with Fingal County Council in the coming weeks in relation to the planned coastal monitoring surveys at Portrane and Rush.

Office of Public Works Projects

172. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of submissions made in response to the Phoenix Park Visitor Experience Strategic Review; when these will be collated; the process that will be taken from here on; if there will be further public consultation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30401/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** During the observation period, which ran from 19th March 2019 until 31st May 2019, one thousand, five hundred and twelve (1,512) comments were submitted to the Office of Public Works in respect of the Draft Phoenix Park Visitor Experience Strategic Review.

OPW is now engaged in a detailed process of reviewing all of these comments and observations. It is not possible at this stage to say when this will be completed. Any proposed developments or conservation projects which might arise out of this draft review would be subject to the full statutory planning processes.
173. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the yield to date in 2019 from the increase in the national training fund levy in budget 2019; the estimated projected end of year yield; the projected yield from a further 0.1% increase in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30296/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As part of Budget 2018, the National Training Fund (NTF) levy was increased by 0.1 per cent in 2018 from 0.7 per cent to 0.8 per cent – providing over €47m (net) of additional investment in the Higher and Further and Training Education Sectors. On foot of decisions taken in Budget 2019, the levy increased to 0.9 per cent in 2019 providing €69 million (net) of additional investment in higher and further education and training bringing the total expenditure allocation from the NTF to €486 million in 2019. A further increase to 1.0 per cent in 2020 was announced in Budget 2019. There is no further increase in the levy planned beyond the level of 1.0 percent in 2020 and, therefore, no further increases due to levy changes are projected.

Decisions taken as part of Budget 2019 will also see the creation of a new ring-fenced funding line, the Human Capital Initiative, to be established within the NTF to draw down €60 million per annum from the accumulated surplus, over the 5 year period 2020-2024.

The following table sets out the annual forecasts for NTF levy receipts for 2019 to 2020, based on different levy rates. These forecasts were provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and are based on macroeconomic employment and wage projections.

The net additional expenditure available from increases in the levy are lower than the gross revenue yield as the calculation of such increases must take account of the increased costs which arise for public sector employers. The expenditure ceiling for the NTF is set as part of the Estimates process, having regard to the Government’s overall budgetary and fiscal stance, and so the amount available for expenditure in any given year may vary from the forecast income.

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Forecasted Income generated from 0.8% levy</td>
<td>€589.2m</td>
<td>€620.1m</td>
<td>€650.3m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecasted Income generated from increase to 0.9% levy from 2019</td>
<td>€662.1m</td>
<td>€703m</td>
<td>€737m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecasted Income generated from increase to 0.9% levy from 2019 &amp; 1% from 2020</td>
<td>€662.1m</td>
<td>€780.5m</td>
<td>€824.9m</td>
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**Schools Building Projects Status**

174. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 279 of 21 May 2019, if there has been progress in finalising the project brief; if so, the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30091/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included on the Department’s school building programme to be delivered as part of the National Development Plan.

The process for finalising the accommodation brief for the school in question is in train and
my Department will be in contact with the school authorities as soon as this process has been completed.

**Schools Site Acquisitions**

175. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 172 of 14 May 2019, if there has been further progress on the site acquisition; if a design team will be put in place for the three projects; the estimated timetable for the completion of the education campus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30092/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy has been informed previously, agreement in principle has been reached with a landowner for the acquisition of a site at Donagchumper, Celbridge. This site is proposed to facilitate the permanent accommodation needs of St. Patrick’s National School, Celbridge Community School and St. Raphael’s Special School on a campus type arrangement. Work is progressing and is ongoing in respect of technical matters on the acquisition.

It is a priority for my Department to commence the architectural planning process for this site at the earliest possible stage. For the time being, given the commercially sensitive nature of site acquisitions in general, I am unable to elaborate further.

**Schools Building Contractors**

176. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 276 of 11 June 2019, if tenders have been invited from the shortlist of contractors; if so, the closing date for receipt of tenders; the number of contractors from which tenders have been sought; when construction will commence and expect to be completed on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30097/19]

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

The Design Team is currently nearing the completion of the process of compiling a shortlist of contractors for tender stage. In the circumstances, it would be inappropriate at this point in time for my Department to comment on the composition of the shortlist.

When the pre-qualification process is complete my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management of the school regarding the progression of the project to the next stage of architectural planning, Stage 3 - tender stage.
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is included in my Department’s Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan. The project will provide new build, extension and refurbishment which will bring the school accommodation up to 16 mainstream classrooms and a 2-classroom Special Educational Needs Base.

This project is one of the school building projects on my Department’s ADAPT 2 Programme. My Department is currently in the process of procuring a Project Manager for the ADAPT 2 Programme, which contains 16 school building projects.

The process to appoint a Design Team – (Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Civil & Structural Engineer, Mechanical & Electrical Engineer and Project Supervisor for the Design Process) for the school in question is ongoing. The closing date for submissions in respect of design team consultants was Tuesday, 9th July on the eTenders website. As the appointment process remains ongoing it would not be appropriate to comment on the make-up of the respective tender lists.

The ADAPT 2 Programme aims for projects to be ready for construction in 36 months from appointment of Design Team. The construction period for this project is approximately 12 months.

School Accommodation Provision

178. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 216 of 5 February 2019, if approval has issued for the provision of additional mainstream and specialist accommodation for the school in question; the details of the accommodation approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30100/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has received an application from the school in question for additional school accommodation. The application is currently under assessment and once this has been completed, the school authority will be informed of the outcome directly.

Higher Education Institutions

179. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 88 of 23 January 2019, if there has been progress with the plans for the future campus development plan for Maynooth University; if there has been progress with the application by Maynooth University for funding under the Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30102/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): An assessment team led by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has been considering the applications to the Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund, including the Maynooth University proposal in relation to the development of the Technology, Society and Innovation Building. The assessment process is now nearing completion and a decision in relation to the Maynooth University application will be communicated to the Institution in the near future.

In making decisions on projects to be funded, account will be taken of the balance of projects across the sector as a whole and the advancement of system-wide objectives.
180. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if authority has been provided to a school (details supplied) to seek rental accommodation to ensure that the school will open in September 2019 in view of the decision by Kildare Country Council to refuse planning permission on 21 June 2019 for the temporary buildings for the school; if there has been success in renting accommodation for the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30103/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** With regard to the school to which the Deputy refers the local authority refused planning permission on 21st June, 2019.

My Department has been in constant contact with the relevant stakeholders including the Patron Body, An Foras Pátrúnachta, considering a number of interim arrangements to ensure the school opens for September 2019.

An Foras Pátrúnachta have made interim arrangements for the school to open in accommodation in Gaelscoil Uí Fhiaich, Maynooth and have communicated this position to parents of enrolled children.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

181. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the building programme at a school (details supplied); the schedule being followed; if concerns raised by the local community have been dealt with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30106/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The project referred to by the Deputy is currently nearing completion and subject to no issues arising the new school building will be ready for occupation for September 2019.

**School Services Staff**

182. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if negotiations between his Department and a union (detail supplied) are to bring about improved terms and conditions for school secretaries and caretakers including a change in status for some that do not have public service conditions and protections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30131/19]

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

I have recently relaxed the moratorium for those C&C and ETB schools with enrolments of 700 and more which allow them to employ an additional School Secretaries up to a maximum of two per school. There are 91 schools in the C&C and ETB Sector who meet this criteria, based on the information currently available to this Department. This is an initial step and has taken immediate effect.
Schemes were initiated in 1978 and 1979 for the employment of Clerical Officers and Caretakers in schools. The schemes were withdrawn completely in 2008.

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

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

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

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

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

Officials from my Department recently had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives as part of a planned meeting. FÓRSA took the opportunity to formally table a pay claim. This was tabled as a follow-on claim from the current pay agreement for this cohort of staff which lasts until December 2019. The Department issued surveys on the 10th of July to establish the full current cost of the trade union’s claim. This is standard practice.

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

**Student Universal Support Ireland Administration**

183. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether it is appropriate that a person in receipt of a SUSI grant that is over 21 years of age and entered third-level education at a younger age may have to provide detailed personal information in relation to their parents which could include difficult situations regarding family break up, separation or divorce; if changes will be made to the requirements for this information in order to acknowledge the way in which it may be difficult for the student to obtain the information and without same they are not able to receive a SUSI grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30140/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter in the first instance for the grant awarding authority, Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI).
For student grant purposes, students are categorised according to their circumstances either as students dependent on parents or a legal guardian, or as independent mature students.

A student’s status for grant purposes is defined at their first point of entry to an approved further or higher education course or at their point of re-entry to an approved course following a break in studies of at least three years, and continues to apply for the duration of their studies.

Article 21(2) of the Student Grant Scheme 2019 states that where a dependent student’s parents are divorced or legally separated, or it is established to the satisfaction of the relevant authority that they are separated, the income to be assessed is that of the student and the parent with whom she/he resides.

The onus is on the grant applicant to provide the necessary documentary evidence as requested by the relevant grant awarding authority. Such documentary evidence will vary from student to student, depending on each individual’s particular set of circumstances. Where the student cannot establish to the satisfaction of the awarding authority that her/his parents are separated (legally or otherwise) then the income to be assessed is that of both parents.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by an appeals officer in SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal may be submitted to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board within the required timeframe (i.e. not later than 30 days after the notification of the determination of the appeals officer to the applicant). Such appeals can be made by the appellant on line via www.studentgrantappeals.ie.

Apart from the Student Grant Scheme, 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. Details of this fund are available from the Access Office in the third level institution attended.

In addition, 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. Further information on this tax relief is available from a student’s local Tax Office or from the Revenue Commissioners website, www.revenue.ie.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

184. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a SNA to date; when a SNA will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30141/19]

**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 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 Accommodation Provision**

185. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the capacity of teachers and staff in a school (details supplied) will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30174/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department has no record of receiving an application for additional accommodation from the school referred to by the Deputy. Any application received will be considered and a response will issue to the Patron directly.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

186. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department holds shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30182/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As Minister, neither I nor my Department hold shares in the entities under the Department’s aegis, namely the non-commercial state agencies. While most of these agencies have a legislative underpinning, two (Skillnet Ireland and Léargas - The Exchange Bureau) are companies limited by guarantee, with no shareholders.
187. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the new post-primary school to serve the Blanchardstown West, Dublin 15 and Blanchardstown Village, Dublin 15 school planning areas; if a patronage has been chosen for the new school; when he expects a principal to be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30210/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, in April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new 800 pupil post-primary school (to be established in 2020) to serve the Blanchardstown_West_Dublin15 and BlanchardstownVge_Dublin15 school planning areas as a regional solution.

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

My Department has identified potential locations for the school and is currently working to undertake a detailed assessment of these. Once the location has been determined, the project to deliver the school accommodation can advance into the architectural planning process.

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

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department’s assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on my Department’s website.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child’s education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

The patronage process for primary and post-primary schools to be established in 2020 will commence later this year, significantly ahead of their due opening. Updates in relation to further patronage processes will be announced on the OPPS website (https://patronage.education.gov.ie/) and my Department’s website (www.education.ie).

Once the patronage of the new school has been announced, the process to appoint a principal for the school can commence. My Department allows for appointments of Principals to all new schools from 1 September of the school year prior to the opening of a new school. The recruitment and appointment of teachers, including Principals, to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012).

**Multidenominational Schools**
188. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of negotiations between City of Dublin Education and Training Board and Educate Together in respect of the delivery of a multidenominational co-educational second-level school for the Dublin 7 area to be based at a college (details supplied); if he has been approached in respect of the collaboration; his views on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30211/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Cabra_Phibsboro_Dublin 7 school planning area is currently served by eight post-primary schools, including the school referred to by the Deputy which is currently under the patronage of City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB).

This school, which has a current enrolment of some 120 pupils in the 2018/19 school year, is co-educational and multi-denominational in nature and provides for the local community and could potentially bring additional capacity of this nature to the area.

I understand that CDETB and Educate Together have started discussions in relation to possible partnerships with a view to Educate Together involvement at second level in existing schools in both the Dublin 7 and Dublin 12 areas. I am supportive of this initiative which has the potential to add to and enhance the availability of additional choice in these areas and my Department is engaging with the bodies concerned in this regard. This represents an opportunity to increase diversity of provision in existing schools in areas where a new school is not required.

I can confirm that CDETB and Educate Together have been working together in relation to extending the co-educational and multi-denominational educational provision at the school referred to by the Deputy in a partnership patronage arrangement. I understand that significant progress has been made in this regard and work is planned to continue over the summer period.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

189. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30240/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information sought by the Deputy in regard to the security services contracts entered into by my Department is set out in the following table. Further information regarding contracts entered into by my Department’s National Educational Psychological Service will be forwarded by the relevant officials to the Deputy.

In addition, details of security service contracts entered into by bodies under the aegis of my Department is being collated and will also be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contractor</th>
<th>Procurement</th>
<th>Commencement of Contract</th>
<th>Duration of Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Kennedy Consultancy and Security Ltd</td>
<td>Supplementary Request for Tender, inviting responses from members of the Office of Public Procurements’ Multi Supplier Framework</td>
<td>1st June 2019</td>
<td>Initial period of 2 years with the right to extend the term for a period or periods of 12 months with a maximum of 2 such extensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tullamore</td>
<td>Keyguard Security</td>
<td>Supplementary Request for Tender, inviting responses from members of the Office of Public Procurements’ Multi Supplier Framework</td>
<td>5th February 2017</td>
<td>Initial period of one year with the possibility of 2 further extensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Budgets**

190. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the requirement for additional expenditure in 2020 to meet demographic costs as outlined in the summer economic statement for his Department by programme; the expected allocation his Department will require as submitted to the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform; the specific resources required to fund in terms of additional staff recruitment, capitation and other current spending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30280/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My aim for Budget 2020 is to progressively deliver on the commitments set out in the Programme for Government, the Confidence and Supply Arrangement and my Department’s Statement of Strategy and Action Plan, and to meet demographic and demand pressures.

Over the past number of years, the Government has invested significant additional resources in education and training, which has delivered thousands of extra teaching and Special Needs Assistant posts in our schools, increased investment in higher education, expanded apprenticeships and traineeships, increased capitation in schools, enhanced supports for school leadership and improved the staffing schedule in primary schools.

In looking at the competing demands for the next Budget, I must have regard to the level of resources which will be available to my Department, in the context of the continuing need for the Government to prudently manage the economy and the public finances and have regard to risks, including those associated with Brexit.

The economic, fiscal and budgetary context for these decisions have been set out in the 2019 Summer Economic Statement, which was published on 25 June by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. This includes a framework that involves a budgetary package of €2.8 billion for 2020, which includes €1.2 billion pre-committed for current expenditure, as follows;
- Demographics - €0.5bn in the areas of Health, Social Protection and Education
- The Public Service Stability Agreement - €0.4bn
- Carryover costs of certain Budget 2019 current expenditure measures amounting to €0.3bn in the areas of Health, Housing, Justice, Education and Social Protection.

The pre-budgetary position for my Department, including the allocation for demographics, will be confirmed when the 2019 Mid-Year Expenditure Report is published by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department has not yet finalised its detailed 2020 allocation request, and will submit this to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as part of the Estimates process for 2020.

It is in this context that I will formulate specific budgetary priorities, having regard to the views of the education partners and all concerned stakeholders.

Student Assistance Fund

191. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the allocations respectively in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 and the expenditure outturn for each year, for the student assistance fund, the fund for students with disabilities and the programme for access to higher education in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30333/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Each year, the provision for access measures is allocated under the umbrella of the ‘Disadvantaged’ initiatives. This includes the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH), the Student Assistance Fund (SAF), the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD), the HEA Access Office costs for Evaluation, Research and Development and Special Disadvantaged Initiatives.

The Deputy will be aware that some of the initiatives are demand led. For example, the FSD provides reasonable accommodations for students in need of additional supports. The cost of this measure can vary from year to year depending on the number of students requiring assistance and the type of reasonable accommodations required. As such, there is some scope to allocate monies between the initiatives to meet demands each year.

The allocation for the ‘Disadvantaged’ initiatives for 2017, 2018 and 2019 was €23.68m, €24.68m and €25.68m respectively. The bulk of the expenditure for the disadvantaged initiatives generally takes place in Q3 and Q4 to coincide with the start of the academic year.

The expenditure outturn for the ‘Disadvantaged’ initiatives was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 (as of 30 June)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATH</td>
<td>€4,400,000</td>
<td>€2,000,000</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>€9,100,000</td>
<td>€10,100,000</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSD</td>
<td>€9,600,000</td>
<td>€9,600,000</td>
<td>€3,300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER *</td>
<td>€579,325</td>
<td>€579,325</td>
<td>€109,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,679,325</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,279,325</strong></td>
<td><strong>€3,409,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Evaluation, Research and Development and Special Disadvantaged Initiatives

**The bulk of the expenditure for the disadvantaged initiatives generally takes place in Q3 and Q4 to coincide with the start of the academic year.

The PATH programmes include multiannual commitments for various initiatives. The out-
turn for 2018 was lower than expected. This was due to a timing issue regarding the roll out of some of the PATH programmes. Monies have been provided for in 2019 for the roll out of these initiatives.

Student Universal Support Ireland Data

192. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the SUSI grant income thresholds by 5%, 10% and 20% respectively, for 2020; the estimated full-year cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30334/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that there are various income thresholds used depending on the type of grant, family size etc. While SUSI has statistics on those students who have applied for grant support and can estimate with some degree of certainty, what impact changes to the thresholds might have for those students on lower income levels, the accuracy of its estimates become less reliable at the higher income levels. Prospective applicants on higher incomes may not have applied for support as their income was above the relevant threshold. As such, it is not possible to accurately cost the number of additional students who may qualify for support, if the thresholds are increased.

Allowing for the limitations regarding the accuracy of the costings, it is estimated that a 5% increase in the income thresholds would cost in the region of €10m and a 10% increase would cost in the region of €20m. The cost of increasing the threshold by 20% is more difficult to estimate given the potentially large number of students who may benefit but who have not previously applied to SUSI for support. It is therefore estimated that a 20% increase could cost in the region of €50m.

The above figures do not include any changes to the income thresholds for the special rate of maintenance grants which are linked to long-term social welfare payments nor do they include any changes to the post-graduate income thresholds.

School Staff

193. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of improving the staffing schedule in primary schools to reduce class sizes by one point in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30335/19]

**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.
Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €13.5m per annum.

Capitation Grants

194. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first full-year cost of increasing the capitation paid to DEIS schools by 50%, by primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30336/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The estimated full year cost of increasing the capitation grant by 50% to DEIS schools at primary and post-primary level is €22.9 million.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. Over the course of the school year 2019/20, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 million will be allocated in 2019.

I fully recognise the need to further improve capitation funding for schools. However, I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures and I have to prioritise where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the Education Sector in any one year especially in the light of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

195. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first full-year cost of decreasing the pupil-teacher ratio in DEIS schools by one point respectively for both primary and secondary schools; the current staffing ratios for DEIS schools in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30337/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on my Department’s website.

In the 2018/19 school year there are 3,106 mainstream primary schools of which 698 (22.47%) are participating in the DEIS Programme.

Each one point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €13.5m per annum.

Appendix A of Circular 19/2019 sets out the schedule of enrolment of pupils governing the appointment and retention of mainstream class teachers and is available on my Department’s website at the following link :


In relation to post-primary schools, I wish to advise the Deputy that in the 2018/19 school year there are 722 post-primary schools of which 198 (27.42%) are participating in the DEIS Programme.
Each 1 point adjustment to the pupil teacher ratio at post primary level is estimated to cost in the region of €63m per annum.

A pupil teacher ratio of 19:1 is applied to all second-level schools in the Free-Education System. DEIS post-primary schools are allocated an enhanced guidance provision. The relevant Circulars governing the staffing arrangements for post-primary schools for the 2019/20 school year are available on my Department’s website at the following link:


**Capitation Grants**

196. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing primary and post-primary school capitation rates by €10 per child; the estimated overall cost of a 5% increase to capitation rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30338/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The estimated full year cost of increasing the capitation grant rate at primary and post-primary level by €10 per pupil is €9.4 million.

The first and full year costs of increasing the capitation grant rate at primary and secondary level by 5% is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for this 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year.

I fully recognise the need to further improve capitation funding for schools. However, I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures and I have to prioritise where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the Education Sector in any one year especially in the light of increasing enrolments.

It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets.

**School Staff**

197. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first full-year costs of increasing the substitution provided to primary schools with teaching principals sufficient to ensure that all teaching principals can avail of one full day of administrative duties each week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30339/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Since my appointment as Minister for Education and Skills I have met with a number of Teaching Principals, including at this year’s IPPN conference, and I appreciate the pressures they face. In Budget 2019, school leadership is again supported with an additional release day for teaching principals in primary schools and a further four additional release days for teaching principals in schools with special classes. These additional release days - 18, 24, and 30 depending on the size of the school - will be effective from 1st September 2019.

This builds on measures in previous budgets, including €0.4 million made available in Budget 2018 to fund almost 4,600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary
10 July 2019

10/07/2019 WRN00500

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

198. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reinstating postgraduate student grants; the projected full-year cost on the basis of the previous system that was in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30340/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Programme for Government contains a commitment to increase financial supports for postgraduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

As the Deputy will be aware, additional funding of €7m was secured in Budgets 2017 and 2018 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. This benefited circa 1,000 postgraduate students who met the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant and reversed the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

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

School Services Staff

199. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools with either a secretary or caretaker directly employed by his Department in 2019; the number in each of the years 2000 to 2018; the criteria that apply to the allocation of these posts; the number of staff employed in schools under the ancillary services grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30341/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** A Scheme was initiated in 1978/79 for the employment of Clerical Officers in primary and post primary schools under which the school secretaries and caretakers are paid directly through the payroll operated by my Department.

The 1978/79 scheme is being phased out as posts become vacant and no new posts are being created. There are currently a total of 189 primary schools with either a school secretary or caretaker employed under this 1978/79 scheme. This is further broken down to 150 schools employing only a school secretary and 39 schools only employing a caretaker.

Currently there are 153 primary and 110 post primary whole time equivalent Clerical Officers (School Secretaries) employed in schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and paid through my Department’s payroll. There are also 86 whole time equivalent primary school caretakers employed under the 1978/79 Scheme and paid through my Department’s payroll.
This 1978/79 scheme has been superseded by a more extensive capitation grant Scheme. The current grant scheme was agreed in the context of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, published in 1991. The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools now receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under these grant schemes.

