

## Written Answers.

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

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### Defence Forces Remuneration

1. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason a member of the Defence Forces not rationed on duty can claim a sub-allowance for €33 tax free but will only be paid €20 for the 24 hour duty. [34770/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The current rates (subject to PAYE) of Security Duty Allowance for performing a 24 hour security duty are:

- €47.59 gross for personnel who enlisted before January 2013
- €50.09 gross for personnel who enlisted after January 2013 and
- €48.39 for officers.

It is an allowance for security duties performed and is paid in addition to basic pay and Military Service Allowance (MSA). It is incorrect to claim that the remuneration for a 24 hour duty is only €20.

In normal circumstances personnel are rationed whilst on 24 hour duty, therefore not incurring any out of pocket expense for subsistence.

Subsistence allowance is a payment towards subsistence costs incurred when personnel are necessarily absent from home and work location on official duties. Subsistence allowance payable is not intended to meet the whole cost of subsistence when absent from home and work location and is not intended to be a source of emolument or profit. In general, Subsistence Allowance is not taxable once it is paid in accordance with Revenue rules and guidelines. Where rations are provided, no subsistence can be claimed.

### Consular Services

2. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has liaised with officials in the Department of Defence regarding a person (details supplied) and efforts to return them here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34778/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The matter referred to by the Deputy is complex and primarily a consular issue. I understand that consular assistance is provided to all Irish citizens abroad when requested and I have instructed my officials to provide all appropriate support to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who are the lead State Department in that regard.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

3. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34843/19]

**Taoiseach and Minister for Defence (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The following table provides details of the persons currently employed as advisers to me, as Minister of State with Responsibility for Defence. Their salary is the scale for Principals (standard scale) appointed on, or after, 6 April 1995.

Post	Name	Salary Scale
Special Adviser	John Coughlan	€85,823 - €105,552
Press Adviser	Niall O'Connor	€85,823 - €105,552

### Defence Forces Retirements

4. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the position with regard to the case of a person (details supplied) who wishes to leave the Army; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34917/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Section 75 of the Defence Act 1954 provides that an enlisted member of the Defence Forces is entitled to purchase discharge from the Defence Forces, except during a period of emergency. Defence Forces Regulations A.10 provide that where a non-commissioned officer or private wishes to discharge from the Permanent Defence Force and has completed less than 12 years in his or her current engagement (other than where he or she seeks to discharge within three months of his or her attestation) he or she is entitled to his or her discharge by purchase. In addition to setting out the scale of payments applicable, the Regulations provide that following the payment of the amount due, a person's discharge shall not proceed until such date as the Deputy Chief of Staff (Support) or the Director of HR Branch, subject to the exigencies of the service and the question of his or her replacement, may decide. A discharge under these circumstances cannot be delayed longer than three months after the date of lodgement of the appropriate sum.

This individual referred to was discharged from the Defence Forces at the end of August 2019.

### Defence Forces Pensions

5. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason a person (details supplied) did not receive an Army pension after 21 years of service. [34965/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The position is that the individual in this case did not have the minimum pensionable service required to be eligible for a pension from the Department of Defence.

In general, the minimum service required by a non-commissioned officer or private of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) who enlisted prior to 1 April 2004, to qualify for a pension under the Defence Forces (Pensions) Schemes is 21 years or 12 years if discharged on medical grounds.

Under the Scheme rules, service under the age of 16 years, and service in the First Line Reserve are not counted as reckonable service.

There are no discretionary provisions contained in the Defence Forces (Pensions) Schemes which would allow for a pension to be awarded to a former member of the PDF without that member having the required minimum service of 21 years to qualify for a pension.

I can however confirm that the individual in this case was awarded a gratuity appropriate to his service and rank on his discharge from the PDF. I can also confirm that the individual was aware at the time of discharge that he would not be eligible for a pension due to not having the required minimum service.

### **Air Corps**

**6. Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his attention or that of his predecessors has been drawn to correspondence in 2016 between the HSA and the Air Corps regarding personal protective equipment (details supplied); if so, the action taken on foot of the correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35006/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As I outlined to the Deputy in my reply to her Parliamentary Question of 27 November 2018, following three inspections at casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell during 2016, the Health and Safety Authority issued a Report of Inspection to the Air Corps on 21 October 2016. This report listed a number of advisory items for follow up including the provision and use of personal protective equipment.

The resultant Air Corps improvement plan confirmed the Air Corps' full commitment to implementing improved safety measures that protect workers and ensure risks are as low as reasonably practicable. The improvement plan was implemented over eight phases, seven of which the military authorities have advised are now complete, while phase eight, chemical awareness training and respiratory equipment training, is a continuous process.

### **Defence Forces Reserve Strength**

**7. Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of active members of the Reserve Defence Forces; the number of new reservists recruited during the 2018 campaign; if a recruitment campaign will open in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35118/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) is comprised of three elements, the First Line Reserve (FLR), the Army Reserve (AR) and the Naval Service Reserve (NSR). The Government appreciates the service of the members of the RDF and recognises the important role that the three elements play 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 July 2019, the substantive strength of the First Line Reserve is 296 personnel; the effective strength of the Army Reserve is 1549 personnel and that of the Naval Service Reserve is 141 personnel.

The most recent recruitment campaign for the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve

was held in March this year.

The following table contains the number of inductions to the AR and NSR in 2018 and 2019 (to 21/08/2019):

Year	Army Reserve	Naval Service Reserve	Total
2019	69	17	86
2018	129	13	142

\*based on figures provided by the Military Authorities on 21/08/2019

The Government remains committed to on-going recruitment in the RDF. Supports being provided to maximise recruitment to the Reserve include the use of social media, local radio and outreach activities by RDF members. The next recruitment campaign for the AR and NSR is scheduled for September/October of this year.

### Departmental Expenditure

8. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35338/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The total expenditure on the renewal of Lotus Notes licences by the Department of Defence since 2009 to date in 2019 is €134,241.

My Department continuously reviews software technologies in use and therefore, licence requirements and costs are subject to change. However, if current licensing structures and requirements were to remain unchanged, the total projected spend for Lotus Notes licence renewals would be in the region of €60,000 over the next five years.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

9. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35573/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In preparation for GDPR a wide range of measures were rolled out to staff in my Department to enhance awareness and understanding so as to comply with the requirements of the Regulation. A data protection officer was appointed and a data protection working group, consisting of representatives from right across my Department, was established. The role of the working group is to ensure awareness and to support the design and implementation of GDPR across the organisation. GDPR training sessions and briefings were provided to all staff, and an awareness campaign was rolled out. Training continues to be provided as required. Details of all training providers and expenditure, which was organised through the Learning and Development Unit, are outlined in the following table:

Year	Consultancies/Providers	Expenditure	Total Expenditure per Year
2016	Legal Island	€198.00	€198.00
2017	Academy of European Law (ERA) Germany	€588.60	
	PDP Training	€995.00	
	Griffith College	€280.00	
	Irish Computer Skills	€440.00	
	Legal Island	€495.00	
	Commercial Media Group (CMG)	€448.95	
	Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	€1,350.00	
	Public Affairs Ireland (PAI)	€1,030.00	€5,627.55
2018	Information Security Assurance Services (ISAS)	€13,500.00	
	Legal Island	€3,415.00	
	Irish Sign Language Interpreting	€1,058.09	
	Colleary & Co	€1,107.00	
	Commercial Media Group (CMG)	€1,185.00	
	Sytorus	€11,750.00	
	Public Affairs Ireland (PAI)	€2,425.00	
	Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	€420.00	
	PDP Training	€1,702.75	
	Irish Computer Skills	€450.00	€37,012.84
2019	Sytorus	€1,000.00	
	Irish Academy of Computer Training	€7,104.00	€8,104.00

### Departmental Customer Charters

10. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35641/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The following table outlines the number of complaints received by my Department, under its Customer Service Charter, in 2017, 2018, and to date in 2019. No issues or problems with the registration of complaints have been drawn to my attention, or to the attention of my Department.

Year	Number of complaints
2017	5
2018	0
2019 (to date)	0

## **Postal Voting**

11. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 100 of 11 June 2019, if a review has been completed by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35846/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I have been advised by the military authorities that their review of the operation of the postal voting system has concluded and the report is currently being finalised.