Within the ancillary services grant programme, the level and extent of services provided is a matter for the school authorities who, through the discretion afforded by the scheme, apply their own arrangements for secretarial services as resources permit. My Department does not have any direct role in the pay and conditions under which they are engaged. Given that employment of school secretaries and caretakers is dealt with at local school level, my Department does not have a central record of the number of school secretaries and caretakers funded by the ancillary services grant.

On a related matter the Deputy may be interested to know that today my Department announced an online survey for schools to complete regarding secretaries and caretakers employed by them and paid by grant funding. These surveys are being undertaken in response to a pay claim that has recently been tabled by the FÓRSA union.

The surveys will issue to over 3,500 individual schools. Given the scale of the task and the fact that schools are in the summer holiday period, my Department expects to have analysis from the surveys available in early October.

The closing date is Wednesday 4 September and my Department is encouraging all relevant schools to complete the surveys before that date.

### Third Level Charges

200. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first and full-year cost of reducing the student contribution rate by €250, €500 or €1,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30342/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Student Contribution, which currently stands at €3,000, was introduced with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. 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 expected increases in student numbers, it is estimated that the net cost to my Department of reducing the contribution is outlined in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduce by (per student) €</th>
<th>Estimated Net cost to Department €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€250</td>
<td>€19m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€500</td>
<td>€38m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>€1,000</td>
<td>€76.4m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that this figure incorporates the resulting reduction to my Department’s Student Grant Scheme budget.

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

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

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

201. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated
first and full-year cost of decreasing the non-adjacent rate of third-level grants from 45 km to
24 km; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30343/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The student maintenance
grant is a contribution towards the living costs of a student. It is not intended to cover the
full cost of attending college. The student grant scheme does, however, provide for different
levels of maintenance support, depending on means. Grants are also provided at adjacent and
non-adjacent rates. The higher non-adjacent rates are intended to provide additional support to
those students who may be living away from home.

Budget 2011 provided for a number of student grant measures which came into effect for
the 2011/12 academic year, including the change in the assessment of the qualifying distance
criterion for the non-adjacent rate of grant from 24 kilometres to 45 kilometres.

The 24km distance criterion was originally set in 1968 and had not been updated in more
than 40 years. Since then, significant improvements have taken place in the road and rail net-
work and it is considered that the revised distance criteria is more consistent with the type of
distances that students may legitimately be expected to commute to college.

The current qualifying distance of 45km for the higher non-adjacent rate of student grant
takes into account a reasonable radius within which students may commute on a daily basis.

The first year cost of “decreasing the non-adjacent rate of third-level grants from 45km to
24km” is estimated to be in the region of €11.5m. The full year cost of this proposal would be
in the region of €26m.

Student Accommodation

202. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the proposed
student accommodation and new build application is in line with a request from a school (de-
tails supplied) will be reviewed in order to allow for a significant increase in student population
and increased accommodation requirements into the future; and if he will make a statement on
the matter. [30359/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department has approved
a major building project on the school building programme to be delivered as part of the Na-
tional Development Plan for the school in question which will cater for an enrolment of 750
pupils.

The project for this school, together with major building projects at four other post primary
schools in the locality, are all intended to cater for the long-term demographic demand in the
school planning area.

Schools Building Projects Applications
203. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the updated funding request by a school will be reviewed with items (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30360/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the school to which he refers was granted approval to build a 1 Classroom SEN Base and 1 Main-stream Classroom under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2018.

The project is devolved to the School Authority to deliver.

The project proceeded to planning application stage and included unapproved works. The Department has advised the School Authority to scale back the project to the level of works approved and resubmit the planning application in respect of these works only.

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**School Transport Provision**

204. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department received a request from a school (details supplied) to support the provision of a dedicated school bus to transport students of the school to and from the Southgate and Grange Rath area of County Meath to the new temporary accommodation of the school in Bettystown, County Meath in view of the planning delays associated with the school site; if the support requested will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30361/19]

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

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport, under the terms of the scheme, may apply to Bus Éireann for transport on a concessionary basis only.

Families of children who require transport under the terms of the School Transport Scheme are advised to contact their local Bus Éireann office to inquire about applying for transport to the school referred to by the Deputy.

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

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**Schools Site Acquisitions**

205. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the location in relation to funding provided by his Department (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30368/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can confirm that the pay-
ment referred to by the Deputy was made in respect of the purchase of a site for Kolbe Special School, Portlaoise.

Schools Building Projects Status

206. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a project (details supplied) will proceed to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30397/19]

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

The Design Team has recently completed work on its NZEB submission for this project which will ensure the new school building will be a “Near Zero Energy Building” (NZEB) in compliance with the 2017 amendment to Part L of the current Building Regulations.

It is anticipated that this project will shortly be authorised to commence the pre-qualification process to create a shortlist of contractors to which the project will be tendered.

Education Centre Network

207. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason he is advertising for a new director in a centre (details supplied) in view of the fact that the current situation has been left unresolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30442/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Section 37 of the Education Act 1998 provides the legislative basis for the recognition and regulation of Education Centres. Section 37(6) of the Act makes provision to make regulations relating to a number of matters in Education Centres such as the appointment of management committees, funding, staffing, provision of information to the Department & other operational matters.

In September 2017, the Education Support Centres (Appointment and Secondment of Directors) Regulation for the appointment and secondment of directors of Education Centres were introduced. Appointments as Directors under these Regulations are made on a school year basis. Under the regulations, a person shall not be appointed as Director for more than 5 consecutive years whether or not the appointment was made before the coming into operation of the Regulations. A part of a school year shall count as a full school year for the purposes of any calculation under the Regulations. At the end of the this school year, the current Director will have reached the maximum limit that is permitted under the Regulations.

Accordingly, the Management Committee of the Centre has sought and received my approval to hold a public competition to recruit a new Director for the 2019/20 school year in accordance with the Regulations.

Public Sector Allowances Eligibility

208. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The adjudication report referred to by the Deputy made provision for five Education Centre Directors to retain their secondment allowances on their return to school in 2018. The circumstances upon which the adjudication was based are explicitly unique to that cohort of Directors and are not applicable in respect of any other Education Centre Director.

Departmental Reports

209. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will publish the report commissioned by his Department regarding governance and accountability of education centres; the key recommendations contained in the report; the fee paid to a company (details supplied) to carry out the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30444/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Education Centres are independent statutory bodies under Section 37 of the Education Act (1998) and are managed by voluntary management committees elected annually.

My Department is the main funder of Education Centres through direct budget allocations for administrative staff pay and operating costs. The Education Centres also receive significant funding from the support services which are funded entirely by my Department for the purpose of designing and delivering continuing professional development courses and other professional support for teachers throughout the country.

My Department is currently progressing a programme of governance modernisation to complement and update the previous requirements that Education Centres were required to observe, and in line with a desire to continually improve the governance and accountability structure in the sector. This programme is being informed by the Mazars Review of the Department’s Governance, Funding and Accountability arrangements for Education Support Centres. The Mazars report has been circulated to all Education Centres. In addition, there have been developments in governance requirements for state funded bodies as outlined in the Code of Practice for State Bodies which need to be reflected in the sector.

A Steering Group has been established to lead on the development of a programme of actions for the modernisation of governance and accountability arrangements for Education Centres and to oversee its implementation. The work of this group is supported by an Implementation Group and a number of Working Groups.

With regard to the fee paid to Mazars, it would not be appropriate to release commercially sensitive information which may disadvantage either the contractors or the awarding authority in future mini competitions conducted under the OGP Framework in which Mazars was awarded the contract.

Education Centre Network

210. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will instruct a centre (details supplied) to publish a report commissioned in the governance of the centre which was undertaken by a company; the amount of financial backing supplied to the centre to fund the report; the key findings of the report; the recommendations and changes which have been made in the centre since; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30445/19]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Education Centres are independent statutory bodies under Section 37 of the Education Act (1998) and are managed by voluntary management committees elected annually.

My Department is the main funder of Education Centres through direct budget allocations for administrative staff pay and operating costs. The Education Centres also receive significant funding from the support services which are funded entirely by my Department for the purpose of designing and delivering continuing professional development courses and other professional support for teachers throughout the country.

In 2015, the Centre referred to by the Deputy reported an alleged financial irregularity to my Department. The matter was immediately referred to the Gardaí by Centre management. I can confirm that the Gardaí have conducted an investigation and the matter is currently before the courts.

As the process is ongoing I do not have any further comment to make at this time in relation to the specific matter.

With regard to Education Centres generally, my Department is progressing a programme of governance modernisation to complement and update the previous requirements that Education Centres are required to observe, and in line with a desire to continually improve the governance and accountability structure in the sector. This programme is being informed by the Mazars Review of the Department’s Governance, Funding and Accountability arrangements for Education Support Centres. In addition, with developments in governance requirements for state funded bodies as outlined in the Code of Practice for State Bodies which are been implemented in the sector.

A Steering Group has been established to lead on the development of a programme of actions for the modernisation of governance and accountability arrangements for Education Centres and to oversee its implementation. The work of this group is supported by an Implementation Group and a number of Working Groups.

Education Centre Network

211. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the accounts of a centre (details supplied) are not available on its website in view of the fact it is funded by taxpayers money and that his officials undertook to consider publishing education centres’ annual accounts on websites as part of the governance modernisation programme; the number of the 21 centres that publish their accounts online; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30446/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Education Centres are independent statutory bodies under Section 37 of the Education Act (1998) and are managed by voluntary management committees elected annually.

Under my Department’s governance and accountability arrangements, Centres are required to have their accounts audited and the audit report must be submitted along with the Centre’s annual report to the Department.

Education Centres are not currently required to publish their audited accounts on their website. Officials of my Department will consider the publication of Education Centres audited accounts as part of the governance modernisation programme that my Department is undertaking in respect of Education Centres.
212. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the price paid to a company (details supplied) to carry out an audit on each of the 21 education centres on an annual basis since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30447/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Education Centres are independent statutory bodies under Section 37 of the Education Act (1998) and are managed by voluntary management committees.

My Department is the main funder of Education Centres through direct budget allocations for administrative staff pay and operating costs. The Education Centres also receive significant funding from the support services which are funded entirely by my Department for the purpose of designing and delivering continuing professional development courses and other professional support for teachers throughout the country.

Under my Department’s governance and accountability arrangements, Centres are required to have their accounts audited and the audit report must be submitted along with the Centre’s annual report to the Department.

Following a competition conducted through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), framework members who had previously qualified to form part of the OGP Framework for the provision of auditing services were contacted and Crowleys DFK Auditors was awarded the contract to undertake an external audit of the financial accounts of all Education Centres. This will provide assurances that all Centres are audited to a consistent standard in accordance with International Standards on auditing and adherence to generally Accepted Accounting Practices.

As the OGP framework under which the contract was awarded to Crowleys is still live, it would not be appropriate to release commercially sensitive information which may disadvantage either the contractor or the awarding authority in future mini competitions.

**Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision**

213. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a community council (details supplied) will have approval on the CCTV application that was submitted in February 2019. [30108/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Community CCTV is governed by section 38(3)(c) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (SI No 289 of 2006). This legal framework requires that any proposed community CCTV scheme must:

- be approved by the local Joint Policing Committee,

- have the prior support of the relevant local authority, which must also undertake to act as data controller and

- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes and these key legal requirements have not changed since 2006.

A grant aid scheme is administered by my Department to support proposed CCTV schemes which meet these legal requirements. I can confirm that my Department received a funding
application from the community group referred to by the Deputy on 17 May of this year. The application has been assessed against the criteria of the grant aid scheme and my officials have recently reverted directly to the individuals concerned.

The grant aid scheme remains open for applications in 2019. I am keen to ensure that all interested groups which have secured the necessary legal approvals for community CCTV have the opportunity to take advantage of the availability of the grant aid scheme. Further details are available to download from my Department’s website - www.justice.ie and support and guidance is available to help interested groups through a dedicated email address communitycctv@justice.ie.

Garda Stations

214. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if plans are being considered to provide a new Garda station in an area (details supplied); the discussions which have taken place in respect of the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30109/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): An unprecedented budget of €1.76 billion has been allocated to An Garda Síochána in 2019. Very significant capital investment is also being made, amounting to € 92 million this year.

In terms of the estate, the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 is an ambitious programme based on agreed Garda priorities, which continues to benefit over 30 locations around the country, underpinned by significant Exchequer funding across the Garda and OPW Votes. Other major ongoing works to the Garda estate include the pilot Garda station reopening project, the development of a new facility at Military Road and the major refurbishment of Fitzgibbon Street station. The goal of this investment is to address deficiencies in the Garda estate and provide fit-for-purpose facilities for Garda members and staff, as well as the public interacting with them.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources made available to An Garda Síochána including responsibility for the formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda stations. Indeed the Deputy may recall that as recently as December 2018, the Garda Síochána Inspectorate in its report “Policing with Local Communities” confirmed that it is appropriate that the Commissioner should continue to hold this responsibility. And the Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation and as such, cooperates closely with the Garda authorities in delivery of Garda accommodation and works to the Garda estate.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Building and Refurbishment Programme, which is based on agreed Garda priorities, does not include plans for the development of a new Garda station at Citywest.

Overall Garda accommodation needs, including any potential need for a new station at any location, fall to be considered by An Garda Síochána in the context of the ongoing expansion of the Garda workforce and implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

Garda Recruitment
215. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if candidates in the Garda Reserve are prioritised for places in Templemore; and if not, if he will consider putting this in place. [30153/19]

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

Admission as a trainee 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. The final stages of the recruitment process in which candidates are vetted, and complete a physical competency test and a medical examination, are managed by the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter.

The Regulations provide that special recognition may be given to Reserve members in the context of the selection process as they have undergone training in many of the skills required to be an effective full-time member of An Garda Síochána and have gained experience in operational policing. Since 2016, recruitment campaigns for An Garda Síochána have included special streams for eligible members of the reserve. To be eligible for the special Reserve stream, a reserve member is required to have completed their probation, performed their role to a satisfactory standard, and have served a minimum of 150 hours per year for two of the previous four years, as well as fulfilling the general Conditions for Entry. Applicants must be a member of the Garda Reserve at the time of appointment as a Garda Trainee to continue to be eligible under the Garda Reserve stream.

**Garda Transport Data**

216. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of four-wheel drive or all terrain Garda vehicles allocated to Kildare Garda division as of 31 December 2018 and 2 July 2019. [30165/19]

**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 have informed me that the following table sets out the number of 4-wheel drive vehicles and all terrain vehicles allocated to Kildare Garda Division for the dates requested by the Deputy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kildare Division: 4-wheel drive and all terrain vehicles</th>
<th>4 x 4</th>
<th>*Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 June 2019</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December 2018</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The category ‘others’ generally refers to MPV, SUV, Minibus or Prisoner Conveyance Vehicles.

Departmental Shareholdings

217. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30188/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Please be advised that there are no entities in which I, in my capacity as Minister for Justice and Equality, or my Department, holds shares.

Garda Transport Data

218. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new marked and unmarked Garda vans that came into the fleet to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30197/19]

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 have informed me that as of 5 July 2019, 2 marked vans and 4 un-
marked vans have been added to the fleet to date this year. I am advised by the Garda authorities that a further 13 marked vans are currently being fitted-out for operational use; and that an additional 15 vans have been ordered for delivery and fit-out during 2019. A decision will be made by Garda management in due course, based on operational needs, as to whether those vans will be marked or unmarked.

Garda Transport Data

219. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new marked and unmarked Garda cars and motorcycles that were allocated to roads policing units in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30198/19]

**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 to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the following table sets out the new vehicles allocated to Roads Policing Duty in 2018 and to date in 2019 (correct as of 8 July 2019). I am further advised that no unmarked vehicles were allocated to Roads Policing Duty during this period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allocations</th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>Vans</th>
<th>Motorbikes</th>
<th>4x4</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to 8 July)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the Deputy may be interested to know that Garda management has informed me that a total number of 300 vehicles (marked and unmarked) are assigned to Roads Policing duty as at 8 July 2019. I am informed that this total is made up of 130 cars, 2 vans, 100 motorbikes, 28 4x4 vehicles and 40 other vehicles.

Sexual Offences Data

220. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number
of staff nationally involved in investigating material on mobile phones, computers and so on relating to child sexual offences; the qualifications needed for such work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30199/19]

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.

I have requested a report from the Commissioner in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy and I will revert to him when it is to hand.

Sexual Offences Data

221. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will advance the scoping group on sexual violence recommendation that further consideration be given to the development of appropriate supplementary data collection exercises to explore the experiences of sexual violence for members of vulnerable and minority groups in view of the fact that a national survey by its nature cannot achieve data to make useful or meaningful conclusions in relation to small groups. [30225/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 20th November 2018 the Government approved a new national survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. Following this, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Central Statistics Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 10th January 2019 regarding the undertaking of the survey.

The CSO have now begun the work on the large scale survey, called the Sexual Violence Survey (SVS), which will look in detail at the experience of sexual violence and abuse for both women and men in Ireland, with repeat surveys every decade.

This is a large and complex survey. The Government’s expert Scoping Group report made clear that delivering a survey that met the highest standards would be a significant undertaking and a multi-annual project.

A priority of mine is that it be done right. We want to ensure that the State undertakes an ongoing programme of research of the highest quality in a sensitive and ethical way to ensure a robust set of data to inform Government policy. The complexities and timeframes involved have been acknowledged by some of the NGOs involved in the sector. The CSO has provided an estimated timeline of up to five years for completion including a full first year of technical research, design, specialist training and preparation. The preparatory phase will also involve a stakeholder consultation process, consideration of best international practice and the conducting of a full pilot survey in the field in 2020.

As has been stated, a national survey by its nature cannot achieve data to make useful or meaningful conclusions on the experiences of sexual violence for smaller cohorts such as members of vulnerable and minority groups. The report of the Scoping Group did indeed recommend that further consideration be given to the development of appropriate supplementary data collection exercises to explore the experiences of those harder to reach groups. Following the pilot of the SVS, proposals will be developed to explore options, including conducting qualita-
tive work on such sub populations.

The provision of reliable, robust, objective and internationally comparable information requires that the planning and execution of this survey is undertaken in a professional and comprehensive manner and to do otherwise may compromise the quality of the resulting data. Therefore, the planned duration of the new Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) is to ensure that all aspects of the survey are undertaken and completed to the highest possible standard.

**Gender Recognition**

222. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will introduce legislative and related measures to develop gender sensitive reception procedures and support services for asylum seekers as required by the Istanbul Convention. [30233/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** On 8 March 2019, Ireland became the 34th out of 47 members of the Council of Europe to have ratified the Istanbul Convention. The Government has committed in the National Strategy for Women and Girls to considering gender impact in the development of new strategies and the review of existing strategies. It will also require all public bodies to assess and identify the human rights of women and girls and the gender equality issues that are relevant to their functions and address these in their strategic planning, policies and practices, and annual reports, in line with the public sector duty under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The Domestic Violence Act 2018 was a key action in progressing the ratification of the Istanbul Convention as it delivered on a number of Convention requirements including extending access to barring orders, giving judges powers to refer perpetrators to programmes and providing for an offence of forced marriage.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department has agreed a policy and practice document on safeguarding RIA residents against domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and harassment. This policy was agreed in April 2014 between RIA, Cosc and NGOs such as AkiDwA, Ruhama and the UNHCR and appropriate training was provided to all accommodation centre staff. The policy can be found on the RIA webpage:


The Istanbul Convention refers to parties taking the necessary legislative or other measures to develop gender-sensitive reception procedures and support services for asylum-seekers as well as gender guidelines and gender-sensitive asylum procedures, including refugee status determination and application for international protection. New national standards for RIA accommodation centres have been developed by my Department in conjunction with NGOs, residents of accommodation centres and other Government Departments. These standards, which are due to be published shortly, will support the process of ensuring that reception procedures and support services for asylum seekers are appropriately gender sensitive.

**Departmental Contracts Data**
223. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30246/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Please see the following table which outlines the contracts in which my Department are engaged for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved and the duration of each contract.

I have requested that the agencies under the remit of my Department respond directly to the Deputy in respect of this request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Security Contract</th>
<th>Contractor</th>
<th>Procurement Process</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McAfee AntiVirus Licensing, Support &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>Caveo</td>
<td>eTenders</td>
<td>21/03/2016 - 20/03/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent ICT Security Consultancy</td>
<td>1. ISAS 2. BH Consultancy</td>
<td>eTenders. More than one contractor selected in order to create a mini framework.</td>
<td>20/07/2017 - 20/02/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firewall Hardware Maintenance</td>
<td>Baker Security Networks</td>
<td>Three Quotations minimum (contract value was less than €25,000)</td>
<td>15/06/2018 - 14/06/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) Certification</td>
<td>Digicert</td>
<td>Three Quotations minimum (contract value was less than €25,000)</td>
<td>23/01/2019 - 23/01/2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Security Analyst</td>
<td>Accenture</td>
<td>Supplementary Request For Tender (SRFT) to Office of Government Procurement Framework for External ICT Technical Support Services</td>
<td>10/06/2019 - 10/12/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The provision of security services at a number of Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service premises.</td>
<td>Manguard Plus</td>
<td>Mini-competition run off Office of Government Procurement Framework Agreement</td>
<td>24 months with option to extend for two 12 month periods. The contract commenced on 3rd May 2019 for a duration of 3 years with the possibility of two 12 month extensions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
224. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will introduce legislation to provide for the full implementation of Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention, which requires that autonomous residence permits be granted to victims of domestic violence. [30256/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention requires Parties to the Istanbul Convention to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that migrant victims, whose residence condition is conditional on marriage or on being in a relationship, are granted an autonomous residence permit of a limited validity in the event of the dissolution of the marriage or the relationship.

The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) has an established policy of allowing victims of domestic abuse to apply for a residence permission in their own right. Immigration guidelines for those experiencing domestic abuse are provided on the INIS website and can be located at the following link.


The INIS guidelines are very clear that reporting abuse will not put a person’s immigration status at risk and emphasises that domestic violence should always be reported. Once an application for independent status under the policy has been granted, the immigration status granted to the applicant is fully independent of any spouse or partner who will have no say in whether an applicant is permitted to stay in Ireland.

**Direct Provision Data**

225. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision by number of years they have been there, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30358/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The figures requested by the Deputy are contained in the following table. It should be noted that the average length of stay in Direct Provision accommodation has reduced from 32 months in 2015 to 24 months at the end of 2018 and significant efforts are being made by my officials to further reduce this period.