## **Brexit Preparations**

12. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of additional Army personnel he plans to assign to the border with the UK for preparedness for the forthcoming departure of the UK from the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36014/19]

13. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of Army personnel he plans to assign to the border with the UK if there is an agreement with the UK by 31 October 2019 and in the event of a no-deal Brexit, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36015/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 12 and 13 together.

As part of a whole of Government approach, my Department continues to engage in forward planning with the other Departments involved in addressing all issues relevant to the UK's decision to leave the European Union. On 9th July last, the Government published the Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update. This reflects the extensive work which has taken place at EU level and on a whole-of-Government basis, including the Brexit Omnibus Act 2019, to prepare for a no deal Brexit. It sets out the next steps to be taken between now and 31st October.

While the UK's decision to leave the EU does not of itself give rise to additional border control requirements, it remains the Government's view that the best way to protect the Good Friday Agreement and avoid a hard border is for the Withdrawal Agreement, including the backstop, to be ratified.

The Government remains committed to the avoidance of a hard border and Ireland and the EU are at one on this. The Government is working closely with the European Commission to meet the shared twin objectives of protecting the Single Market and Ireland's place in it, and protecting the Good Friday Agreement, including avoiding physical infrastructure at the border. This work is looking at necessary checks to preserve Ireland's full participation in the Single Market and Customs Union.

In terms of deployment of military personnel to the border, as I have said in the past, primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Minister for Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. Accordingly, responsibility for the security aspect of border control rests with An Garda Síochána, while the Revenue Commissioners also have responsibilities relating to their particular mandate.

Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to provide assistance and support to An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. The Defence Forces also provide support to the

Revenue Commissioners, again, when requested to do so.

There is ongoing close liaison between An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces regarding security matters and regular coordination and liaison meetings take place. My Department continues to monitor the ongoing situation to ensure that both it and the Defence Forces are fully prepared to address any potential issues that might arise in the defence area as a consequence of Brexit.

### Brexit Expenditure

14. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost to date in 2019 and the expected cost in 2019 to his Department of expenses payable to staff being relocated to work in respect of the border with the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36016/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The relocation of civil servants in my Department to work in respect of the border with the United Kingdom has not arisen, nor is such relocation anticipated. As such, no costs have arisen, or are expected to arise in that regard in 2019.

### Parliamentary Questions Data

15. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of oral parliamentary questions he has answered as Minister for Defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36139/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The table below provides details of the number of Oral Parliamentary Questions I have answered in each of the years following my appointment in May 2016 as Minister of State with Responsibility for Defence.

Year	Number of Oral Parliamentary Questions Answered
2016	55
2017	83
2018	78
2019	50 (to end of July)

### Departmental Internships

16. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36145/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department did not offer any internships, paid or unpaid, in the period since 28 August 2014. No consideration is being given to offering internships at this time.

## **Protected Disclosures**

17. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the safeguards in place to protect the identity of the person who has made the protected disclosure in instances in which protected disclosures are shared with external consultants; if the person that made the protected disclosure is notified in advance; if their consent is required to share the disclosure with external consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36202/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) have put in place a national Framework for services related to the receipt and investigation of Protected Disclosures. My Department has recently signed a contract with Mazars arising from a tender competition under this Framework. The Framework arrangement and contract clearly set out and provide for the protections provided to persons under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. This includes a comprehensive confidentiality clause. This is in line with Section 16 (1) of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 which provides that:

“ a person to whom a protected disclosure is made, and any person to whom a protected disclosure is referred in the performance of that person’s duties, shall not disclose to another person any information that might identify the person by whom the protected disclosure was made”.

Section 16 (2) (c) (i) of the Act states that information that may identify the person making the protected disclosure may be disclosed if this is reasonably necessary in order to conduct the investigation. Section 16 (2) (c) (i) states that Section 16 (1) does not apply if “the person to whom the protected disclosure was made or referred reasonably believes that disclosing any such information is necessary for the effective investigation of the relevant wrongdoing concerned.”