More generally, as you are aware, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department is responsible for the offer of accommodation and supports to persons seeking international protection in Ireland. Applicants are free to accept these services or are free to source their own accommodation with family or friends. While previously this was done on an administrative basis, this is now carried out under the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive, which was transposed into Irish law in June 2018 by way of SI No. 230 of 2018.

My Department working together with other Departments and agencies has already introduced far-reaching and important reforms to the overall system and this process will continue as we strive to make further improvements in the future. One of the most significant improvements is the introduction of independent living, which allows applicants to obtain food and other products in a specially-constructed food hall in the centre and to cook the food at either
communal or individual cooking stations.

As of early April 2019, over 2,200 applicants across eight centres were availing of the independent living model. In addition, almost 1,400 other applicants have access to other self-catering facilities with food provided by the contractor or the applicant themselves. The Department of Justice and Equality anticipates that all of the centres under contract to it will have moved to the independent living model by mid-2020.

In addition, there have been significant improvements to recreation opportunities, such as the provision of outdoor sports pitches, including ‘all-weather’ facilities, teenagers’ rooms and family living rooms in centres to provide social areas for particular age groups. Friends of the Centre groups have also been established in each centre. This initiative aims to bring residents, community and voluntary groups together with a view to increasing integration opportunities and providing for the development of greater community linkages with the residents and the centre.

The following figures include over 700 people with a protection status or a permission to remain in the State.

Residents who have been granted status or a permission to remain have the same access to housing supports and services as Irish and EEA nationals. Considerable work is being undertaken to support these residents to move out of accommodation centres and into secure permanent accommodation. RIA have a specific team who work on this. Their work is enhanced through the funded transitional support work provided by DePaul Ireland and the Peter McVerry Trust. A number of NGOs has also been awarded monies under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). These include the PATHS project and South Dublin County Partnership.

Additionally, RIA is liaising with officials in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and the City and County Managers Association collectively to support residents with permission to remain to access housing options.

### Duration of Stay of RIA Residents at July 9th 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By Months</th>
<th>No. of RIA Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0&lt;3</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;6</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6&lt;9</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9&lt;12</td>
<td>641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12&lt;18</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18&lt;24</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24&lt;36</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36&lt;48</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48&lt;60</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60&lt;72</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72&lt;84</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84+</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Visa Applications

226. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applica-
tions since 1 January 2016 for visas pursuant to the policy document on non-EEA family reunification made by persons here granted international protection; the number of visa applications granted to family members of such sponsors; if the grant was at first instance or on appeal; the number of the sponsors that did not meet the financial criteria in the policy document; and the number of the sponsors which were under 18 years of age (details supplied) [30448/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The policy document referred to by the Deputy is a general policy to cover the broad range of persons legally in the State who wish to apply for their family members to join them. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, as the criteria for qualification under the policy does not consider the original basis by which the sponsor came to have permission to be in the State, the data requested by the Deputy is not available.

The usual manner by which persons who have been granted refugee status by the State can seek family reunification is in accordance with the International Protection Act 2015. Specifically, sections 56 and 57 provide for reunification where the family member is as defined in section 56(9) of that Act. There have been 402 family members granted family reunification under the provisions of the Act since the commencement of the provisions on 31 December 2016.

In addition, the Irish Humanitarian Admissions Programme 2 (IHAP) was established to provide humanitarian admission to Ireland for 530 eligible family members of Irish citizens and those with protection status in Ireland. The first call for proposals was issued in June 2018 which has led to a total of 98 applications being granted in respect of 166 beneficiaries. To date, of the 166 people granted permission, 92 have actually arrived in the State.

A second call for proposals under the IHAP issued in December 2018, with a closing date for proposals of 8 February 2019. Processing of proposals under the second call is underway and it is expected that the majority of decisions under this call will issue by September 2019.

Legal Costs

227. Deputy Willie Penrose asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if steps have been initiated to review or reuse the costs provisions applicable to the District Court as per SI No. 17 of 2014 and in particular the obligation to review the same levy every three years as set out in the regulation; if in this context provision will be made prospectively for the payment of drafting fees, opinions, notices of applications and affidavits which pertain to dealing with civil matters before the District Court and which are necessary in the context of such proceedings and which are not included in counsels’ fees as set out in 13(i) of SI No. 7 of 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30467/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy may be aware, the matter of the revision of the Schedule of Costs to the District Court Rules in accordance with Order 53, Rule 2(4) is a matter for the District Court Rules Committee. As Minister I must consider any proposed revision and concur with changes.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and I understand that the District Court Rules Committee is currently undertaking a review and is awaiting observations from the Law Society as well as seeking observations from the Bar Council in relation to the Schedule.

Work Permits Eligibility
228. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to relaunch the scheme to allocate work permits for non-EU citizens to fill the need in the dairy sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30224/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The employment permit system is managed through the operation of the critical skills and ineligible occupations lists. In May 2018, following a comprehensive review of the data and evidence available, and consideration of a detailed business case by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as the lead policy Department for the sector, a pilot quota based scheme was introduced to remove the occupations of horticulture worker, meat processing operative and dairy farm assistant from the ineligible occupations list. The quotas introduced were 500, 1,500 and 50 respectively. The scheme allows workers from non-EEA countries to access employment opportunities.

The application of a quota based system is to ensure that in the longer-term, strategies are put in place to source labour supply from both the domestic and European labour markets and to invest in innovative technologies for the sector. To date this pilot scheme has proved very successful with the number of permits issued in the dairy sector almost exhausted.

These lists are subject to twice-yearly evidenced based review process involving consideration of research undertaken by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (Solas), the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), the National Skills Council, and input by relevant Government Departments in addition to the public consultation phase. Submissions to the review process are also considered by the Economic Migration Policy Interdepartmental Group chaired by my Department which includes the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The pilot scheme provides that additional employment permit quotas may be granted in response to progress reported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on commitments given by the sector to:

- the systematic and structured engagement with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection regarding sourcing labour from the live register and across the EEA;

- the development of training, upskilling and career opportunities;

- a commitment to examine the potential of innovation in the sector to ameliorate reliance on a model of low skill, low wage employment.

The views of the lead policy Government Department for the sector, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, are an important part of the decision-making process.

I am advised that the business case submitted by the sector requesting an extension to this quota has been forwarded to my Department, following its consideration by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My Officials are currently examining the submission as a matter of urgency and I expect to be in a position to make a decision on this request very shortly.

**IDA Ireland**

229. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 106 of 10 April 2019, the progress made in marketing the site in question; if there has been further meetings between the IDA and the site owners; if the attention of the IDA has been drawn to moves to rebrand the site (details supplied); if there have been site visits from potential investors or new businesses seeking to locate at the site; and
if she will make a statement on the matter. [30096/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am informed that the IDA met with the site’s new owners last December and that it has been provided with marketing information for the Liffey Business Campus. The owners are marketing the site through a third party agent. The IDA is not aware of a rebrand of the site and continues to actively market it to both existing and potential clients through its network of offices in Ireland and overseas.

More broadly, the Agency’s efforts to attract more investment to Kildare will be assisted by the County’s already strong profile as a home to overseas firms in the Technology, Financial Services and Pharmaceuticals sectors. IDA client companies such as Intel, Pfizer, and Procter and Gamble are all located there and continue to perform well. Kildare has seen a 4.5% increase in foreign direct investment-driven employment over the last 12 months and I am hopeful that that positive trend will continue.

Regional Development Initiatives

230. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when a hub (details supplied) in Naas, County Kildare, will be completed; when it will be operational; the interest to date from companies to locate there; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30101/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department through Enterprise Ireland has approved funding totalling €59.5 million to 42 projects under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund to date. On 24 June last I announced Call 3 of this Fund with an additional allocation of €45m.

The MERITS hub is one of the projects funded under Call 1 of this initiative announced in December 2017. The Mid East Regional Innovation Think Space (MERITS) is a new build project to cluster Irish and international new-technology companies and provide mentorship and support in Naas, County Kildare. The project is supported by strong collaboration with Kildare County Council, Maynooth University/ MaynoothWorks, Kildare Chamber and the 3 Mid East LEOs (Kildare, Meath & Wicklow).

Enterprise Ireland has been informed that the build completion date for the MERITS hub is estimated to be October 2020, with the occupation date estimated to be during the period November to December 2020. The MERITS hub has reported a strong local demand for office space of this nature especially given the lack of such infrastructure in the locality.

I launched the new Regional Enterprise Plan for the Mid-East region, which covers Kildare, Meath and Wicklow, on the 7th February last in Naas. It is focused on four Strategic Objectives, specifically: developing the Screen Content Creation Sector, developing innovative co-working spaces, supporting the agri-food sector and ensuring the availability of skills and talent.

Within the Mid-East Regional Enterprise Plan there is a focus on the creation of at least 10 Hubs/co-working spaces based on the MERITS model. Plans are progressing for additional hubs in Co. Kildare, Co. Meath and Co. Wicklow.

Departmental Shareholdings

231. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innov-
tion if she will provide details of all entities in which she or her Department holds shares; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30177/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): No shares are held in the name of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation or the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Departmental Contracts Data

232. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the contracts her Department and agencies under her remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30235/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Security Services contracts are in place in two of my Department’s Offices namely Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE), 16 Parnell Square, Dublin 2 and Patents Office, Hebron Road, Kilkenny. The procurement process for both were via Office of Government Procurement National Framework Agreement for the provision of Security Services.

The ODCE contract is with Synergy Security Solutions and started on 1 June 2019 for a period of three years with two optional 12-month extensions.

The Patents Office has a contract with Securway At Risk Security Group Limited, T/A Sar Security. The duration of contract is for two years with two optional 12-month extensions (currently on first extension until 2nd April 2020).

My Department does not routinely collect details of (security contracts etc.) entered into by the agencies under the aegis of the Department. This is a day to day operational matter for the agencies concerned and not one in which I have a direct function.

IDA Ireland Data

233. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits the IDA made to south County Kildare and Athy over the past five years; the number of additional jobs and investments secured in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30328/19]

234. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits the IDA made to counties Carlow and Kilkenny over the past five years; the number of additional jobs and investments secured in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30329/19]

235. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits the IDA made to County Waterford over the past five years; the number of additional jobs and investments secured in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30330/19]

236. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits the IDA made to County Wicklow over the past five years; the number of additional jobs and investments secured in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30331/19]
Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits the IDA made to County Galway over the past five years; the number of additional jobs and investments secured in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30332/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 233 to 237, inclusive, together.

Regional development remains a key priority of mine as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Through my Department and its Enterprise Agencies, I am focused on strengthening investment and job creation all over the country. In 2018, 56% of all net new jobs created by IDA Ireland were in locations outside Dublin. Similarly, every region in Ireland posted net gains in jobs last year. There are now over 132,000 people employed across 681 firms in IDA client companies outside the capital. In fact, 58% of all IDA-supported employment is now outside of Dublin. This represents the highest number of people employed in the regions by IDA clients in the Agency’s history. The strength of the IDA’s recent mid-year results for 2019 indicates that we can continue to rely on the selling points that make investing in the regions so attractive in the first place with the technology, financial services and pharmaceutical sectors performing extremely well.

Kildare and Wicklow are part of IDA Ireland’s East & Mid-East region. There are 29 IDA supported client companies in County Kildare, which collectively employ 8,838 people - representing an increase of 4.5% over the previous year. IDA clients such as Intel, Pfizer, and Procter and Gamble are all located in Kildare and continue to perform well. FDI levels in Wicklow are also trending in the right direction. The County saw a 17% increase in FDI employment last year, with 388 net new jobs added by IDA client companies.

IDA Ireland’s South-East region includes Counties Kilkenny, Waterford and Carlow. There are currently five IDA client companies located in Kilkenny employing a total of 711 people which represents an 8% increase since 2015. County Waterford has 38 IDA client companies employing approximately 7,100 people, representing an increase of 3% over last year with 374 net new jobs added. There are currently seven IDA client companies operating in Co. Carlow employing a total of 1,150 people. Last year alone, the number of IDA supported jobs in Carlow increased by 31% with 275 net new jobs added. A further boost to the County was MSD’s announcement late last year that it plans to construct a second manufacturing facility at its existing site in Carlow with the creation of 170 new jobs.

County Galway is part of the IDA’s West region and is home to a strong base of multinational companies. There are 81 IDA clients in the County employing 19,969 people, which represents an increase of almost 8% over last year. Galway has developed into a focused global centre of FDI activity providing knowledge intensive services for global companies such as Boston Scientific, Medtronic, HP and CISCO.

Table (A) outlines the employment figures for the years 2015-2018. Figures for 2019 will not be available until the end of the year. Data on IDA-supported jobs is collated on a county-by-county basis. Information on the number of jobs in specific towns and locations is therefore unfortunately unavailable. Table (B) outlines site visits to the respective counties from 2015 to Q1 2019. Whilst site visits are an important tool in helping showcase regional locations to investors, it is important to remember that the final decision as to where to invest rests solely with the company concerned. It is also the case that site visit activity does not necessarily reflect investment potential, as a significant proportion of all new foreign direct investment comes from existing IDA clients already present in the country. Investments by IDA clients are released as national figures only and Table (C) outlines the number of these investments won from 2014 to
2018.

Table (A) IDA Employment 2015-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1,150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>15,463</td>
<td>17,041</td>
<td>18,503</td>
<td>19,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>5,574</td>
<td>6,253</td>
<td>6,690</td>
<td>7,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>2,203</td>
<td>2,234</td>
<td>2,230</td>
<td>2,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>10,123</td>
<td>9,740</td>
<td>8,452</td>
<td>8,838</td>
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</table>

Table (B) IDA Site Visits 2015 to Q1 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Q1 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table (C) IDA Ireland Annual Total Investments 2014 - 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Investments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mental Health Services

238. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of support services for children and teenagers identified as having a tendency to self-harm; the number of instances of such vulnerable young persons his attention has been drawn to in the past two years; the extent to which it has been possible to make a positive intervention; if particular deficiencies have been identified in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30464/19]

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.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

239. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Health if the new endoscopy unit and other medicine units proposed for Naas General Hospital, Naas, County Kildare, are included in the HSE capital plan for 2019; if so, when construction will commence and is expected to be completed regarding the improvements to the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the
matter. [30093/19]

240. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Health if phase 3C of Naas General Hospital is included in the HSE capital plan for 2019; if so, when construction will commence and expect to be completed on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30094/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 239 and 240 together.

My Department is currently in discussions with the Health Service Executive and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with a view to finalising the HSE capital plan over the coming weeks.

However, I have asked the Health Service Executive to provide you with details of the current position and plans regarding proposed capital developments at Naas General Hospital including the accommodation and ancillary services to support a new endoscopy unit, physical medicine unit, physical therapy unit, oncology unit and day procedure department and the new mental health unit on the grounds of Naas General Hospital.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

241. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if a refund under the cross-Border directive will issue to a person (details supplied). [30105/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The management of the Cross Border Directive (CBD) is a matter for the Health Service Executive.

As the issue raised is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Healthcare Infrastructure Provision

242. Deputy Seamus Healy asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the up-grading and development of a home (details supplied) with particular reference to ensuring a long-stay facility for Roscrea, County Tipperary and the surrounding area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30107/19]

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 the Deputy directly in relation to this matter.

Home Care Packages

243. Deputy Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) was approved for homecare; when the person will receive same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30144/19]

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.
244. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not yet received a date for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30145/19]

**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.

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245. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30146/19]

**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.

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

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246. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when the pay deal agreed with nurses and midwives in February 2019 will be put in place; the full cost of the pay deal for nurses and midwives in 2019 and 2020; and the nature of offsetting cost reduction measures such as changes to roster arrangements that are to be put in place to deal with the cost of the new pay deal. [30150/19]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A detailed implementation plan to give effect to this agreement is currently being finalised by the HSE. It will set out the actions to be taken by the HSE to implement the Enhanced Nurse/Midwife Contract. It will also set out key productivity measures that will be subject to independent verification.

The most recent estimate of costs for the implementation of the various elements of the Labour Court recommendation is €39m in 2019. An additional €5m for the continued implementation of the Framework on Safe Staffing and Skill mix will also be required.

In addition, the 2018 Public Service Pay Commission recommendations in respect of increases and extensions to certain nursing and midwifery allowances will cost an additional €13.7m in 2019.

Estimates for the 2020 costs are currently being assessed by the HSE and will be subject to the normal budgeting and planning process for the next financial year.

HSE Staff Data

247. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Health the number of staff employed in a facility (details supplied) in County Mayo including whole-time and part-time equivalents; the breakdown of the staffing categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30151/19]

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 Staff Data

248. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Health the number of staff members currently absent due to sick leave in a facility (details supplied) in County Mayo; the length of time they have been absent; if they are still being paid by the HSE while on sick leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30152/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Waiting Lists

249. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an appointment with an orthopaedic consultant at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30160/19]

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 sched-
uled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

Invalidity Pension Applications

250. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an invalidity pension application review by a person (details supplied). [30161/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

251. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health if the decision by the HSE to move a person (details supplied) from their residential care home in Greystones, County Wicklow to Portarlington, County Laois can be reversed to facilitate family members to visit the person on a regular basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30162/19]

**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.

HSE Staff Recruitment

252. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the private companies involved with the national recruitment service of the HSE. [30169/19]

253. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if the national recruitment service of the HSE has given contracts to private companies; and if so, the name and expenditure on same in each of the past five years. [30170/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 252 and 253 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.
254. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the turnaround time between job advertisement and hiring of persons for different grades of HSE staff. [30171/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Efforts have been made by my Department to gain clarity on what job titles are being referred to in the question. At the time of the deadline for reply however, there is insufficient information on hand for the HSE to investigate the issue, therefore the Deputy should forward the information directly to the HSE.

**Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

255. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of funding for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30175/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The management of the Cross Border Directive (CBD) is a matter for the Health Service Executive.

As the issue raised is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond the Deputy directly.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

256. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30186/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 1957 Vhi Act established the Voluntary Health Insurance Board (Vhi) as a statutory corporation with defined powers. Vhi is a commercial state body under my aegis as Minister for Health. As Minister for Health, I have a role in making appointments to the Vhi Board and in approving changes to the Vhi’s employee pension schemes. I do not, however, have a role in the day-to-day commercial decision making of Vhi. As of 2018, NewERA offers financial advice to my Department officials regarding Vhi’s activities.

257. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment in CHO 2 of a child health governance team to provide oversight for the implementation of the healthy childhood priority programme. [30200/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to her.

**Health Services Provision**

258. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if a clinic has been established to support the homecare community intervention team in County Galway in association with University Hospital Galway. [30201/19]
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.

Chronic Disease Management Programme

259. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health if a chronic disease programme has been established in CHO 2 to develop integrated care for patients managed by their general practitioners and the acute hospitals. [30202/19]

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.

Health Services Staff Data

260. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the expansion of the homeless multidisciplinary team (details supplied) in CHO 2; and the number of additional staff in whole-time equivalent terms recruited to date in 2019. [30203/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As the questions asked by the Deputy are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply.

Mental Health Services Staff

261. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health if all frontline mental health staff in CHO 2 have access to Children First mandatory training. [30204/19]

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.

Disease Classification

262. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health the number of children diagnosed with ME in the voluntary sector children’s hospital group, other voluntary hospitals and in the HSE acute sector in 2018 and to date in 2019; the criteria used to identify each level of severity that is mild, moderate, severe and profound; the data for same; the diagnostic criteria (details supplied) each paediatric department uses to diagnose ME; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30206/19]

263. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health the paediatric services within the voluntary sector children’s hospital group and other voluntary hospitals, in the HSE acute sector and in the community health organisations in which a child that may potentially have ME as described in the WHO and SNOMED classifications be referred to which acknowledges ME is a physiological illness, that ME is not a mental health or psychiatric condition and acknowledges a number of other factors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30208/19]
264. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health if ME will be acknowledged as a neurological disorder as stated in the WHO and SNOMED classifications; if he will request the HSE to commence the work of identifying a consultant and expert in the condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30212/19]

265. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health if an assurance will be given that a child will be protected who has or may potentially have ME and is waiting for an appointment to diagnose or exclude ME using recognised diagnostic criteria from being threatened with being taken from their family into hospital for a programme associated with graded exercise therapy or enforced activity, be that schooling in hospital, walking and so on (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30215/19]

269. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health his views on whether general practitioners and paediatric services in the voluntary sector children’s hospital group and other voluntary hospitals in the HSE acute sector and community health organisations are providing appropriate knowledgeable care, using consistent diagnostic criteria and biomedical guidance across all children’s services to ensure that children that have or potentially and have ME are referred to a service which acknowledges ME is a physiological illness; acknowledges that ME is not a mental health or psychiatric condition and acknowledges a number of other factors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30251/19]

270. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health if a child that has or potentially has ME will be referred to an appropriately knowledgeable paediatric service which is willing to diagnose ME and fulfils a number of criteria (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30252/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 to 265, inclusive, 269 and 270 together.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) / myalgic encephalomyelitis (or encephalopathy) (ME) is a complex debilitating disorder which is characterised by severe fatigue accompanied by a range of other symptoms.

There is currently no known, specific, medical diagnostic test to determine or confirm a correct diagnosis of ME and no specific treatment which works for all sufferers is currently available. As a result clinical assessment and the design of care plans need to be tailored to the individual patient. There are assessments and tests which can be carried out in primary care settings by a General Practitioner. Specialised tests may be required when considering and ruling out other diagnoses.

Treatment for ME is tailored to address the varying symptoms presented by those affected by ME. In general, these treatments are delivered within the context of primary care, with referrals into secondary care for specialist interventions in the areas of Neurology, Rheumatology, Pain Specialists, Endocrinology, Immunology, Cardiology, etc. Different patients, depending on their primary symptoms, will require different Consultant input. The challenge in relation to ME is that it does not sit within one specialty, but crosses a number of specialties, with patients frequently attending different Consultants for management of their symptoms as and when they arise. Consultants are well used to coordinating the care of patients that require the input of their colleagues and other members of the multidisciplinary care team.

Waiting times for access to these services can be lengthy. However, there is currently work under way as part of the implementation of the Strategy for the Design of Integrated Outpatient Services 2016-2020, specifically as regards addressing how and where the patient is treated and the classification of referrals with corresponding clinically recommended time-frames. Consid-
eration is also being given to condition specific referral forms. This work should see significant improvements with respect to access to appropriate services.

As these questions relates to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

**Dental Services Provision**

266. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for special care dentistry assessment and procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30227/19]

**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.

**Ministerial Meetings**

267. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will meet with a representative from an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30228/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I would be happy to facilitate a meeting in September at some point. My officials will be in direct contact with the organization to set up a time and date that would be suitable.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

268. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30244/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is located at Miesian Plaza, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2 which is leased by the OPW. There are four civil service Departments using this office space and the security company G4S provides security from 9pm to 7am Monday to Friday and 24/7 security at weekends and public holidays for the OPW tenant block. The costs of this are shared across the tenant Departments. The original contract for G4S was procured by the OPW and the tenant Departments continued this provision when they took occupancy in mid-2018. This will continue until a full managed service procurement process for the building, including security services, is carried out. This is expected to be completed by end 2019. The details and provision of security services for agencies under the remit of my Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned.

Questions Nos. 269 and 270 answered with Question No. 262.

**Mental Health Services Data**

271. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if children that potentially have ME have been placed under the mental health department of a hospital; the diagnostic criteria
used to diagnose or exclude ME (details supplied); the number of children that potentially have ME placed under mental health departments to manage their care in 2018 and to date 2019; the criteria used to classify those children into severity levels that is, mild, moderate, severe and profound by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30253/19]

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 Services

272. Deputy Denis Naughten asked the Minister for Health the status of the rehabilitation unit project for Roscommon University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30257/19]

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 Staff Recruitment

273. Deputy Denis Naughten asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in approval of development posts at Roscommon University Hospital which were specifically provided for in budget 2018; if the posts will be filled without delay in view of the fact that candidates have now been selected further to a recruitment process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30258/19]

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.

Emergency Departments

274. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the latest planning details and timeframe for a new accident and emergency department at Beaumont Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30264/19]

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.

Hospitals Building Programme

275. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health if capital budgets assigned to his Department under Project Ireland 2040 will include a new regional or university hospital for the north fringe of Dublin and Fingal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30265/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Sláintecare Action Plan for 2019 includes a commitment to develop criteria for new dedicated ambulatory elective-only hospital
facilities. Detailed policy analysis to underpin this very significant health capital development is required to guide service and operational specifications for the new facilities.

Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan are long-term plans which will provide the capital funding to develop dedicated ambulatory elective-only hospital facilities. However, we must ensure that we carefully plan the use of this capital funding to meet the populations health needs and achieve value for money.

Project Ireland 2040 includes provision for new dedicated ambulatory elective-only hospital facilities will be introduced in Dublin, Galway and Cork. These facilities will provide high volume, low complexity procedures on a day and outpatient basis, together with a range of ambulatory diagnostic services. The high volume of demand for such services in these major urban centres is sufficient to justify the construction of dedicated ambulatory centres.

It is envisaged that these facilities will be sited adjacent to acute hospitals. The aim is to both increase capacity in the hospital system and provide a better separation of scheduled and unscheduled care, in line with the recommendations of the Sláintecare Report. They will provide increased, protected capacity for elective treatment and free up capacity in major hospitals to address higher complexity and emergency care.

Speech and Language Therapy Data

276. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults attending speech and language therapy supports in County Donegal; and the locations in the county these supports are provided. [30266/19]

**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

277. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the locations of feeding clinics across the State supporting persons with disabilities who have difficulties swallowing and are prone to choking due to their disability. [30267/19]

**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.

HSE Correspondence

278. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when he will provide a sub-
stantive response to correspondence calling for an independent review into the circumstances leading to the death of a person (details supplied) in November 2016. [30268/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have been advised by the HSE that a letter issued to the correspondent from the Saolta University Health Care Group on the 28 June, 2019 in relation to this matter.

**Healthcare Policy**

279. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the results of the public consultation on geographical alignment of community healthcare organisations and hospital groups will be published. [30269/19]

280. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if a geographical outline of community healthcare networks, community healthcare organisations and hospital groups will be provided across the State; and the way in which they align with and interact with each other. [30270/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 279 and 280 together.

A clear governance and accountability framework was identified as a key building block of Sláintecare by the Committee on the Future of Healthcare. As part of its recommendations in this area, the Committee called for the HSE to become a more strategic and patient-focused ‘national centre’ carrying out national level functions, and the establishment of regional bodies with responsibility for the planning and delivery of integrated care at a regional level. As the Deputy will be aware, 9 Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) and 6 Hospital Groups are in place on an administrative basis to plan and deliver community and acute care services respectively. While significant progress has been made by these structures, there is broad consensus that having separate and un-aligned structures for acute and community care impedes the development of a more integrated health service underpinned by population based planning, as envisaged under the Sláintecare programme. In this regard, the Sláintecare report recommended that “further analysis and consultation should be undertaken to identify how alignment can best be achieved with minimal disruption to key structures including at community healthcare network level”. As a first step in this process, my Department undertook a public consultation regarding the geographical alignment of CHOs and Hospital Groups in 2018. In addition, my Department has carried out further detailed analysis work to determine the optimal geographical alignment of CHOs, CHNs and Hospital Groups which can be achieved with minimal disruption, and which will ultimately be the geographical areas of the proposed new regional health bodies. My Department is finalising proposals in this regard, and I hope to bring these proposals to Government shortly, together with the findings of the public consultation, which I expect to be published shortly thereafter.

In parallel, work is progressing in my Department on the development of detailed policy proposals on reconfiguration of the HSE, including the establishment of regional health bodies. This will take into account international experience of regional delivery of healthcare along with a comprehensive engagement process with stakeholders in the Irish health system.

**Alcohol Pricing**

281. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health his plans to commence the pro-
visions of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 relating to minimum alcohol pricing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30271/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 2013 Government Decision which approved a minimum pricing regime envisaged its introduction in Northern Ireland and in this jurisdiction simultaneously. It is my intention to seek a revised Government Decision to implement minimum unit pricing of alcohol here as soon as possible in order to address the very significant health harms and financial costs of the way alcohol is currently consumed here.

**Health Services Staff Recruitment**

282. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the reason two permanent senior management administrative posts (details supplied) are being prioritised to be filled while front-line posts have ceased. [30272/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Home Help Service Data**

283. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the ratio of co-ordinators and HCSA leads to general staff and HCSA workers within the home help sector for the nine Health Service Executive CHO areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30274/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors**

284. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if the ENT department at University Hospital Limerick has lost its accreditation for training of non-consultant doctors in the speciality of ENT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30276/19]

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

**Departmental Budgets**

285. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the requirement for additional revenues in 2020 to meet demographic costs as outlined in the summer economic statement for his Department by sub-vote and scheme; the expected allocation his Department will require as submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the specific resources required to fund in terms of additional staffing requirements by type and grade or additional operational costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30283/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department will shortly be engaging in dialogue with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Health Service Executive in relation to the 2020 Estimates, and this process will include an analysis of the potential impact of demographic change.
Until these discussions are concluded it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter.

**Health Services Expenditure**

286. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of extending access to the counselling in primary care service to all 16 to 25 year olds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30348/19]

**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 Charges**

287. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the €100 fee for those seeking post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV (PEP) here through emergency departments; if the fee will be waived; when this will come into effect; if his Department has been consulted on this for legal advice by the HSE; if he will waive the fee for non-EU nationals accessing the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30349/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health (Out-Patient Charges) Regulations 2013, provide that, subject to specified exemptions, a charge shall be made for out-patient services provided at an emergency department, or any other facility providing similar services, in respect of the first occasion the service is provided in relation to each episode of care.

The Regulations sets out a number of categories of persons who are exempt from this charge including: a person with full eligibility; a child up to the age of 6 weeks; a child in respect of prescribed diseases of a permanent or long term nature; a person who has a letter of referral from a registered general practitioner, and a person whose attendance results in admission as an in-patient.

There are currently no plans to revise the format of the charge or exempt further categories of persons from the charge.

**Health Services Staff Recruitment**

288. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the recruitment of a clinical lead in sexual health; the length of time the position has been advertised since the announcement in October 2018; when the role will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30350/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to him.

**Motorised Transport Grant**

289. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the health (trans-
port support) Bill; the projected costs of reintroducing a mobility allowance and motorised transport scheme to new applicants in 2020; the status of work in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30351/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in 2013.

With regard to the proposals for a new Health (Transport Support) Bill, the Deputy may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Health and I, brought a Memorandum to Government on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet Agenda at that time. I intend to revert to Government in due course with revised proposals to reflect the discussions at that Cabinet meeting and further discussions between myself and Minister Harris, on the best way to progress the Transport Scheme.

As to the Deputy’s question regarding projected costs of a new Transport Support scheme, the clear instruction from Government is that eligibility criteria for a new scheme must focus on those with the greatest need who have the least resources available to them. In order to make the eligibility criteria for the scheme very broad, opening up newer categories of eligibility, the effects of which are difficult to estimate, would carry major budgetary implications. Competing demands within the disability budget and elsewhere must be considered.

As of January this year, 3,790 persons who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance at the time that the scheme closed, have continued to receive the monthly payment at a cost of just under €9 million per annum, in line with the Government decision. I can assure the Deputy of our efforts to find a solution which is fair, financially affordable and legally sound.

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.

**Health Services Staff Data**

290. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the full-time equivalent number of staff positions in the health services whose role is to process payments in relation to private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30352/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.
291. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the amount recovered in a full year from private health insurers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30353/19]

292. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the amount recovered in a full year from private health insurers as a percentage of the amount owed by private insurers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30354/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 291 and 292 together.

As this is a matter for the Health Service Executive, I have asked them to respond to you directly.

**Home Help Service Expenditure**

293. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing an additional 2.2 million hours of home help; the estimated cost of providing 8,000 extra homecare packages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30355/19]

**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 Expenditure**

294. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of meeting the outstanding demand for homecare packages and home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30356/19]

**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 Agency Staff Expenditure**

295. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the spend to date and projected full year spend by the HSE on agency staff by position and grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30357/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Family Support Services**

296. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to provide family supports for those with sickle cell disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30364/19]
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.

Disease Management

297. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the health system is adapting to assist the growing numbers of persons with sickle cell disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30365/19]

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.

Health Services Provision

298. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when medical treatment will be made available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30369/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy’s question relates to an operational issue, I have referred the matter to the HSE for direct reply.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

299. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health if the approval of the reimbursement of the drug Tagrisso as a second line therapy for non-small cell lung cancer will be expedited, in view of the need of a very small patient cohort and relatively small budget impact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30370/19]

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 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.

I am advised by the HSE that it has assessed osimertinib for the following indication:

- The treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic EGFR T790M mutation-positive NSCLC.
In respect of this indication, the NCPE completed its Health Technology Assessment (HTA) in May 2018. 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 2nd 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 they are currently under consideration.

In addition, the HSE have commissioned a HTA on osimertinib for:

- 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.

I am informed that this assessment is ongoing and will be assessed in line with the 2013 Act.

**HSE Expenditure**

300. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health the anticipated savings the HSE will generate through the best value biological medicines initiative recently launched by the medicines management programme in 2019 and 2020; the proportion of these savings that will be reinvested into new medicines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30371/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

**Medicinal Products Expenditure**

301. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health the oncology medicines that had a health technology assessment completed by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, NCPE, since 2016 and are not reimbursed by the HSE, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30372/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive has responsibility for medicines expenditure, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.
303. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the inquiries made as to whether the entire cervical screening service should be re-established to ensure an entirely integrated service for HPV, cytology, colposcopy and histopathology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30374/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Following the issues which emerged in relation to CervicalCheck in 2018, Government established a Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Gabriel Scally. The Scoping Inquiry submitted its Final Report in September 2018 and a Supplementary Report this June, and provided welcome assurance in relation to the quality management processes in the labs. Dr Scally has said he has found no evidence of deficiencies in screening quality in any of the labs. These are very welcome reassurances for women in Ireland, given the importance of screening for women’s health and the need for external laboratory capacity to support the programme.

At the same time, Dr Scally did as we know uncover significant issues across a range of areas within screening, and made 58 recommendations in total across his reports. My focus now is on the full implementation of all of those recommendations, which are fundamental to strengthening the programme and ensuring it delivers a service of the highest quality for Irish women.

I take it that, in referring to an integrated service, the Deputy is referring particularly to the laboratory element of the screening pathway which is currently provided primarily by external providers, with a small element provided by the Coombe Hospital. While Dr Scally made no recommendation regarding how laboratory services should be provided, the HSE has advised it is committed to the further development of laboratory services at the Coombe, and that work is ongoing in relation to development of costings and a business case, taking account of future need.

### Hospital Beds Closures

304. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his views on reports that the HSE plans to close the elms ward in St Mary’s Hospital, Phoenix Park; and his plans to ensure that the facility remains open. [30387/19]

**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.

Cross-Border Health Services Provision

305. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the cost of implementing the cross-Border directive in each year since its inception; the estimated cost for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30388/19]

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

Treatment Abroad Scheme

306. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the cost of implementing the treatment abroad scheme in each year since its inception; the estimated cost for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30389/19]

**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.

Medical Workforce Data

307. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he has received the Murray report on medical recruitment; if he will publish same without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30390/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Director General of the HSE wrote to my Department on 13 May in response to requests that I and the Secretary General had made asking that the HSE address medical recruitment challenges, including issues raised by Justice Kelly concerning the appointment of doctors not on the Specialist Register to consultant posts.

The covering letter from the Director General confirmed the HSE’s recognition of all aspects of medical recruitment and retention as a potential patient safety issue and its commitment to put a governance framework in place to deliver improvements in this area. It advised that the HSE is developing terms of reference for a Medical Workforce and Patient Safety Oversight Group supported by a project team to agree and oversee implementation of actions in relation to the following priority areas:

- Doctors employed by the HSE who are not on the Specialist Register,
- Non-Training Scheme NCHDs
- The recruitment process for NCHDs
- The recruitment process for consultants
- Retention of consultants and NCHDs, and
- The configuration of services that will best support the recruitment and retention of consultants and NCHDs, facilitate their training requirements and other needs.

The correspondence included a number of appendices, one of which was the Report of the NDTP Project Team on the Employment of Consultants Not Registered in the Specialist Division of the Register of Medical Practitioners. The Report highlights the work in train to address the position of those appointed to posts though not on the specialist register and the supervisory arrangements that are to be followed in such cases. It also addresses the issue of supporting such consultants to achieve specialist registration. The main attachment to the letter and other appendices addressed corporate governance and risk management arrangements.

The covering letter also advised that a further report on issues relating to NCHD recruitment, including the robustness of the appointment process is due to be completed in the coming months. The HSE has already issued directions to prospective employers of NCHDs highlighting the need to ensure that only properly qualified and competent doctors are recruited.

The position in relation to the Report referred to by the Deputy therefore is that it is currently receiving consideration as part of the broader submission.

Hospital Beds Data

308. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if 16 newly commissioned beds opened in the Sacred Heart hospital, Castlebar, County Mayo in 2019; the total bed capacity provided by same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30391/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Reports

309. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if each community healthcare organisation and hospital group published operational plans for 2019; and if so, if they have been published on the Health Service Executive website. [30404/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the publication of each CHO and Hospital Group 2019 operational plan is a matter for the HSE, the question has been referred to the HSE for a direct response to the Deputy.

Health Services Reports

310. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date in the implementation of the 45 recommendations of the trauma steering group in tabular form. [30405/19]
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 Reports

311. Deputy Stephen Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date in the implementation of the recommendations of the Scally report in tabular form. [30406/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Last September, Government accepted all 50 of the recommendations that were set out in Dr Scally’s Final Report into CervicalCheck and an implementation plan was approved by Government on 11 December 2018. The implementation plan is available at the following link: https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ScopingInquiryImplementationRevisedMasterplanMay-2019FinalSubmitted.pdf. Work is ongoing in the Department of Health, the HSE and the National Cancer Registry of Ireland on the range of actions within the Plan.

Dr Scally carried out a review of the implementation plan at the request of the Minister, and affirmed that the Implementation Plan is a comprehensive response to his report and that considers significant effort and resources are being committed to addressing the problems he identified.

Dr Scally also acknowledged in his Supplementary Report (published on 11 June 2019) that substantial and important progress has been made in implementing his recommendations to date. A progress report against the Implementation Plan for Quarter 1 2019 is published on the Department of Health website and is available at the following link:


It shows that, as of the end of Q1 2019, there were 161 actions arising from the 56 recommendations. 48 of these actions were completed and 82 actions were in progress. Some key areas of progress to date include:

- The HSE Board has now been established following the passage of the Bill and the first meeting of the Board, chaired by Mr Ciaran Devane, took place on 28 June;

- The Chair of the National Screening Committee has been appointed and it is intended that the inaugural meeting of the Committee will be held in Q3. The Committee will be an expert advisory committee responsible for considering population screening programmes in Ireland against internationally accepted criteria;

- Following the publication of the Crowe Horwath Report on the Role, Training and Career Structures of Public Health Physicians in Ireland in December, an Implementation Oversight Group has been established to oversee the implementation of a new model of public health medicine;

- I have approved the terms of reference and proposed membership for the new Independent Patient Safety Council. A process is underway to appoint the chair and hold the first meeting of the Council;

- The HSE published a revised interim open disclosure policy in June, pending a more detailed review, which will follow the outcome of the work to be undertaken by the new Independent Patient Safety Council;
- Expert groups have been established within National Screening Service to review clinical audit processes for interval cancers across all screening programmes;

- A new Quality Safety & Risk Committee with an independent chairperson was established in the National Screening Service in October 2018 and a Quality, Safety & Risk Manager has been appointed to NSS;

- A new Clinical Director for the CervicalCheck Programme has been appointed in addition to a new National Laboratory Quality Assurance Lead. A Director of Public Health for the NSS has also been appointed;

- The Director of Public Health in the NSS is establishing a quality improvement project across all programmes in order to adopt a formal quality assurance risk management approach.

The Supplementary Report makes two further recommendations, which have been accepted. Actions to implement these recommendations will be incorporated into the existing Implementation Plan for all of the Scoping Inquiry recommendations.

Chronic Disease Management Programme

312. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive has completed reviews of the existing approved models of care for four chronic diseases (details supplied); and if a service gap analysis has been conducted. [30407/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Charges

313. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 187 of 4 July 2019, when the review of the basis for existing hospital and medication charges to be carried out under commitments given in the Sláintecare implementation strategy will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30408/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The vision of Sláintecare is to achieve a universal single-tier health and social care system where everyone has equitable access to services based on need and not ability to pay. In its report, the Houses of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare called for a universal health system accessible to all on the basis of need, free at the point of delivery (or at the lowest possible cost). Over time, the vision is that everyone will have entitlement to a comprehensive range of primary, acute and social care services at no cost or at a substantially reduced cost and that the vast majority of this care will be provided in primary and community settings.

Within the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy, Strategic Action 6 aims to expand eligibility on a phased basis to move towards universal healthcare and support a shift to community-based care. The vision is that all citizens will have universal access to healthcare, in both the acute and community settings. In order to achieve this goal, there will need to be an expansion in eligibility, particularly for primary and community care. Although there is wide-ranging agreement that Ireland should move in the direction of a universal single-tier health service, there is also widespread acknowledgement that this goal presents a number of challenges.

As detailed in the Sláintecare Action Plan for 2019, the department is currently reviewing
the basis for existing hospital and medication charges and it is anticipated that the review will be finalised shortly. By the end of 2019, the Department will seek to develop options for future changes to hospital and medication charges and develop policy options for achieving universal eligibility.

Health Services Staff Data

314. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of public health nurses employed throughout the public health sector; the number of vacancies that exist; the number recruited to date in 2019; the number required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30465/19]

    **Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Electricity Grid

315. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the export of surplus power to the national grid by members of the farming community; and if the necessary new paperwork is in place (details supplied). [30159/19]

    **Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The suite of investments eligible for grant aid under TAMS II has recently been extended to include on-farm solar PV and battery storage facilities. The focus of TAMS II is on the provision of grant aid for on-farm investments and the electricity generated is intended for consumption on the farm enterprise.

    Wider energy policy including issues regarding the export of power to the national grid are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Climate Change Policy

316. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will discuss with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment measures to ensure that assistance is given to the farming community to achieve the targets for climate change action 2020. [30148/19]

    **Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is actively engaged as part of the whole of Government approach to transitioning to a low-carbon, competitive, sustainable and climate resilient economy and society.

    The recently launched ‘All-of-Government Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown’ is a collaborative approach that sets out the vision and pathway to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and meet our 2030 EU targets. The contribution from the agriculture sector to this national ambition is significant.

    However, agriculture cannot stand in isolation on this matter and will continue to work with all stakeholders including the Department of Communication, Climate Action and Environment to continue to examine and deliver the best means of encouraging sustainable food production, while optimising the sectors contribution to greenhouse gas mitigation, sequestration and dis-
The placement of fossil fuels. The targets set in this climate action plan for the sector are ambitious and challenging and will require early and extensive adoption of mitigation measures.

The approach of my Department is to focus on improving the emissions intensity of Irish production through the deployment of innovative and efficient practices at farm level combined with the practical application of emerging scientific knowledge. 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.

Recently, my colleague Richard Bruton, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment opened the second phase of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (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-/

My Department continues to work at building this consensus around the need for the agriculture sector to make a positive contribution to the climate change debate and I will continue to engage extensively and work in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders in this regard.

I am confident the agricultural sector as a whole will meet this challenge and contribute significantly to Ireland’s transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society, with collaboration, co-operation and collective responsibility being key in achieving this ambition and realising the potential of pro-active engagement.

Forestry Sector

317. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a forestry licence application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30164/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All forestry licence applications undergo a comprehensive vetting process to ensure that, inter alia, the landscape, environment and our archaeological heritage are protected. Every application is treated on its own merits and is examined with regard to its effect, if any, on its surroundings.

In this particular case, there has been detailed correspondence with the registered forester and a Natura Impact Assessment was submitted to the Department on 16th April, 2019. This has been referred to the Department’s ecologist for assessment and a decision on the application will issue when all environmental and other considerations have been considered in full.
318. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30176/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy is available at the following link:


### Departmental Contracts Data

319. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30234/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Security services for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, including opening and closing of buildings and alarm activation call outs, are usually provided by Service Officers who are Civil Servants in each building. However, in some instances, where there are no Service Officers in a building, additional security services are needed. Details of companies contracted directly by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are outlined below. In some cases, a tender document is at an advanced stage of preparation while others are under review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Provider</th>
<th>Procurement Process Undertaken</th>
<th>Duration of Contract</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G4S Cash Solutions</td>
<td>Three quotations sought</td>
<td>2 years with 2 possible extensions of 12 months each</td>
<td>Cash in Transit Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Guard Security</td>
<td>OGP procured contract</td>
<td>2 years with 2 possible extensions of 12 months each</td>
<td>RVO Tipperary Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Guard Security</td>
<td>Three quotations sought</td>
<td>1 year with 2 possible extensions of 12 months each</td>
<td>Relief security Cavan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Guard Security</td>
<td>Three quotations sought</td>
<td>6 months with 2 possible extensions of 1 month each</td>
<td>Temporary Open/Close Portlaoise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4 Securicor</td>
<td>Preparation for tender through OGP is at an advanced stage</td>
<td>To be determined shortly</td>
<td>RVO Limerick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quirke Security</td>
<td>Preparation for tender through OGP is at an advanced stage</td>
<td>To be determined shortly</td>
<td>RVO Tralee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Response Security</td>
<td>Preparation for tender through OGP is at an advanced stage</td>
<td>To be determined shortly</td>
<td>Navan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As regards the twelve State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, the information requested is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves. I have referred the Deputy’s question to the Agencies and have requested that a response should issue within 10 days.

* Facilities Management Services are also provided at Backweston Campus and at Drumshanbo, which include security services, by Apleona and Aramark

**Greyhound Industry**

320. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the commencement order for the Greyhound Racing Act 2019 has been signed; if not, the reason; and when it will be signed. [30261/19]

**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 Greyhound Racing Act 2019 was signed by the President on 28th May 2019. Appropriate statutory instruments will be required to commence various sections of the Act and these will be drawn up by Bord na gCon in consultation with my Department.

Bord na gCon is engaged in a detailed analysis of the transitional arrangements needed to give effect to the new provisions in the Act so that their statutory functions can continue in an effective and efficient manner and will make the necessary commencement orders as soon as
possible once this work is completed.

### Bovine Disease Controls

321. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on the examination of tissue samples as part of the BVD screening programme in each of the years 2013 to 2018, in tabular form. [30384/19]

322. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of tissue samples examined as part of the BVD screening programme in each of the years 2013 to 2018, in tabular form. [30385/19]

323. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of laboratories contracted or approved by his Department to carry out analysis of tissue samples as part of the BVD screening programme in each of the years 2013 to 2018, in tabular form; and the number of these laboratories that carry out tissue sample analysis operations here and outside of the State, respectively. [30386/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 321, 322 and 323 together.

The BVD Eradication programme is an Animal Health Ireland-led collaborative programme with representation from various industry stakeholders. BVD testing is compulsory for all cattle born on or after 1st January 2013.

The primary method of BVD testing is through the detection of BVD viral antigen on ear notch samples collected by the animal keeper during calf tagging. The tissue sample is submitted to a designated laboratory of their choice.

The programme results indicate very significant progress has been made in reducing the prevalence of this disease – with the Persistently Infected (PI) birth rate falling from 0.66% in 2013 (the first year of the Compulsory Programme) to 0.06% in 2018. Indeed, the number of positive herds has reduced considerably from 11.27% (9,485) of breeding herds in 2013 to 1.11% (839) herds in 2018. The programme benefits to farmers amounted to approx €85 million in 2018.

My Department do not have information on the costs of these tests as that is a commercial matter for the herd owners and the laboratories concerned.

The table below reports the number of calves tested for BVD for each year of the programme and the number of laboratories engaged in testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Calves Tested</th>
<th>Number of Laboratories engaged in testing</th>
<th>Number of Laboratories within the State</th>
<th>Number of Laboratories outside the State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,095,951</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,132,051</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,265,032</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2,325,310</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2,347,253</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2,342,904</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
324. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the EU recognised a body (details supplied) as a body in its role for certification of the haulage sector. [30402/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops (TASCC) is a voluntary scheme developed, owned and implemented by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), which is UK-based. My Department, therefore, has no role in the operation of this Scheme.

Accordingly, the requirement by certain feed businesses for their hauliers to hold TASCC certification is an operational decision for the companies concerned.

325. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 1188 of 8 May 2019, the way in which holders of a TASCC certificate will be able to comply in the event of Brexit considering that feed and grain merchants currently require hauliers of grain and feed ingredients to be holders of TASCC certification. [30403/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The role of my Department as the competent authority for official controls along the animal feed chain is to ensure the implementation and enforcement of EU and National feed legislation, including those requirements relating to hauliers and the transport of feed.

The Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops (TASCC) is a voluntary scheme developed, owned and implemented by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), which is UK-based. My Department, therefore, has no role in the operation of this Scheme.

326. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the additional projected yield in 2020 from a one cent increase in the National Oil Reserve Agency levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30300/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The current rate of the NORA levy is 2 cent per litre, payable when oil is placed on the market. The levy was set at this rate in 2009. In 2018 the total NORA levy amounted to €134m. A one cent increase in the levy would, other things being equal, result in an increase of approximately €65m in the total annual amount.

327. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 546 of 21 May 2019, if a shortlist of candidates has been invited to tender for the project; the closing date for receipt of tenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30095/19]
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): In December 2018, Kildare County Council, the contracting authority, invited tenders for expressions of interest in the remediation of Kerdiffstown landfill. The closing date for submissions was extended until 14 February 2019 on foot of requests for more time made on the eTenders procurement website. This process of evaluation is at an advanced stage and is being managed by Kildare County Council in accordance with the Office of Public Procurement guidelines and regulatory framework.

Bord na Móna

328. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the current Bord Na Móna redundancy scheme; and if there is a maximum age at which employees are eligible for inclusion on the scheme. [30116/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Voluntary Redundancy Scheme is an operational matter for the Board and management of Bord na Móna and not one in which I, as Minister, have a statutory function.

Departmental Shareholdings

329. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30179/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Shares are held, either directly by me as Minister or by my Department on my behalf, in the following entities:-

- An Post;
- Bord na Móna;
- EirGrid;
- ESB;
- National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA); and
- Irish National Petroleum Corporation (INPC).

Climate Change Adaptation Plans

330. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if an audit of the number of carparking and bicycle spaces available to Civil Service staff as part of the Climate Action Plan 2019 has been carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30193/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I published the Government’s Climate Action Plan on 17 June. The Plan sets out, for the first time, how Ireland can reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and also puts Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Plan
commits to reducing public sector emissions by 30% and improving public sector energy efficiency by 50% by 2030.

The Plan also includes a commitment to require each public body to adopt a Climate Action Mandate. The mandate will involve a core group of requirements that every public body will have to meet, and a wider set that should be pursued by larger organisations. The core requirements will have specific timelines for their introduction, be clearly measurable against a set of key performance indicators, and may include measures such as the following:

- facilitating employees in adopting lower carbon lifestyles
- every public building with public access to display an up-to-date Display Energy Certificate
- collaborating with suppliers and service providers in joint decarbonisation initiatives, including working with clients to adopt low carbon approaches such as the development of clusters

In addition, large public bodies may be required to commit to other measures such as:

- achieving formal environmental accreditation, such as EMAS or ISO 14001, and ISO 50001
- a proportion of energy to come from certified renewable sources and/or onsite renewables
- active management of equipment containing refrigerant gases, including maintenance and disposal planning

A decision as to whether to undertake specific audits is a matter for senior management to consider when developing Climate Action Mandates for their respective Government Department, Office or Agency.

Biofuel Obligation Scheme

331. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he is examining the possibility of liquid fuelled heating appliances being adapted and used with biofuel; if he is examining proposals and strategies from stakeholders regarding the decarbonisation of homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30223/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Biofuel Obligation Scheme, administered by the National Oil Reserves Agency, is the principal support for the uptake of biofuels in Ireland. The scheme was introduced in 2010 and requires suppliers of liquid road transport fuel to ensure that biofuels make up a certain percentage of annual fuel sales.

A public consultation on the development of the scheme is planned for later this year. This will include the potential inclusion of the heat sector in the Biofuel Obligation Scheme, based on the level of use and availability of suitable biofuels.

The Climate Action Plan has identified sectoral targets that will deliver the carbon abatement we need to achieve by 2030. For homes, the target identified is to retrofit 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating B2 and to replace 400,000 existing heating systems with heat pumps.
The Plan commits Government to developing a new retrofitting delivery model, which will group retrofits together to achieve economies of scale, leverage private finance, and ensure easy pay-back methods. Proposals are currently being developed and my Department will be examining successful policies and strategies from other jurisdictions and consulting with stakeholders during this development process.

The Climate Action Plan recognises that the National Dialogue on Climate Action will drive action at community level, including focusing on youth activities as well as facilitating reporting back to regional gatherings on initiatives undertaken locally. The Plan itself is to be seen as a rolling process for effective consultation and implementation of change as I am currently engaged in a series of consultative meetings to explain the approach taken, hear views and take on ideas.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

332. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30237/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department has a contract for the provision of security services for its Dublin and Cavan offices with Key Guard Security Limited. The contract duration is three years with an option of extending it for up to twelve months. The contract was awarded following a competitive tendering process under the Office of Government Procurement Security Services Framework Agreement.

The information sought by the Deputy regarding the public bodies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each body. I will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisation.

**Traveller Community**

333. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the efforts being made to ensure that Travellers, those in rental accommodation and those in mortgage arrears, can access the better energy homes scheme for those on fuel allowance. [30400/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Buildings constructed since 2006 are generally more energy efficient due to energy performance requirements in the Building Regulations. These Regulations have been progressively strengthened and new buildings must now meet a very high energy performance standard.

My Department funds a number of retrofit schemes that are primarily aimed at improving the energy efficiency of houses built before 2006. Grants are available to all house owners, including landlords, for insulation, heating controls, heat pumps and solar panels. These grants are not means tested and are available to any house owner whose property meets the required year of build.

100% Exchequer-funded upgrades are also available in certain circumstances. Again the house must have been built before 2006. Eligibility for this scheme is linked to a number of
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection payments.

I am aware of a recent report highlighting the prevalence of energy poverty among Travelers living in mobile homes and trailers. The Climate Action Plan commits to reviewing ways to improve how current energy poverty schemes can target those most in need.

My Department is also working to improve the energy efficiency of our rental sector. On average, these properties are less energy efficient than owner occupied homes. A cross-Departmental Advisory Group has been established to examine potential policy options and make recommendations aimed at addressing this issue. A public consultation on this matter is currently in development and will be published later in 2019.

**Regional Road Network**

334. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for increasing the roads budget allocation for Galway County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30112/19]

335. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if applications have been made by Galway County Council for extra funding for roads; the percentage increase sought; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30113/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 334 and 335 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of Galway County Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council’s own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

Funding under my Department’s main grant programmes are allocated taking the length of the road network in each local authority area into account with a view to ensuring as fair and equitable approach as possible for determining allocations. It is envisaged that grant allocations will continue to be determined on this basis.

The 2019 regional and local roads budget has been fully allocated and the Department is not in a position to provide additional funding this year. The years during the recession saw major cuts in State grants for roads and funding is still only recovering to the levels required for adequate maintenance and renewal of the road network. Having said that, 2019 has seen a welcome increase in grants and I am glad to note that Galway County Council has seen its overall roads allocation for 2019 rise to €28.8m, an increase of over 47% when compared to 2017.

It is a matter for Galway County Council to determine its priorities and decide its work programme for the year taking account of available grant funding and its own resources. Where additional costs arise on particular schemes and can be justified by reference to the requirements of the Public Spending Code, the Department may allow Councils to recoup extra costs from its grant allocation in the following year.

The final decision on grant allocations for 2020 will be determined as part of the Estimates process and will not be announced until early 2020.
336. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated yield of a bed night tax or levy of €1 per night in a hotel or bed and breakfast in a full year for each local authority in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30301/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): No calculations have been made by my Department in relation to a bed night tax or levy. Fáilte Ireland compile a range of accommodation statistics and I have asked the agency to reply directly to the Deputy with any available statistics they have in relation to the number of bed nights in question. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

337. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consultants have been appointed in South Dublin County Council to progress the planning and design of the upgrade of the M4 between Maynooth and Leixlip, County Kildare and to junction 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30099/19]

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.

338. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the outcome of reviews of train fares for commuters from Newbridge and Kildare, County Kildare outside the short hop zone; if further reviews are planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30138/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services. I have, therefore, referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

339. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a person (details supplied) cannot get the LocalLink route to and from a location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30163/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Trans-
port, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA’s responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Provision

340. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Irish Rail plans to increase the number of carriages from four to seven on the 6.35pm Dublin Connolly to Newbridge train service. [30167/19]

341. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Irish Rail plans to increase the number of carriages on peak DART and commuter rail services. [30168/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 340 and 341 together.

The issue raised are operational matters for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy’s questions to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Roads Maintenance

342. Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will arrange to have a premises (details supplied) with a view to resolving the problem for the householder inspected in view of surface water flooding the property as a result of roadworks carried out on the national primary route which raised the level of the road. [30173/19]

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 operation and maintenance 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 Shareholdings

343. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30192/19]
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, hold a 20% shareholding in Aviareto as provided for in the International Interests in Mobile Equipment (Cape Town Convention) Act, 2005. Aviareto is a joint venture between SITA and the Irish Government and was selected by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to set up and run the International Registry of Mobile Assets as required by the Cape Town Treaty.

Section 19 of the Harbours Act 1996 provides for both the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (s19 (1)(b)) and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (s19 (1)(c)) to be shareholders in the six State port companies:

- Dublin Port Company
- Port of Cork Company
- Galway Harbour Company
- New Ross Port Company
- Port of Waterford Company
- Shannon Foynes Port Company

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform holds one share and the remainder is held by me as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

In respect of the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), Shannon Group Shareholders and DAA Shareholders, I hold one share in each agency. My Department holds two shares in both the IAA and DAA Shareholders and three in Shannon Group Shareholders.

CIE is a statutory corporation. CIE holds 100% of shares in Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann.

Sports Capital Programme

344. Deputy Fergus O’Dowd asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the next round of sports grants will commence; the capital available for the clubs and organisation that apply and qualify; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30209/19]

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, 19 October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162 million 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 €7 million in allocations to 170 projects were announced on 17 January.

619 equipment-only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8 million 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 end of 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.

Departmental Contracts Data

345. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30250/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Top Security Ltd is providing security services at my Department’s offices in Cork. This is the only office of my Department where security services are being provided by an external company. Following a request for tenders in 2008, my Department awarded the contract to Top Security Ltd in 2008 for the provision of these services on the basis that it was the most economically advantageous tender received.

In respect of the agencies of my Department, I have referred the Deputy’s question to them for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Service Obligation Levy Payments

346. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the 2018 and 2019 PSO subvention allocated respectively to each transport body and public service provider by the National Transport Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30319/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. My Department has allocated €287 million in public service obligation (PSO) funding to the National Transport Authority for 2019. It is the NTA’s statutory responsibility to allocate this funding to the transport operators, and it does this in accordance with the contractual arrangements that it has in place with the individual service providers.

I have, therefore, forwarded the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive responses within ten working days.

Public Service Obligation Data

347. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the es-
timated cost of providing an increased subsidy to each public transport provider to reduce fares by 5%, 10% and 20%, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30320/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services.

As the Deputy is aware, in Budget 2019 I secured an increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for Public Service Obligation (PSO) public transport services and €287 million is available this year to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for this purpose.

The overall PSO amount is set each year as part of the annual Estimates and Budget processes, and the 2019 allocation for the Vote was voted on and approved by this House as part of the “Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019”. It is the statutory remit of the NTA to make PSO payments to the public transport operators who provide PSO services, and the payments are made in accordance with the PSO contracts that the NTA has in place with each of those operators.

I have, therefore, referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

348. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of progress towards delivering the Galway city bypass since approval was provided in 2018; the spend on the N6 Galway city transport project to date; the annual capital allocations for 2019, 2020 and 2021 for the project; the estimated completion date; the estimated final cost of the road; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30321/19]

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. TII also manage and distribute the capital national roads programme budget allocated to them by my Department.

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

349. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be allocated in 2020 to enable the further design and development of an essential road project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30393/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council’s own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.
This year I gave an allocation of €100,000 to Cavan County Council to enable the Council to undertake a detailed project appraisal, in line with the current requirements in the Public Spending Code and the Capital Investment Framework, of the Cavan to Dundalk section of the proposed east-west route. The aim of this appraisal would be to assess the extent to which the scheme or elements of it can be justified in terms of appraisal and advanced for further consideration in relation to schemes for future development. Preparation of the appraisal is the responsibility of the Council.

Allocations for 2020 will not be decided on, or issued until early 2020.

Road Projects

350. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be allocated in 2020 towards the planning and design of an essential road project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30394/19]

**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. Once funding arrangements have been put in place by my Department with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction of individual national roads is a matter for TII, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. TII also manage and distribute the capital national roads programme budget.

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 Shareholdings

351. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide details of all entities in which she or her Department hold shares; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30178/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I can confirm to the Deputy that neither I, or my Department, are shareholders in any entity.

School Discipline

352. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if Tusla plans to inform schools that a reduced timetable put in place for a child is deemed a suspension under its 2008 guidelines and should be recorded and reported to Tusla and to schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30195/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guideline for Schools (NEWB, 2008) was published as part of the then NEWB’s overall strategy to support school attendance and participation. They were designed to provide support for schools in their work with students and their families to ensure that schools can maintain the best possible educational environment. The Guidelines were prepared with the help of an Expert Group, and wide-ranging inputs from management bodies, teacher unions, parent organisations, students, the Department of Education & Science (DES) and its agencies...
The existing guidelines state that “Exclusion of a student for part of the school day, as a sanction, or asking parents to keep a child from school, as a sanction, is a suspension. Any exclusion imposed by a school is a suspension, and should follow the guidelines relating to a suspension”. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires that when a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days the school must inform an Educational Welfare Officer.

Tusla Educational Welfare Services (EWS) participated in the recent Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills examination of the matter of the use of reduced timetables in schools. My Department and the EWS are working closely with the Department of Education and Skills who have a lead role on this issue. It is important, however, to note that there are instances where, if agreed by all parties (the parents, child and the school) the use of a “reduced timetable” may, in certain exceptional circumstances, be deemed an appropriate short-term response to support a student’s continuation in education. In such instances it would be important that a record is maintained detailing such an agreed arrangement.

The issue of reduced timetables was the subject of a recent meeting of our National Advisory Council for Children and Young People wherein the range of issues, whereby these are used as sanctions, but in some cases supports, was considered. The National Advisory Council will continue to consider this issue and I intend to ensure that the perspectives of these experts would inform enhanced guidance which will be developed collaboratively by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla Educational Welfare Services.

Child and Family Agency

353. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the training and information provided for Tusla to enable it to recognise and support a child who has or potentially has ME; the difference between school phobia or school avoidance and the physiological presentation of ME; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30205/19]

355. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the training and information provided to schools to enable them to recognise and support a child who has or potentially has ME (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30213/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 353 and 355 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, does not have a role in the diagnosis of medical conditions. Where a child is in the care of Tusla, the Agency will work to source any required supports to meet the child’s identified needs, in collaboration with other bodies such as the HSE.

I am not in a position to comment on the training provided to schools. Matters relating to schooling are more appropriate for my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills.

Medical Conditions

354. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a child who has or may potentially have ME and-or is waiting for an appointment to diagnose or ex-
clude ME using recognised diagnostic criteria will be protected (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30207/19]

356. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an assurance will be given that a child who has or potentially has ME will be referred to an appropriately knowledgeable paediatric service that is willing to diagnose the condition (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30214/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 354 and 356 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that I am not in a position to comment on the diagnosis, or treatment, of health conditions. Matters concerning the HSE, including hospital programmes that may be offered to children diagnosed with a condition, are more appropriate for the attention of my Cabinet colleague, the Minister for Health.

*Question No. 355 answered with Question No. 353.*

*Question No. 356 answered with Question No. 354.*

**Family Resource Centres**

357. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of family resources centres and the county in which each is located, in tabular form. [30216/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme. There are currently 121 Family Resource Centres, which are funded under the Programme. Funding for the Programme has increased from €13.5m in 2017 to €18.0m this year.

In Budget 2019, I secured an increase of €1.5 million for the FRC Programme. This additional funding is being used to:

- Increase core funding to each of the 110 FRCs which existed pre-2018 by 5%.

- Employ an additional 17 Family Support Workers - one FRC in each of the 17 Tusla geographical areas will be allocated funding to employ a Family Support Worker.

- Fund the Family Resource Centre Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Programme.

As the operation of the Family Resource Centre Programme is a matter for Tusla, I have asked Tusla to provide the Deputy with the requested information directly.

**School Discipline**

358. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if Tusla plans to inform schools that putting in place a reduced timetable for a child is deemed a suspension under its 2008 guidelines and should be recorded and reported to Tusla and to schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30226/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Developing
a Code of Behaviour: Guideline for Schools (NEWB, 2008) was published as part of the then NEWB’s overall strategy to support school attendance and participation. They were designed to provide support for schools in their work with students and their families to ensure that schools can maintain the best possible educational environment. The Guidelines were prepared with the help of an Expert Group, and wide-ranging inputs from management bodies, teacher unions, parent organisations, students, the Department of Education & Science (DES) and its agencies and services, non-governmental organisations, State agencies and many other contributors.

The existing guidelines state that “Exclusion of a student for part of the school day, as a sanction, or asking parents to keep a child from school, as a sanction, is a suspension. Any exclusion imposed by a school is a suspension, and should follow the guidelines relating to a suspension”. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires that when a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days the school must inform an Educational Welfare Officer.

Tusla Educational Welfare Services (EWS) participated in the recent Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills examination of the matter of the use of reduced timetables in schools. My Department and the EWS are working closely with the Department of Education and Skills who have a lead role on this issue. It is important, however, to note that there are instances where, if agreed by all parties (the parents, child and the school) the use of a “reduced timetable” may, in certain exceptional circumstances, be deemed an appropriate short-term response to support a student’s continuation in education. In such instances it would be important that a record is maintained detailing such an agreed arrangement.

The issue of reduced timetables was the subject of a recent meeting of our National Advisory Council for Children and Young People wherein the range of issues, whereby these are used as sanctions, but in some cases supports, was considered. The National Advisory Council will continue to consider this issue and I intend to ensure that the perspectives of these experts would inform enhanced guidance which will be developed collaboratively by my Department, the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla Educational Welfare Services.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

359. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the contracts her Department and agencies under her remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30236/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department is located at Miesian Plaza, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2 which is leased by the OPW. There are four civil service Departments using this office space and the security company G4S provides security from 9pm to 7am Monday to Friday, and 24/7 at the weekends / public holidays for the OPW tenant block. The costs of this are shared across the tenant Departments.

The original contract for G4S was procured by the OPW and the tenant Departments continued this provision when they took occupancy in mid-2018. This will continue until a fully managed service procurement process for the building, including security services, is carried out. This is expected to be completed by end 2019.

The details and provision of security services for agencies under the remit of my Department is an operational matter and I have requested that the agencies concerned reply directly to the Deputy.
360. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children that potentially have myalgic encephalomyelitis, ME, overseen by Tusla; the approach of Tusla to children missing school that potentially have ME; if she will undertake reforms to improve the quality of social work practice and decision making, including thorough assessment and accreditation against qualifying standards for children that potentially have ME and or are waiting for an appointment to diagnose and or exclude ME using recognised diagnostic criteria; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30254/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Where a child is in the care, or known to, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, information about any known medical issues may be recorded on their file. Information about the health status of individual children is not collated centrally by Tusla for the purpose of reporting.

Where a child in care has a diagnosed medical condition, Tusla social workers will work collaboratively with the HSE to ensure that the child has access to the relevant services and supports. Where it is not possible to meet the child’s needs through the public health system Tusla may, on occasion, privately source supports.

Social workers do not and cannot diagnose children and young people with medical or psychiatric conditions, however, if a parent or carer is worried that a child may have an illness, physical or mental, a social worker allocated to a family would support the parent/carer to access the relevant services, for example their GP.

Where a child already has a diagnosis, a social worker must work with the child, their parent or carer and (with the appropriate consent) the child’s doctor, to support the child and family in managing the impact of any illness. The goal of the intervention is to ensure that the child can avail of any developmental opportunities, and to ensure parents and carers are supported to care for the child. This may involve providing practical supports through the family support service, assisting parents and carers to attend appointments for the child or assisting the child, parents and carers to access recommended supports e.g. applications for local authority grants to modify housing.

The Education and Welfare Service, also a division of Tusla, work with children and their parents/carers where school attendance is of concern. This is separate to the child protection social work service provided by Tusla.

**Departmental Budgets**

361. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the requirement for additional revenues in 2020 to meet demographic costs as outlined in the summer economic statement for her Department by additional staff, scheme and programme; the expected allocation her Department will require as submitted to the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform; the specific resources required to fund such as increased staffing commitments or funding to the affordable childcare scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30282/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department is currently examining expenditure requirements across all programme areas, including expenditure trends thus far in 2019, to identify how services can be delivered within the overall fiscal parameters for 2020.
As the Deputy will be aware, this forms part of the normal budget/estimates process and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this point.

**Affordable Childcare Scheme**

362. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the universal childcare subsidy from 50 cent an hour to €1 per hour or €2 per hour respectively; the estimated impact such an increase will have on other income assessed subsidies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30344/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The estimated costs per annum across the National Childcare Scheme of increasing the universal subsidy to €1 and €2 respectively are set out in the table below. The figures are based on the full cost to the National Childcare Scheme, assuming that the minimum targeted subsidy is increased so as never to be below the universal subsidy in all cases.

The costs are arrived at by:

- establishing the number of families with children under 15 years by income bracket (data supplied by CSO) and
- profiling these families by reference to the age of their children and
- estimating the proportion of children in each income bracket and age range using registered care and
- calculating estimated subsidy rates based on income levels and age profile and
- applying estimates of the average hours used by age group for term time and non-term time.

The cost estimates for subsidies at the existing levels (50c universal and the current targeted subsidy levels) assume a relatively conservative level of change from current scheme uptake. This change is used at a fixed level throughout the estimates. In other words, increased subsidies may create behavioural changes by families which are not factored into scenarios (for example, families moving from unregistered childminding to registered Early Learning and Care services that are eligible for the National Childcare Scheme).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Universal Rate</th>
<th>Additional Cost per annum</th>
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<td>.50c</td>
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<td>€1</td>
<td>€21</td>
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<td>€2</td>
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The following should also be noted:

- The figures do not include once-off transitional “savers” costs under section 26 of the Childcare Support Act.
- This assumes the minimum targeted subsidy is set by the universal subsidy for children under 3 years (or children over 3 years who do not yet qualify for ECCE) who are eligible for targeted subsidies.

**Affordable Childcare Scheme Data**

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363. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of families with children in full-time childcare that will not be eligible for an additional subsidy for childcare in autumn 2019 under the national childcare scheme due to their income exceeding the threshold of €60,000; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30345/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support, with some families receiving subsidies for the first time. This is because the Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. In this way, it aims to combat the poverty traps which may exist within the existing schemes.

Income thresholds for assessment under the Scheme were raised substantially under Budget 2019. The significant increase in the Scheme’s maximum net income threshold from €47,000 to €60,000 per annum, ensures that families with, in some cases, a gross income of up to €100,000 will benefit from the Scheme.

I am also very pleased that I have managed to adjust the lower income threshold, meaning that maximum subsidy rates will now be paid to all families with a reckonable income of up to €26,000 (up from €22,700). This ‘poverty proofs’ the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the very highest subsidy rates under the scheme.

I would emphasise that this Scheme is designed in accordance with the principle of progressive universalism, having regard to the best interests of children and to the needs of the most economically vulnerable. Those with the least income will get the highest subsidy. We will also aim to support education, training and employment as routes out of poverty.

It is estimated that 36,050 households with children in childcare will not be eligible for income assessed subsidy under the national childcare scheme due to their reckonable income exceeding the threshold of €60,000.

This figure is arrived at taking account of
- Extrapolated 2016 household income distributions for families with 1, 2, and 3+ children
- The estimated number of children at different ages/stages of education
- The estimated uptake of those children based on patterns at their age/stage of education
- The behavioural patterns of parents in the upper/lower half of the income distribution.

However, of these 36,050 households, it is estimated that 13,200 will qualify for a universal subsidy of up to €1,040 per annum as they will have children under three or not yet eligible for the ECCE scheme. A further 14,000 approximately will qualify for the free pre-school programme (ECCE) which is considered to reduce childcare costs for parents who are working by approximately €5,500 per child over the course of the 2 year ECCE programme.

Finally, it is should be noted that the National Childcare Scheme is designed to be flexible, with income thresholds, subsidy rates and maximum hours and these can be adjusted over time as Government investment becomes available.

**Domestic Violence Refuges Provision**
364. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when funding will be allocated towards the necessary provision of a refuge centre in counties Cavan and Monaghan for victims of domestic abuse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30395/19]

**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 for victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence throughout the country.

In 2019, €25.3 million is being allocated to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, an increase of €1.5 million over 2018.

This year, the additional funding of €1.5m will be used for the further investment and development of these services. 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.

With regard to the future provision of additional refuge spaces, it should be noted that the responsibility for capital investment in new refuges falls under the remit of a number of Government bodies. Tusla is in contact with funded organisations in relation to proposed new developments, with plans underway in a number of areas for additional refuge spaces. These plans are at various stages.

Any additional funded developments will be informed by Tusla’s review of emergency refuge accommodation nationwide, and the identified needs of service users throughout the country.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy with regard to the provision of a refuge in counties Cavan and Monaghan.

### Bullying of Children

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which incidents of various forms of bullying including cyberbullying were reported to her Department or bodies under her remit in the past three years; the degree to which the various responsible authorities were in a position to offer positive intervention; the outcome of such interventions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30450/19]

371. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department remains alert to the various forms of bullying affecting children and families; the degree to which she can proactively intervene in cases in which there may be suspicion of a form of bullying with a view to ensuring the victims realise that help is available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30456/19]

372. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of incidents of various forms of bullying of children that have been reported to her Department in each of the past three years to date; the extent to which a positive and lasting
intervention was possible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30457/19]

373. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to tackle the issue of the bullying of children by peers or adults; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30458/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 365 and 371 to 373, inclusive, together.

I am conscious of the issue referred to by the Deputy. The internet is an increasingly valuable resource for everyone, including children and young people, but it also exposes people to new risks including cyberbullying.

My Department does not have a role in relation to the coordination or investigation of complaints about bullying, including cyberbullying.

The welfare and protection of children and in particular, vulnerable children, is everybody’s concern. Responsibility for children’s welfare arises in all settings where children are and attaches to all responsible adults who come in contact with children. The primary responsibility for protecting children rests with their parents but parents are supported in this role by a range of service providers, state agencies, schools and professionals working with children and young people.

In recognition of the whole of government approach required, in July 2018, the Taoiseach launched the Action Plan for Online Safety 2018-19. The Action Plan involves a wide range of actions, across six Government Departments - Departments of Communications, Climate Action and Environment; Education and Skills; Justice and Equality; Children and Youth Affairs; Health and Business Enterprise and Innovation, recognising that online safety is not the responsibility of any one Department and signifying the range and breadth of the issues involved. A Sponsors Group, involving the six Departments and chaired by the Department of Education & Skills, has been established to drive implementation of the Action Plan.

There is a range of services available which can assist children and young people in coping with bullying situations for example;

- www.webwise.ie - An initiative of Department of Education & Skills - provides a range of internet safety issues and concerns and offers advice and support for young people, teachers and parents.

- With regard to cyber bullying, the Office for Internet Safety, under the Department of Justice & Equality, takes a lead responsibility for internet safety in Ireland, particularly as it relates to children.

The information and resources can be accessed through the single access point www.besa-safeonline.ie

The Children First Act 2015, which has been fully commenced since 11 December 2017, sets out a range of obligations for individuals and organisations in relation to child protection. It is predicated on the clear principle that child protection issues are the responsibility of all Government Departments in their respective sectors, and that they must be embedded in the policy considerations of all Departments.

The Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group (CFIDIG) is a statutory group set up under the Children First Act 2015. Its membership is drawn from all Departments, the HSE, An Garda Síochána and Tusla. Its role is in relation to promoting compliance with the
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Children First legislation and guidance. While the CFIDIG does not have a direct role with regard to online safety, it does provide a forum for discussion on matters related to child protection.

As part of the Action Plan for Online Safety, my Department committed to amending the Children First Guidance to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the completion of a Child Safeguarding Statement. An addendum to the guidance, clarifying the need to consider online safety in the preparation of risk assessments and Child Safeguarding Statements, was finalised and published on my Department’s website in January. In addition, the Child and Family Agency - Tusla has revised its template for the completion of Child Safeguarding Statements to refer to the need to consider online risks to children if a service provides access to the internet.

At a national and community level, youth organisations and voluntary youth services funded by my Department provide education programmes, run awareness campaigns about bullying and provide programmes for young people to give them the knowledge and skills to build supportive links and counter bullying behaviours. Specifically, my Department supports the National Youth Health Programme which is in partnership with the HSE and the National Youth Council of Ireland. The programme’s aims are to provide a broad-based, flexible health promotion / education support and training service to youth organisations and to all those working with young people in out-of-school settings, and includes programmes aimed at exploring bullying and cyber bullying with young people.

Youth Services Funding

366. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she continues to interact with youth organisations nationally and in County Kildare with a view to providing financial support as required; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30451/19]

367. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department continues to liaise with groups involved in providing support for young persons nationally on an ongoing basis; the extent of such activity and award of financial support to date in 2019 in this regard nationally and in County Kildare in particular; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30452/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 366 and 367 together.

My Department maintains close contact with the National Youth Organisations and I, and officials from my Department, meet formally with these organisations twice a year to share knowledge and information on developments in the youth sector. Most recently I met with the National Youth Organisations at a venue in Dublin on 11th April 2019.

In addition to this my Department has committed to convene formal meetings twice yearly between the Department and the 5 largest grantees from 2018 onwards. In May my officials met with Youth Work Ireland, Scouting Ireland, National Youth Council Ireland, Crosscare and Foróige in this regard.

Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed in 2017, which mapped youth service provision across the State as well as an Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement tool which was designed in collaboration with the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector and was officially launched in
January 2019. This mapping will assist the Department and the relevant ETB in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

The funding for the provision of youth services is administered on behalf of my Department by the ETBs. Funded Youth Services based in Kildare are overseen by Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) in matters relating to grants and service provision.

Child and Family Agency Data

368. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children deemed to be at risk; the extent to which this number has fluctuated on the basis of satisfactory or other outcomes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30453/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): This question relates to an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have therefore referred the matter to Tusla, and asked that a direct response be provided to the Deputy.

I can inform the Deputy that data on the number of open cases, which are cases which have been assessed as requiring a social work intervention, is reported monthly, and published in the National Performance and Activity Dashboard on the Tusla website.

Children in Care

369. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in care; the extent to which adequate resources, accommodation and ongoing supervision of their respective cases continues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30454/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy is asking about an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have therefore referred the matter to Tusla and asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Child and Family Agency Data

370. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children discharged from care in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30455/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy is asking about an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I have therefore referred the matter to Tusla and asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 371 to 373, inclusive, answered with Question No. 365.

Child and Family Agency Services
374. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which her Department can provide a rapid response in respect of children suspected of various forms of abuse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30459/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is the body responsible for child protection and welfare. Tusla has adopted Signs of Safety as the national approach to practice, as well as a standard business process that sets out timelines for responses to referrals and assessment of reported concerns. All cases where a child is deemed to be at immediate risk receive a same day response, and after hours and weekends there is an Out of Hours social work service available. Cases that cannot be allocated to a social worker following preliminary enquiries are described as ‘active on duty’ and receive a service from the duty social work team until a specific social worker is allocated.

Tusla publishes monthly data on a range of metrics, including the waiting time for a case to be allocated to a social worker. Cases are prioritised as ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ (it is important to note that priority level does not equate to the risk level of a case), and as of April 2019 there were 1,008 cases of ‘high’ priority awaiting allocation nationally. For context, there were 4,903 new referrals to child protection and welfare services in the same month.

Timely response to reported concerns is a key objective for Tusla, and my Department officials work closely with the senior management team to reduce waiting times, including through investment in partnership, prevention and family support services that provide for a community-led response to referrals that do not reach the threshold for a child protection or social-work led intervention.

**Departmental Budgets**

375. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of the budget available to her Department to cater for the full extent of her responsibilities including the protection of children, the monitoring of at-risk cases and the follow-up as necessary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30460/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Gross funding of €1.51 billion is being made available to my Department for 2019. This represents an increase of €107 million or 8% over the 2018 allocation. At the end of June 2019, overall spending is in line with projections and I am satisfied that the significant additional resources secured for 2019 enables my Department and its agencies to build on the good work achieved to date and to continue this Government’s commitment to provide quality services for children and young people.

**Childcare Services Provision**

376. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she is satisfied regarding the availability of childcare facilities in view of the increasing necessity for both parents to be at work and to meet the requirements of one parent families; the ongoing work being undertaken to improve provisions in the area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30461/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** A key priority for me as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is to ensure access to high quality and affordable early years and school-age childcare services.
Each year Pobal conducts research on behalf of my Department to examine a number of factors related to childcare services in Ireland, including the monitoring of capacity. The most recent Early Years Sector Profile 2017/2018, published in November 2018 indicates that existing childcare provision in general meets the needs nationwide in terms of capacity. Latest available data from Pobal indicates that in general there remains no issue in relation to capacity.

I am delighted to have secured €8.86m in capital funding for childcare in 2019. This funding will be used to meet the most pressing needs of the sector with the ultimate aim of benefitting parents and children through improving our childcare infrastructure.

Furthermore, under the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan published earlier this year, I ensured that Childcare was identified as one of our nation’s strategic priorities with €250 million in additional funding to expand childcare capacity over the duration of the Plan.

Also in 2019, I provided €4m in capital funding to support additional places for under threes and €1m to support additional places for school age care. Successful applicants have been notified and I anticipate that this funding will support the creation of approximately 3,600 new and extra spaces for children up to the age of 15.

My Department funds 30 City and County Childcare Committees across the country. Part of their role is to advise my Department on capacity issues. I would encourage anyone having difficulty in securing a place to make contact with their local CCC. Contact details for all of the CCCs, in addition to other information about the services they provide, may be found on www.myccc.ie

Many parents opt to use childminders to care for their pre-school and school-age children so I was delighted to secure €500,000 in Budget 2019 to recruit a National Childminding Coordinator and a team of six Development Officers around the country, to support the registration of more childminders with Tusla and thus enable them to access subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme.

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS), due to be launched later this year will also be a significant intervention to address this challenge. The NCS recognises the different costs associated with providing childcare for children of different ages. The Scheme will provide for a progressive system of subsidies starting with the highest subsidy rates for children under 1 (up to €5.10 per hour) and the next highest subsidy for children from 1 to under 3 (up to €4.35 per hour).

Through the National Childcare Scheme and a range of other measures, I am committed to changing Ireland’s childcare system from one of the most expensive in the world to one of the very best. In designing the National Childcare Scheme, extensive research and consultations have been carried out to ensure that this goal is achieved and that the Scheme can help as many families as possible.

The National Childcare Scheme will greatly increase the number of families who can access financial support. The Scheme removes many of the restrictive eligibility requirements of the existing support programmes, whereby a parent must be in receipt of certain Social Protection payments or a Medical Card in order to receive targeted supports. In this way, it aims to combat the poverty traps which may exist within the existing schemes, and to make work pay for parents. Many parents will see an increase to the level of subsidy they currently receive. For example, a family with a child aged two in full-time care (40 hours) and currently benefitting from the maximum subsidy of €145 per week under CCS Band A, would see their subsidy increase to €174 per week, an additional subsidisation of €1,500 per annum.
I have also worked to poverty-proof the Scheme by ensuring that families at or below the relative income poverty line will benefit from the highest subsidy rates under the Scheme. Indeed, international reports have stated that the Scheme will significantly address affordability for lower income families, with analysis showing that Ireland will, for example, change from being the most expensive country in the OECD for childcare for lone parents, to 11th position.

Arrangements are in place to ensure that no one loses out in the initial transition to the new Scheme. So, whilst there may have been fears that, in a small number of cases, where a family currently receiving the maximum amount of financial support for full-time childcare under an existing programme may receive less under the new Scheme, they will not lose out. The family can continue to access their current targeted supports (i.e. effectively remain on their current payment) until the end of August 2020.

**After-School Support Service Provision**

377. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which she remains satisfied regarding the availability of community child support services including the provision of support for after-school activities through youth clubs and similar bodies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30462/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Both I, and my Department, are committed to ensuring that every young person in Ireland has access to the transformational power that participating in youth services can bring. Government investment in services for young people has increased since 2016 by, in the region of, €8.5m. In 2019 we have invested €63.6M in current and capital funding in clubs, services and young people in 2019.

The Targeted Youth Funding Scheme has been allocated €35.18 million for 2019 to provide out of school supports to young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by strengthening their personal and social competencies. Young people aged 10 to 24 years of age who are described in the National Youth Strategy as marginalised, disadvantaged or vulnerable will be the primary target group for services available through the new scheme.

A further €11m is allocated to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations through the Youth Service Grant Scheme. This funding is made available on an annual basis to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations. The continued funding of voluntary youth organisations through the Scheme is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.

For 2019, just over €2m in funding is being provided to local youth groups through the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme which supports volunteer-led youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through local Education and Training Boards. The scheme is open to over 1,600 youth groups and clubs. Each year, over 600 local youth clubs benefit from the scheme.

As the Deputy is aware my Department is currently managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to identify need and to focus funding on young people most in need of intervention. Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed in 2017, which mapped youth service provision across the State as well as an Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and
Service Requirement tool which was designed in collaboration with the Education and Training Board (ETB) sector and was officially launched in January 2019. This mapping and tool will assist the Department and the relevant ETBs in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify requirements in their area and facilitate decisions on service requirement by reference to evidenced need.

Counselling Services Provision

378. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she envisages improved counselling services for children at risk and their families in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30463/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise the Deputy that I do not have a role in the provision of counselling services. Counselling services are a matter for the HSE, which falls under the policy remit of my Cabinet colleague, the Minister for Health.

Departmental Shareholdings

379. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30190/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I can confirm that no shareholdings are held in any entity by my Department, or vested in me in my capacity as Minister for Rural and Community Development.

Departmental Contracts Data

380. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30248/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department does not have any contracts currently in place in relation to security services.

I can also confirm that the Charities Regulator and Pobal also currently have no such contracts in place.

The Western Development Commission and Water Safety Ireland have contractual arrangements in place in relation to basic building security, details of which are set out in the following table.
LEADER Programmes Funding

381. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding allocated for the 2014 to 2020 LEADER programme; the expenditure to date; if he is satisfied that the total funding will be drawn down by the end date for the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30420/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The 2014-2020 LEADER programme has a total budget of €250 million over the lifetime of the programme. €220 million of this has been allocated as core funding to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) who deliver the programme throughout the country. The allocation is used by the LAGs to administer the programme and to fund individual LEADER projects in their areas.

The remaining €30 million in funding is available for thematic schemes which will be delivered at a national level.

Total expenditure to date under the LEADER programme is in excess of €54.2 million. This figure includes the LAGs’ core project costs and administration/animation costs, as well as expenditure on thematic projects.

Overall, since the programme commenced operation in 2016, 2,230 LEADER projects have been approved to a value of €78.3 million, while a further 406 applications requesting over €28.5 million are going through the approvals process.

The LAGs have indicated to my Department that, on average, over 80% of their available project budget will be allocated by the end of 2019. This will place LEADER in a strong position as it enters the final year in which projects can be approved under the current programme. In line with EU Regulations, all project funding must be allocated by the LAGs by the end of 2020 with payments continuing, as required, in subsequent years.

I am satisfied that the LEADER programme has gained strong momentum, both in terms of approvals and payments, since my Department introduced a range of administrative improvements from the second half of 2017. I am confident that the funding available under LEADER will be fully utilised over the remainder of the programming period.

**Rural Regeneration and Development Fund**

382. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications made under the rural regeneration and development fund to date per category; the number of applications granted funding per category; the funding approved for...
the scheme in 2019; the value of payments made to date for approved projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30431/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund seeks to support ambitious and strategic projects which have the potential to transform rural economies and communities. The Government has committed €1 billion over 10 years to the Fund and €315 million is allocated to the Fund for the period 2019-2022. My Department has allocated €52m in funding in 2019 for projects supported by the Fund.

The first call under the Fund closed in September 2018. 280 applications were received – 126 Category 1 applications (projects which had the relevant planning and consents in place and could commence capital works in 2019) and 154 Category 2 applications (projects which had potential but needed further development to enable them to be potentially submitted as Category 1 proposals in the future).

In November 2018 and February 2019 I announced details of a total of 38 Category 1 projects and 46 Category 2 projects which were successful under the first call from the Fund, providing €86m in support for projects worth a total of €117m.

Following the announcement of the 84 successful projects, my Department engaged with each lead party to complete due diligence requirements. Contractual arrangements were also drawn up with the release of funding based on the achievement of key milestones in the projects.

In this regard, significant progress is already being made on the implementation of successful projects. A number of the projects have already reached their first milestone and had funding released. To date, €1,722,043 has been drawn down from the Fund by seven separate projects, made up of €1,654,161 drawn down for five Category 1 projects to date and €67,882 for two Category 2 projects. I expect that payments from the Fund will significantly accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across all the 84 projects.

It should be noted that the second call for applications to the Rural Regeneration and Development is now open. Details of the second call are set out in the information booklet and application form relating to the Fund, which are available on the www.gov.ie website. The closing date for applications is 12 noon on Tuesday, 6 August 2019.

Carer’s Benefit Applications

383. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer’s benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30104/19]

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 27 March 2019.

The application was awarded to the person concerned with effect from 22 August 2019 when her carer’s leave commences. The first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 22 August 2019.
The person concerned was notified on 6 July 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 Benefit Applications**

384. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer’s benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30110/19]

**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 increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 21 March 2019 in respect of two care recipients.

The person concerned on 28 June 2019, requested that the application in respect of her father be withdrawn.

The application in respect of her daughter was awarded with effect from 6 June 2019 when her carer’s leave commenced. The first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 11 July 2019.

Arrears of benefit due from 6 June 2019 to 10 July 2019 will also issue to her bank on 11 July 2019.

The person concerned was notified on 6 July 2019 of these decisions, the reason for them and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Carer’s Benefit Applications**

385. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for carer’s benefit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30111/19]

**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 21 June 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.
386. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will remove the habitual residency clause for social protection for Northern Ireland in view of the commitment to no hard border on the island of Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30115/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Habitual residence is a condition that one must satisfy to be eligible for most means tested social welfare payments in Ireland. It applies to all applicants for relevant payments, whether or not they are Irish citizens.

The term ‘habitually resident’ means that a person has to have their ‘centre of interest’ in Ireland. The term also conveys permanence - a person has been here for some time and intends to stay here for the foreseeable future.

A key element of the habitual residence provisions is the right to reside requirement which must be satisfied. Irish citizens have a right to reside in Ireland. EU citizens have a right to reside in Ireland (or other EU Member States) subject to the conditions set out in EU law. In addition, UK nationals coming from the Common Travel Area have a right to reside in Ireland as provided for in the Aliens (Exemption) Order 1999 and this right will continue after the UK leaves the EU.

As part of the Common Travel Area commitments, the Government entered into a Convention on Social Security with the Government of the United Kingdom which was signed on 1 February 2019. This Convention ensures that the current reciprocal arrangements that apply to the coordination of social security payments between the two jurisdictions will be maintained post-Brexit.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Redundancy Payments**

387. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is accepted that a person (details supplied) is not in the financial position to repay a sum under the redundancy and insolvency payment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30132/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Redundancy Payments Act 1967, as amended, provides for the making of payments by employers to employees in respect of redundancy. It is the employer’s responsibility to pay statutory redundancy payments to all eligible employees. In the event that an employer is unable to pay due to financial difficulties, an application for payment from the Social Insurance Fund may be submitted to the Department. When such a redundancy payment is made from the Social Insurance Fund, a debt is immediately raised against the employer.

The Department is obliged to make every effort to recover the debts owed to the Social Insurance Fund, in accordance with Section 32 of the Act.

If a person is not in a position to make a repayment it is important that they engage with the Department’s Debt Management Unit so that the relevant records can be updated to reflect the position. Recent financial information has not been received in this case therefore my officials are unable to confirm inability to repay the debt.

Again I would also like to remind the Deputy that any person who is experiencing difficul-
Borrowers who qualify for this scheme will incur no charge for using this service. I trust that this helps clarify the matter.

Invalidity Pension Applications

388. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for invalidity pension by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [30147/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 23 May 2019. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 11 July 2019. Any arrears due from 23 May 2019 to 10 July 2019 will issue as soon as possible. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on 4 July 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

389. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in relation to a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30149/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance from this gentleman on 7 May 2019. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person’s circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

390. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) submitted a request to sponsor or sub sponsor a community employment scheme; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that in a response dated 16 May 2019, stated that the school was ineligible for the scheme; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that the Constitution acknowledges the role of a parent and guardian as the primary educator of the child; if the application from the school will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30154/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Employment (CE) projects are typically sponsored by groups wishing to benefit...
the local community, namely voluntary and community organisations and, to a lesser extent, public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities.

The private school outlined by the Deputy provides an alternative to the mainstream model of education. Charges are applied in respect of those attending the school.

Schools are not permitted to sponsor CE schemes and CE participants cannot be employed by or work in schools. This includes the provision of security, caretaking and other services to schools. As the Deputy may be aware, FAS who had responsibility for CE up until 2012, withdrew the CE services from schools from September 2001. As a result, the budget for schools-based CE schemes was transferred to the Department of Education and Skills.

My colleague, Minister Joe Mc Hugh T.D. has overall responsibility for the services and initiatives provided for the whole education sector including the control of policy, funding and direction.

It is a matter for all private schools to determine how the provision of their services are resourced.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

391. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will provide details of all entities in which she or her Department hold shares; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30183/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by my Department that it does not hold shares in any entity.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

392. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the contracts her Department and agencies under her remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30241/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection currently has a contract in place with Secureway At Risk Security Group Ltd (SARs) for the provision of security services. The contract was tendered through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) security framework and resulted in a nationwide contract for a period up to 4 years. The Department is currently engaging with the OGP in the preparation of a new security tender that is due for publication at the end of this year. This contract also covers security services, as required, to the Social Welfare Appeals Office, Social Welfare Tribunal and the Labour Market Council (agencies under the remit of the Department) whilst the Citizens Information Board and Pensions Authority have their own security arrangements in place through their building leases.

**Community Employment Schemes Places**
Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a community employment scheme placement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be extended; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30260/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Requests for extending participants on Community Employment Schemes are considered by this Department at the request of the Project Sponsor. A request has been received from Castlemaine Community Services Group to extend the participation of Mairead McCarthy on her current Community Employment Scheme and this request is currently being examined.

A reply will issue to the sponsor shortly.

Departmental Budgets

Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the requirement for additional revenues in 2020 to meet demographic costs as outlined in the summer economic statement for her Department by programme; the expected allocation her Department will require as submitted to the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform; the specific resources required to fund in terms of additional payments such as pensions or child benefit by scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30281/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Demographic costs are contributing to increased expenditure in the Department of Employment Affairs on Social Protection each year, particularly in the areas of pensions, and disability and caring payments.

Over the coming months, as in previous years, the Department will continue to monitor trends in expenditure and recipients with a view to agreeing an Existing Level of Service requirement for 2020 with the Department of Public Service and Reform, taking account of demographic costs, in advance of Budget 2020.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Parental Leave

Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the new paid parental leave benefit as announced at budget 2019 for parents will be available; when the application process will open; the number of parents she expects to avail of the new benefit in the remainder of 2019; the estimated number of applicants in 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30322/19]

Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the eligibility criteria for the new paid parental leave benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30323/19]

Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the new paid parental leave benefit will be available to all new parents of children born since the budget 2019 announcement in October 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30324/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 395 to 397, inclusive, together.
In Budget 2019 I announced the introduction of a new social insurance based parental benefit scheme to take effect in November 2019.

The new scheme will provide two weeks paid leave to both parents, including those who adopt a child, who take parental leave from their employment to care for their child. The scheme will support parents during the first year of the child’s life, in line with the Programme for Government commitment and allows parents more flexibility in achieving and managing a work life balance.

This new leave and benefit will be available to parents in respect of children born on or after the date of its implementation in November 2019.

The benefit will be available to employed and self-employed parents who satisfy certain pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions similar to that required for Maternity and Paternity Benefits. The qualifying conditions for the new benefit include that a claimant must:

- Be in employment or self-employment and
- Be certified by their employer as entitled to leave and
- Have sufficient PRSI paid before the first day of their leave

The following is the estimate of the volume of recipients for 2019 and 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Benefit scheme</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a lead-in time required following the announcement of any new scheme to facilitate its implementation. My officials are currently working alongside officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, which has overall policy responsibility for parental leave.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Social Welfare Benefits Expenditure

398. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing child benefit and domiciliary care allowance by €5 in 2020; the estimated full year cost; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30325/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**
Child Benefit is a monthly payment to the parents or guardians of children under 16 years of age. It is paid at a rate of €140 per month for each child under 18 years of age if they are in full-time education, full-time training or have a disability and cannot support themselves.

The estimated full year cost of increasing Child Benefit by €5 per month per child is €73.3 million.

Domiciliary Care Allowance is a monthly payment of €309.50 for a child aged under 16 with a severe disability, who requires ongoing care and attention substantially over and above the care and attention usually required by a child of the same age. It is not means tested.

The estimated full year cost of increasing Domiciliary Care Allowance by €5 per month per child is €2.9 million.
Therefore, the estimated full year cost of increasing both Child Benefit and Domiciliary Care Allowance by €5 is €76.2 million.

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. Any increases to Child Benefit or Domiciliary Care Allowance would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Payments

399. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has been provided with sufficient expenditure allocation for the payment of a full Christmas bonus in 2019; the projected cost of a 100% Christmas bonus in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30326/19]

**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.

As is the case every year, the payment of a Christmas Bonus is a discretionary decision made by Government in the context of the annual Budget process and available resources. A decision to pay the bonus this year will be made when announcing the 2020 Budget in October and must be consistent with the legal requirements set out in the Fiscal Responsibility Acts 2012 and 2013, and within the context of achieving targets set for Ireland by the EU rules.

The cost of paying a 100% Christmas Bonus in 2019 is currently estimated at approximately €270 million. This estimate will change and will be revised in the light of trends on the relevant schemes over the coming months.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker’s Allowance Data

400. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons aged 26 years of age and under in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance by age and payment; the number of qualified adult rates included in these groups; the estimated cost in a full year of restoring all the reduced payments for persons under 26 years to the full adult rate and with the qualified adult rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30327/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of persons aged 26 years of age and under in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance by age and payment; the number of qualified adult rates included in these groups; the estimated cost in a full year of restoring all the reduced payments for persons under 26 years to the full adult rate and with the qualified adult rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30327/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of persons aged 26 years of age and under in receipt of jobseeker’s allowance by age and payment; the number of qualified adult rates included in these groups; the estimated cost in a full year of restoring all the reduced payments for persons under 26 years to the full adult rate and with the qualified adult rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30327/19]

The estimated full year cost to pay the full adult rate of €203 per week to persons under 26 years of age on Jobseeker’s Allowance is €59.9 million. This costing includes increasing the €112.70 qualified adult rate to €134.70 per week.
Young jobseekers who participate in an education, training or employment programme currently qualify for the maximum weekly rate of payment. Age-related reduced rates of payment also do not apply in certain circumstances, such as when the claimant has a dependent child, or transferred to Jobseeker’s Allowance from Disability Allowance, or was in State care during the 12 months prior to applying for Jobseeker’s Allowance.

It should be noted that any change to the reduced rates of Jobseeker’s Allowance would need to be considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Tabular Statement Attached

Number of recipients of a Jobseekers Allowance aged 26 and under payment by age and rate with the number of adult dependents on the 30th of June 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>€112.70</th>
<th>€157.80</th>
<th>€203.00</th>
<th>Total Recipients</th>
<th>Adult Dependents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1,346</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2,111</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2,197</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2,437</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>2,439</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1,965</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>23,57</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,702</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>2,309</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,095</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>2,784</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,352</td>
<td>3,358</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>13,170</td>
<td>2,114</td>
<td>6,289</td>
<td>21,573</td>
<td>2,071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Carer’s Benefit Eligibility**

401. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed to allow a full and final decision on the case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30366/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer’s benefit (CARB) is a PRSI based payment, made to a person 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.

Entitlement to carer’s benefit (CARB), is dependent on the provision of evidence of the care recipient’s care requirement, the level of care the carer provides, the carer’s hours of employment and their PRSI record. Under current legislation for CARB, a carer cannot qualify for payment where the care recipient is in hospital. CARB payment can only be made from the date of discharge from hospital.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 1 May 2019.

Additional information in relation to the person’s application was requested by a deciding officer on 8 July 2019.

Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.
I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

402. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of social welfare appeals lodged in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the percentage of appeals which were successful; the average waiting time in these years in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30409/19]

**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.

Appeals which had a favourable outcome for the appellant consist of appeals which were either allowed in full or in part by an Appeals Officer, or which were resolved by way of a revised decision in favour of the appellant by a Deciding Officer / Designated Person.

In any year about 85% of all claims are awarded by the Department and just 1% are appealed. Nevertheless, the Department continues to work to ensure that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

There are a number of reasons why a decision which was refused at first instance might be successful on appeal and it is not necessarily the case that the first decision was incorrect. It is often the case that new evidence is provided with an appeal and that, as a result, the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person. This was the case in 37.6% of such successful outcomes in 2017, 31.5% of such outcomes in 2018 and 36.9% of such outcomes to the end of June 2019.

Where the decision was not revised by the Department in light of the appeal contentions, further evidence is often provided by the appellant as the appeal process proceeds and, in addition, the Appeals Officer may gain insights when they meet the appellant in person at oral hearing which may influence the outcome of the appeal.

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 for the first six months of 2019 with an oral hearing decision taking 28.2 weeks and a summary decision taking 23.2 weeks.

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.

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 statistics required by the Deputy are set out in the following tables.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Appeal Receipts and Percentage of Favourable Decisions of Appeals Finalised 2012 – 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Appeal Receipts</th>
<th>Appeals Finalised</th>
<th>Favourable Decisions</th>
<th>Appeals Disallowed</th>
<th>Withdrawn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>35,484</td>
<td>32,558</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>32,777</td>
<td>38,421</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26,069</td>
<td>31,211</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>24,475</td>
<td>25,406</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>22,461</td>
<td>23,220</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19,658</td>
<td>18,980</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>18,854</td>
<td>18,507</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to 30/6/2019)</td>
<td>11,182</td>
<td>10,544</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appeal Processing Times 2012 – 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions</th>
<th>Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to 30/6/2019)</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Child Poverty**

403. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the target for child poverty; the number of children who would have to be lifted out of poverty for the target to be met within the timeframe set; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30410/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** In
2014, as part of the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (Better Outcomes Brighter Futures) the Government set an ambitious and challenging child poverty target: to lift 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two-thirds on the 2011 level (or 107,000 children). To achieve this target the Government undertook to adopt a multi-dimensional, whole-of-Government approach which would build on the life cycle approach employed in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAP inclusion) and be informed by the European Commission’s Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, as part of the Social Investment Package.’

The 2017 SILC data indicates that there were 105,000 children in consistent poverty in 2017, a decrease of 25,000 children on 2016. Budgets 2018 and 2019 included DEASP measures specifically aimed at supporting families on low incomes through raising income thresholds for the Working Family Payment, increasing qualified child rates, increasing earnings disregards for One Parent Family and Jobseeker Transition payments, and increasing the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. These improved supports – along with increasing employment rates - are not reflected in the 2017 SILC data. This would suggest that we can expect further reductions in the child poverty rates once the 2018 figures become available.

My Department is finalising the new social inclusion strategy which is aimed at addressing the challenge to overcoming poverty in Irish society, with a proposed six year timeframe covering the period 2019 – 2025. It will continue to have a ‘whole of government’ approach which recognises the shared responsibility across Government to achieve improved outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalised in our society. The new strategy will be published in the coming weeks.

Working Family Payment Data

404. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of households in each county in receipt of the working family payment in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30411/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is a weekly in-work payment which provides additional financial support to employees on low earnings with children. WFP is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependents and to offer a financial incentive to take up employment.

The number of households (recipients) in each county in receipt of WFP is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>12,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>5,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>2,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>2,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>2,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>2,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>2,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>2,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>1,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>1,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>1,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>1,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>1,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>1,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>1,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>1,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>52,762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the above figures refer to the number of households in receipt of WFP at the end of June 2019. The figures may fluctuate from week to week.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

405. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons in each of the years 2011 to 2018, and to date in 2019, who have been subject to sanctions and have had their social welfare payment reduced or ceased due to no compliance as determined by her Department in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30412/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Penalty rates were introduced in 2011 as a means of encouraging jobseekers to engage with activation measures and to co-operate with efforts of the Department to assist them in securing employment. The Department is committed, under Pathways to Work, to incentivise the take-up of activation opportunities, and this includes implementing sanctions for failure to engage where appropriate.

The legislation underpinning the application of penalty rates is provided for in the Social Welfare Act. Penalty rates can only be applied in specific circumstances and the decision to impose a penalty can only be made by a Deciding Officer of the Department. If dissatisfied with that decision it is open to the Jobseeker to appeal the decision to the Social Welfare Ap-
peal’s Office.

A total number of 66,628 Penalty Rates have been applied to 46,300 people over the full period from 2011 to 2 June 2019. The following table includes individuals who may have had a Penalty Rate applied in more than one year.

Details of the numbers of people who were subject to penalty rates each year since their introduction in 2011 and up to 2 June 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of People Penalty rated</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>1,471</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>4,969</td>
<td>6,115</td>
<td>9,565</td>
<td>13,503</td>
<td>12,380</td>
<td>5,821</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Welfare Benefits Data

406. Deputy Willie O’Dea asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the rate of severe material deprivation for lone parent households here as measured by EUROSTAT in tabular form; the way in which this rate compares to the EU average; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30413/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The material deprivation rate is an indicator derived from Eurostat EU-SILC (Survey on Income and Living Conditions) data that expresses the inability to afford some items considered by most people to be desirable, or even necessary, to lead an adequate life. The indicator distinguishes between individuals who cannot afford a certain good or service, and those who do not have this good or service for another reason e.g. because they do not want or do not need it.

The indicator adopted by the Social Protection Committee of the European Commission measures the percentage of the population that cannot afford at least three of the following nine items:

1. to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills;
2. to keep their home adequately warm;
3. to face unexpected expenses;
4. to eat meat or proteins regularly;
5. to go on holiday;
6. a television set;
7. a washing machine;
8. a car; or
9. a telephone.

The severe material deprivation rate is defined as the enforced inability to pay for at least four of the above-mentioned items.

As the following table shows, the EU-SILC severe material deprivation figure for Irish single parents for 2017 was 17.9%. It is important to note that there has been a steady reduction of the severe material deprivation rate for single parents in Ireland over the period from 2012 to 2017, and the rate has almost halved from its high point of 32.3% in 2013. With the social welfare improvements in Budgets 2018 and 2019, this rate of reduction should continue to bring it
10 July 2019

Budget 2019 raised the weekly rates of payment for working age schemes and also increased the income disregard for one-parent family payment and jobseeker’s transitional payment recipients to €150 per week with effect from 25/03/19 (the highest disregard level to date). The weekly rates of the Qualified Child Allowance in 2019 also increased by €2.20 per week (from €31.80 to €34) for children under 12, and by €5.20 per week (from €31.80 to €37) for children of 12 and over. This measure will benefit over 370,000 children and will help to further tackle child poverty.

With regard to increases introduced in Budget 2019 alone, for example, a lone parent working 15 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage is now better off by almost €1,000 per year.

The Department’s social impact assessments of the last five Budgets (2015 to 2019) are an indicator of the improvements over that time for lone parents. These show a cumulative increase of €43.75 in the average weekly household income of employed lone parents (and €45.00 for unemployed lone parents). This compares favourably with a weekly increase of €39.25 for the average household.

Severe Material deprivation rate: household type - Single Person with dependent children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU-SILC Data

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker’s Allowance Data

407. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons aged 65 years and older signing on for a jobseeker’s payment due to the fact that they are not eligible for the State pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30414/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by my Department that at the end of June there were 5,266 aged 65 years of age and older in receipt of a jobseeker’s payment.

Pensions Data

408. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the 2012 pension review; the number of persons to date who had their pensions reviewed; the number of persons still awaiting their pension to be reviewed; the percentage of persons who received an increase in their pension following the review; the percentage of such persons who received an increase of €20 or more; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30417/19]

**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. As at 4 July 2019, 77,193 reviews have been completed. Of these, 42% pensioners received an increase in their rate of payment and 58% are remaining on their existing rate of payment.

The detailed breakdown requested by the Deputy is not readily available, however based on an analysis of sample of cases where an increase was awarded, the best estimate at this stage is that 51% of those who received an increase received a weekly increase in excess of €20.00.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Youth Employment Initiative

409. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the youth employment support scheme; the number of persons who participated in the scheme since it was launched; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30418/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) was introduced on Monday 1 October 2018 and has been open to applications from that date.

YESS is a work experience programme, targeted at young jobseekers who are long-term unemployed or who face significant barriers to employment. The scheme aims to provide participants with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement.

A total of 339 jobseekers have participated on YESS since its inception, with 190 participating currently.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Review

410. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the interdepartmental review of community employment schemes; when the review is expected to be completed; his plans to engage with relevant stakeholders before changes are made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30419/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** 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 Rural Social Scheme and the Job Initiative scheme.
Meetings of the IDG have taken place along with bilateral meetings with appropriate Departments. There has also been a consultative process relevant stakeholders and their submissions are being considered as part of the deliberation process. I expect to have a final report shortly.

Referendum Campaigns

411. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the referendum on future presidential elections; and the progress being made on same. [30016/19]

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.

Home Loan Scheme

412. Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons in the Louth County Council area who availed of the Rebuilding Ireland home loan to date. [30123/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): 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, broken down by local authority, 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.

An Bord Pleanála Data

413. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the rate of overturning decisions of planners by An Bord Pleanála since 2011; if the planner upheld the planning authorities decision; the details of each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30139/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
Since the establishment of An Bord Pleanála in 1977, planning legislation has clearly assigned final responsibility for decisions on planning appeals to the Board and not to inspectors preparing reports and making recommendations to the Board.

The number of inspectors’ recommendations not generally accepted in the final decisions made by the Board for the years 2011-2017 is outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of recommendations not accepted</th>
<th>% of recommendations not accepted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information, and other related statistics, are publically available in An Bord Pleanála’s Annual Reports which can be accessed at the following link:


An Bord Pleanála is required by section 34(10) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to state the main reasons and considerations on which its decisions on planning appeals are based, including reasons for the imposition of any conditions. The Board is also required to indicate the main reasons for not accepting any recommendation to grant or refuse permission by an inspector engaged by it to report on a planning case.

The main reasons and considerations, referred to above, are stated on the Board decision order in each case and also on the Board direction sheet which precedes the making and signing of the formal Board order and records the outcome of the Board meeting at which the relevant case was discussed and decided. These documents are publicly available for inspection on the website of An Bord Pleanála and at its offices within 3 days following the making of the Board decision.

Arrangements have been put in place by all bodies under the aegis of my Department to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. This provides a speedy, efficient and cost effective system to address queries directly to the relevant bodies. The contact email address for An Bord Pleanála is Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie.

### Residential Tenancies Board Administration

414. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the operating cost of the Residential Tenancies Board for 2018 and to date in 2019. [30142/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In 2018, my Department provided almost €4.4m in Exchequer funding to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) towards operational costs (current expenditure).

Increased Exchequer funding of €7.010m was secured for the Board’s 2019 operational costs, to support the on-going delivery of its core functions and to reflect the additional powers
and functions conferred on the RTB by the provisions in the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) 2019 Act.

The introduction of these new powers of investigation and the related sanctions regime came into effect from 1 July 2019 and the key provisions of the Act make it a criminal offence for landlords to implement rent increases that contravene the law, that do not adhere to new definitions of a substantial change, or fail to cooperate with an investigation, or fail to register and update tenancies with the RTB. The Act provides powers to the RTB to investigate and administratively sanction landlords who engage in improper conduct including non-compliance with the rent increase restriction in RPZs and allows the RTB to initiate an investigation without the need for a complaint to be made.

€3.5m of the 2019 allocation has been drawn down to end of June 2019, which is in line with the expected profile.

Separate budgetary provision of €0.95m has been provided annually in 2018 and 2019 for capital expenditure. The full amount was drawn down in 2018 and €0.57m of this year’s allocation has been drawn down to end June 2019.

The RTB also has access to income from fees for certain of its services, which it also uses to support its operations. Details of the RTB’s own self-financing income and expenditure can be found in the its Annual Reports and Financial Statements, all of which are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and are also published on the RTB’s website at the following link: https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/rtb-publications/.

Weather Events Response

415. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a risk assessment will be carried out on publicly owned trees nationally in view of the recommendations of the review report on severe weather events for a risk managed approach to address the issue of trees and public safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30157/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is the Lead Government Department for coordinating the response to severe weather events, including those involving high winds.

One of the most widespread and potentially dangerous consequence of high wind is the risk of trees breaking and/or blowing over, which can disrupt transport networks, as well as posing a danger to motorists and pedestrians in the vicinity. This was the case with ex-Hurricane Ophelia on 16 October 2017, where trees down were reported in many areas across the country, with especially high numbers of roads blocked in the south and south-east regions, as well as resultant damage to electricity supply and communications networks.

Tragically, the three fatalities which occurred during ex-Hurricane Ophelia, were associated with falling trees and breaking branches. The fatalities underlined the public safety risk of this event which informed the decision of the National Emergency Co-ordination Group to advise the public against undertaking non-essential activities or travel on 16 October 2017.

In its role as Lead Government Department, my Department has prepared a review report on the severe weather events which affected Ireland between August 2017 and September 2018. The review report includes recommendations for a risk management approach to address the issue of trees and public safety. It is not seen as feasible or appropriate that trees be individually
assessed at all locations. By definition, a risk management approach will involve consideration of a range of factors which could point to an elevated risk to public safety. This subject is relevant for a number of Departments and public bodies, as well as for landowners. Under the Roads Act 1993, local authorities have responsibility for trees in public areas while trees on private lands, including lands adjoining public roads, are the legal responsibility of the land owner.

The Report makes recommendations on the issue of a risk management approach to trees which can impact on public safety. Implementation of recommendations in the Report that fall within the remit of my Department are in hand, and work on those within the remit of the Principal Response Agencies (An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and local authorities) will continue under the aegis of the National Steering Group on Major Emergency Management.

Recommendations in the Report which involve other Government Departments and those which relate to national co-ordination arrangements will be considered and taken forward through the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning.

Question No. 416 withdrawn.

**Departmental Shareholdings**

417. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide details of all entities in which he or his Department hold shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30187/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Details of the relevant entities, and of the number of shares held in them by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government or the Department, are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>No. of Shares Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish Water</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Finance Agency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that the Minister also holds 90% of Ervia stock.

**Departmental Contracts Data**

418. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the contracts his Department and agencies under his remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30245/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department engaged Top Security Ltd to provide static security for its Offices at the Custom House, Dublin 1 following a competition held by the Office of Government Procurement under its Security Services Framework. The contract is effective from 11 February 2019 to 10 February 2021.

The information requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email
address for each agency is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Email address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Bord Pleanála</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie">Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtas@ervia.ie">oireachtas@ervia.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Sustainable Communities Agency</td>
<td><a href="mailto:publicreps@housingagency.ie">publicreps@housingagency.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Finance Agency</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie">oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Water</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtasmembers@water.ie">oireachtasmembers@water.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Management Agency</td>
<td><a href="mailto:corporate@lgma.ie">corporate@lgma.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordnance Survey Ireland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Oireachtas@osi.ie">Oireachtas@osi.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Registration Authority</td>
<td><a href="mailto:reps@prai.ie">reps@prai.ie</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pyrite Resolution Board</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtaisinfo@pyriteboard.ie">oireachtaisinfo@pyriteboard.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Tenancies Board</td>
<td><a href="mailto:OireacthasMembersQueries@rtb.ie">OireacthasMembersQueries@rtb.ie</a></td>
</tr>
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<td>Valuation Office</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie">oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Development Agency</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtas@lda.ie">oireachtas@lda.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Planning Regulator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:oireachtas@opr.ie">oireachtas@opr.ie</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Reports**

419. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the quarterly social housing pipeline report will be published; and if it will include Traveller accommodation. [30263/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

My Department publishes comprehensive status reports on a quarterly basis of all social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas. These reports are known as the Social Housing Construction Status Report (CSR), the most recent of which covers the period up to the end of Q1 2019. The Q1 2019 Social Housing CSR contains scheme by scheme 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 Q1 2019. This report can be found at the following link [http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q1-2019/](http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q1-2019/).

In relation to Traveller-specific accommodation, a dedicated budget is in place to fund the delivery of this accommodation, based on the requirements identified in local Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs). The funding involved supports the delivery of various types of accommodation, including group housing, halting sites and the refurbishment of existing units.

In line with the commitment in Rebuilding Ireland, and reflecting the disappointing level of overall funding drawdown in recent years, the Housing Agency, in 2017, commissioned a review of funding for Traveller-specific accommodation to date. This review had regard to targets contained in local authority TAPs and actual delivery, the current status of accommodation funded and funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports. Following its consideration of the review, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee recommended that an Independent Expert Group be established to examine and make recommendations on issues regarding Traveller accommodation policy, strategy and implementation. The work of this Expert Group is now at an advanced stage and the Group’s report is expected shortly.

In the context of this work, my Department will also review the reporting arrangements on the delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation.
Questions - Written Answers

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

420. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if information (details supplied) will be provided in tabular form. [30275/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Data in respect of local authority house purchase loans for the period 2000 to Q1 2019, local authority mortgage arrears for the period 2000 to 2018 and information in relation to local authority repossessions of properties for the period 2005 to 2018 that were financed using a local authority home loan and which are now either repossessed, voluntarily surrendered or abandoned is available on my Department’s website at the following link: https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/local-authority-loan-activity. This data is broken down by local authority area.

The number of forced repossessions by local authorities is low. Repossession is always the last option and local authorities have shown extensive forbearance over the years in refraining from legal pursuit of housing loan arrears. It is inevitable that a small proportion of loans may be deemed unsustainable, by both the local authority and the borrower. In these circumstances, the borrower may opt to voluntarily surrender the house to the local authority, thereby avoiding unnecessary legal and disposal fees. The local authority will also explore the possibility of Voluntary Sale or Local Authority Mortgage to Rent (LAMTR) with a borrower where a mortgage has been deemed unsustainable.

In this regard, it is of note that 435 houses have been dealt with under the Local Authority Mortgage to Rent Scheme from its introduction in 2013 to end 2018. Under the scheme, a local authority can acquire ownership of properties with unsustainable local authority mortgages, thus enabling the household to remain in their home as a social housing tenant. It should be noted that the absence of a Mortgage to Rent scheme for local authority borrowers with unsustainable mortgages would have led to an increase in the repossession statistics. Information on the number and cost of LAMTR cases completed in the period 2013 to 2018, broken down by local authority area, is available on my Department’s website at the aforementioned link under the heading “Local Authority Mortgage to Rent”.

Repossessed units suitable for social housing are transferred into social housing stock – suitability (or otherwise) is determined by the local authority and considerations would include the location and suitability of each property, in terms of social housing need. Any units that are not considered suitable for social housing can be put to the open market for sale. The funding arrangement for transferring these units into social housing stock covers the lower of the amount owed by the borrower, or the current market value of the property, with some funding also for improvement works where required, to ensure the property is available for early re-letting.

It is considered that the bulk of repossessed properties have been transferred to permanent SH stock since 2013. The table (Table 1) sets out the LA areas where funding has been provided to transfer repossessed units into permanent stock.

To support local authorities in dealing with the shortfalls that arise through LAMTR cases and repossessions, or voluntary surrenders, the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process Premium Fund was established in 2012. This fund is centrally held by the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) to support the costs arising for local authorities in dealing with unsustainable cases and is contributed to by all local authorities through the application of a MARP premium to all existing and new loans. Allocations from the MARP Premium Fund are managed by a dedicated Adjudication Panel consisting of local authority personnel.
### Table: Capital funding provided to local authorities for the bringing into stock of repossessed and surrendered properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Funding provided since 2013 to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>€396,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>€174,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>€667,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City</td>
<td>€126,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork County</td>
<td>€1,840,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLR</td>
<td>€162,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>€1,615,492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City</td>
<td>€22,003,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>€519,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City</td>
<td>€156,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway County</td>
<td>€668,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>€507,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>€4,033,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>€724,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick City and County</td>
<td>€80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>€694,770</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>€460,701</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>€75,524</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>€514,352</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>€163,613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>€117,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dublin</td>
<td>€651,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>€404,234</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterford City and County</td>
<td>€309,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>€1,001,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>€1,051,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>€937,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>€40,225,677</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local Authority Housing Data

421. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated cost of building an additional 1,000 social housing units per year on local authority or State owned land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30346/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

There are a number of variables in terms of estimating the cost of providing social housing units e.g. form of delivery, size of unit, land, funding, etc.

The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan is based on a blended approach to delivery, under which there are a range of delivery mechanisms such as building, leasing and acquisitions. Over 50,000 social housing homes are targeted for delivery over the life of the Plan, and an additional 88,000 households will have their housing need met through Housing Assistance Payment and the Rental Accommodation Scheme. Funding of €6 billion is being provided to support the delivery of Rebuilding Ireland’s social housing ambition.
In terms of construction and ‘all-in’ costs, the averages for a range of differently sized social housing units, based on full capital costs, are set out in the following table. These are based on the analysis of returned data from tendered social housing schemes over an extended period. Construction cost is reflective of building costs (including VAT) and also includes normal site works and site development. All-in cost includes cost of construction, land cost, professional fees, utility connections, site investigations/surveys, archaeology where appropriate, VAT and contribution to public art. Abnormal costs are excluded from these figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 bed</th>
<th>2 bed (1 storey)</th>
<th>2 bed (2 storey)</th>
<th>3 bed</th>
<th>4 bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>€155,818</td>
<td>€165,132</td>
<td>€174,206</td>
<td>€184,685</td>
<td>€199,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-in</td>
<td>€201,359</td>
<td>€212,624</td>
<td>€222,582</td>
<td>€234,571</td>
<td>€252,047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local Authority Housing Data

422. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of HAP and RAS recipients, respectively, by council area at the end of 2017, 2018 and in 2019 to date; the projected full year numbers for 2019 in view of the fact the information is not available on the website in this format; the full year costs of each scheme in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30347/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a flexible and immediate housing support that is available to all eligible households throughout the State. At the end of Quarter 1 2019, there were 45,900 active tenancies in receipt of HAP support

The following table sets out the number of active HAP tenancies by local authority area at end 2017, end 2018 and end Quarter 1 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Active HAP Tenancies 2017</th>
<th>Active HAP Tenancies 2018</th>
<th>Active HAP Tenancies Q1 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow County Council</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan County Council</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare County Council</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>1335</td>
<td>1332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City Council</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>2063</td>
<td>2167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork County Council</td>
<td>2647</td>
<td>3339</td>
<td>3427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal County Council</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>1729</td>
<td>1727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City Council</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>2219</td>
<td>2594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal County Council</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>1286</td>
<td>1436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City Council</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>1465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway County Council</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>1052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry County Council</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare County Council</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>2042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny County Council</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois County Council</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim County Council</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick City &amp; County Council</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2175</td>
<td>2219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) was established in 2005 and requires local authorities to meet the accommodation needs of people that are in receipt of Rent Supplement for 18 months or longer, and who are assessed as having a long-term housing need.

Data for the years 2011 to 2018 on the number and cost of tenancies funded under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) scheme is 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.

The most recent RAS tenancy data, broken down per local authority, is detailed in the following table. At the end of March 2019 (Q1) there were a total of 18,697 tenancies supported under the scheme. Data in respect of Q2 2019 is currently being compiled by my Department. It is not possible to accurately predict the number of tenancies that will be supported by RAS at the end of 2019 as numbers in RAS vary as contracts end, tenants move on to other properties, landlords join or withdraw from the scheme, new tenancies are allocated or vacancies in contracted units are filled. Furthermore, towards 2021, as the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme continues to be rolled out nationally and replaces Rent Supplement, it is expected that more RAS tenancies will terminate than will commence.

Nevertheless, RAS continues to be an effective and secure form of social housing support, and remains a significant part of the suite of social housing options currently available to those who are assessed as being in need of housing support. I am providing €134.3 million to support the cost of RAS in 2019 and this funding will go towards supporting 600 additional RAS tenancies targeted to be achieved by local authorities in 2019 and the ongoing cost of supporting continuing RAS contracts in place at the beginning of 2019.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Total All RAS Tenancies Q1 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow Co Council</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan Co Council</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Co Council</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City Council</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork Co Council</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal Co Council</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City Council</td>
<td>1765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin South Co Council</td>
<td>1292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Council</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal Co Council</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City Council</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway Co Council</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry Co Council</td>
<td>891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare Co Council</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny Co Council</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois Co Council</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim Council</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick City &amp; Co Council</td>
<td>1145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford Co Council</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louth Co Council</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Co Council</td>
<td>808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath Co Council</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan Co Council</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offaly Co Council</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon Co Council</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Co Council</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary Co Council</td>
<td>1089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford City &amp; Co Council</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath Co Council</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford Co Council</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow Co Council</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,697</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The targets for the HAP and RAS schemes by local authority for 2019 are published on the Rebuilding Ireland website and are available at the following link:


The information requested in respect of the cost of the HAP and RAS schemes is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>HAP (€m)</th>
<th>RAS (€m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>152.69</td>
<td>142.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>276.6</td>
<td>143.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (Allocated)</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>134.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HAP and RAS continue to be key vehicles in meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme outlined under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

**Building Regulations**

423. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the submissions received relating to TGD F of the building regulations and the documents constituting his consideration of the submissions will be put on his Department’s website. [30398/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations, giving effect to Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) Regulations and Major Renovation Regulations, were published earlier this year. The regulations aim to make all new residential dwellings 70% more energy efficient than the performance requirements in 2005. In conjunction with this, amendments to Part F of the Building Regulations were published, which relate to ventilation. The NZEB standard is achieved, in part, through improved air tightness in a building.

The public consultation on the review of Part F and Part L of the Building Regulations took place from April 9 to June 8 2018. Over 1,000 comments/submissions were received, 303 of which were in relation to Part F. These were assessed and taken into consideration when Part F of the Building Regulations and the accompanying technical guidance was reviewed. These will be published on my Department’s website over the coming weeks, subject to respecting any data protection and commercial confidentiality issues that may arise.

**Calafoirt agus Céanna**

424. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an féidir léi an t-eolas is déanaí a chur ar fáil faoin dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh ag an Roinn chun bonneagar úr a fhorbairt ag Cáith Chailleach Rabhartaigh i gContae Dhún na nGall; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [30114/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Mar is eol don Teachta, tá Cáith Chailleach Rabhartaigh faoi chúram Chomhairle Chontae Dhún an nGall. Tá an cé seo san áireamh mar cheann de na tograí atá le forbairt faoin bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta.

Mar chuid den próiseas forbartha, tá iarraí ag mo Roinn ar an gComhairle Chontae Cás Gnó ina leith a ullmhú faoi réir théarmaí an Chóid Caiteachais Pobhl. Cuirfidh thoradh an Cháis Gnó sin i bhfios don Chomhairle agus do mo Roinn an chead chéim eile a bhainfidh leis an togra, ag cur an allúntas airgid atá ar fáil do mo Roinn agus na n-éileamh éagsúla ar an allúntas sin san áireamh.

**Boat Permits**

425. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 723 of 2 July 2019, if the 1997 agreement made with boatmen (details supplied) in County Kerry will be honoured and included in the conditions of their P5 licences; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30158/19]
Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The historical agreement referred to was between the parties whose names are included on the document. My Department is not (and was not) party to this document and it has no status with regard to the Department’s governance of the lakes. This has been repeatedly communicated to the person referred to in details supplied.

As outlined in my previous response, the individual in question has not provided all the required documentation in the tender competition checklist. 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.

Departmental Shareholdings

426. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide details of all entities in which she or her Department holds shares; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30180/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that neither I, as Minister, nor my Department are designated owners of shares in any entities as described by the Deputy.

Departmental Contracts Data

427. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the contracts her Department and agencies under her remit are engaged in for the provision of security services; the name of each contractor; the procurement process involved; the duration of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [30238/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I am advised that my Department and those agencies under its remit are engaged in a number of contracts for the provision of security services as listed in the following tables. When engaging security services my Department is committed to public procurement procedures and value for money. A number of contracts such as those awarded for keyholding duties are subject to annual review, and a number have been renewed. The value of these contracts is considerably below the threshold necessary for the conduct of a formal procurement process.

Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht: Reviewed annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of contractor</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Nature of Service</th>
<th>Duration of contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synergy Security Solutions</td>
<td>North King St. Smithfield Dublin 7</td>
<td>Front Desk (opening &amp; closing)</td>
<td>2 years from January 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure-All Security</td>
<td>Coole Park Visitor Centre, Co. Galway</td>
<td>Keyholding (opening and closing)</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noonan Services</td>
<td>New Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noonan Services</td>
<td>Mahon, Co. Cork</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4S</td>
<td>Furbo, Co. Galway</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitas Security Services Ltd</td>
<td>Custom House, Druid Lane, Galway</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of contractor</td>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Nature of Service</td>
<td>Duration of contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresco Security Ltd</td>
<td>Killarney House and Gardens, Co. Kerry</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimewatch Fire and Security</td>
<td>Wexford Wildfowl Reserve</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure-All Security</td>
<td>Millennium House, Loughrea, Co. Galway</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd Security</td>
<td>Knocksink, Co. Wicklow</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Agency</th>
<th>Name of Contractor</th>
<th>Nature of Service</th>
<th>Duration of Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts Council</td>
<td>Accent Solutions</td>
<td>Access control, Keyholding and Out of hours security services</td>
<td>3 years from March 2016 (Extended by 12 months in 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coimisinéir Teanga</td>
<td>Noonan Services Group</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>Reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford Art Gallery</td>
<td>Synergy Security Solutions Ltd</td>
<td>Keyholding Out of hours security services and Front Desk</td>
<td>3 years from June 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foras na Gaeilge</td>
<td>G4S Security</td>
<td>Keyholding and Out of hours security service</td>
<td>Contract commenced 2013 and subject to annual review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Council</td>
<td>Sentry Security</td>
<td>Static security, Keyholding (opening and closing), Out of hours security services and Alarm monitoring and maintenance</td>
<td>2 years from December 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Museum Modern Art</td>
<td>Synergy Security Solutions</td>
<td>Out of hours security services</td>
<td>3 Years from 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Archives</td>
<td>Securaway At Risk Security Group Limited T/A SAR Security</td>
<td>Static security (National Archives building in Bishop Street.)</td>
<td>2 years from May 2017 (option to extend the contract a maximum of twice for twelve month periods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Concert Hall</td>
<td>Manguard Plus</td>
<td>Static security and remote monitoring security services</td>
<td>Contract commenced Jan 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Gallery of Ireland</td>
<td>Noonan Services Group Limited</td>
<td>Out of hours security services</td>
<td>3 years from March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Library of Ireland</td>
<td>Top Security</td>
<td>NLI Kildare St.: Out of hours security services National Photographic Archive: Front desk</td>
<td>2 years from January 2018 (option to extend by up 2 additional years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Library of Ireland</td>
<td>Noonan</td>
<td>Keyholding (Park west Facility and National Photographic Archive)</td>
<td>Contract commenced Jan 2011 (New tender in progress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Ireland</td>
<td>Securitas</td>
<td>Keyholding</td>
<td>One year from November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Agency</td>
<td>Name of Contractor</td>
<td>Nature of Service</td>
<td>Duration of Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Ireland</td>
<td>DNA Security</td>
<td>Alarm monitoring and maintenance and CCTV (Dublin Office)</td>
<td>Contract commenced May 2017, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Ireland</td>
<td>Gallant Security</td>
<td>Alarm monitoring and maintenance (Dublin Office)</td>
<td>Contract commenced May 2008, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Ireland</td>
<td>Secure All Security</td>
<td>Keyholding (Galway Office)</td>
<td>Contract commenced May 2006, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Ireland</td>
<td>Centaur Alarms</td>
<td>Alarm monitoring and maintenance (Galway Office)</td>
<td>Contract commenced May 2007, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways Ireland</td>
<td>MCM Technology of Cork</td>
<td>Alarm monitoring and maintenance (Scarriff Regional Offices)</td>
<td>Contract commenced May 2006, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways Ireland</td>
<td>Nightguard</td>
<td>Alarm monitoring and maintenance (Portumna Office)</td>
<td>One year from November 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways Ireland</td>
<td>Visiconnex</td>
<td>CCTV surveillance and hailing system (Fennis-court Depot)</td>
<td>Contract commenced September 2011, reviewed annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways Ireland</td>
<td>Sure – Security Services</td>
<td>CCTV monitoring (Tullamore, Lowtown, Deey Bridge and 13th Lock Gate)</td>
<td>Two years from May 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways Ireland</td>
<td>Vodafone Ltd</td>
<td>Dry Dock vessel surveillance (Scarriff Harbour)</td>
<td>Five years from July 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>