However, in general the practice in the Department of Defence is that the discloser would be made aware of the investigation save in exceptional circumstances.

## **Cyber Security Protocols**

18. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cyber security staff for cyber security protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36225/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department places a high priority on cyber security and implements a programme of continuous review in order to keep up to date with current threat levels.

In line with best practice, the Department of Defence fully cooperates and collaborates with and takes guidance from Ireland’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is located in the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and have the lead role in this area.

From an operational and security perspective, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on specific details in relation to cybersecurity.

## **Departmental Operations**

19. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36241/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department has a Business Continuity Plan. In addition, it also has numerous processes and procedures in place across multiple sites to address disaster recovery.

### **Defence Forces Reserve**

20. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the way in which he plans to remedy the issue with Defence Forces regulation R5 which prohibits Reserve Defence Forces officers commissioned after 2005 from being promoted above the rank of lieutenant and which was identified three years ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36357/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** It was not possible provide a reply on this matter in the timeframe available. I will revert to the Deputy with a reply as soon as possible.

### **Defence Forces Remuneration**

21. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when pay and conditions for members of the Permanent Defence Force will be improved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36435/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The recovery in the economy has provided the fiscal resources to provide for a fair and sustainable recovery in public service pay scales.

Pay is being restored to members of the Defence Forces and other public servants in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, provides for increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. By the end of the current Public Service Pay agreement the payscales of all public servants (including members of the Defence Forces), earning under €70,000 per annum, will be restored to pre FEMPI levels. The restoration of the 5% reduction to allowances cut under FEMPI is also scheduled in the agreement.

New entrants to the public service who joined the Defence Forces since 2011, may also benefit from the measures, in relation to interventions at points 4 and 8 of the pay scales. This measure is effective from 1 March 2019.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Services Stability Agreement 2018-2020, the Government tasked the Public Service Pay Commission, with conducting a more comprehensive examination, of the specific recruitment and retention challenges in the Defence Sector. The Commission's Report was approved by Government on 4 July 2019.

The report recommends a range of measures to improve recruitment and retention in the Permanent Defence Force. This includes a 10% increase in Military Service Allowance, the

restoration of the rates of certain allowances specific to the Defence Forces cut in accordance with the Haddington Road Agreement and the re-introduction of a service commitment scheme for Air Corp pilots.

Implementation of these recommendations can commence when the Permanent Defence Force representative associations (PDFORRA and RACO), have considered and accepted the report.

The Report also contains a range of recommendations aimed at improving workforce planning, recruitment and conditions of service.

The Government agreed an extensive implementation plan for the report and work on this has commenced.

### **Passport Applications**

22. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of an application for a passport by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36542/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am advised by the Passport Service that the application referred to was registered with the Passport Service on 5 June this year.

All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008 (“The Act”). Section 14 of the Act provides, among other things, that for a passport to issue to a child under 18 years of age, the consent of all the child’s guardians must be received by the Passport Service.

Passport applications for children have specific witnessing requirements in respect of establishing the child applicant’s identity and establishing that consent for the issuance of a passport from all the child’s guardians has been granted.

I am advised by the Passport Service that staff at the Embassy through which the application was originally lodged have been in contact with the applicant’s guardians in order clarify the witnessing requirements for their child’s application.

I am further advised that the applicant’s guardians are required to submit original supporting documents in respect of their child’s application. Embassy staff have been in contact with the applicant’s guardians in order to confirm what documents are required for the application to be processed.

### **Middle East Issues**

23. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the death in solitary confinement of a person (details supplied) following a number of in-depth interrogations in Israeli holding centres; if he has contacted his Israeli counterpart regarding this death in custody to request an explanation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34683/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The human rights situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a matter of concern, in

view of the frequency with which violations take place. This includes the treatment of prisoners in detention, and I have raised the subject of detention conditions directly with the Israeli authorities on my visits to the region.

Ireland has also raised these issues at EU level and in international fora. At the 41st session of the Human Rights Council in July, Ireland raised the issue of the unacceptable treatment of Palestinians in detention, especially minors, particularly in comparison to the treatment of Israeli citizens. Ireland also chose to highlight the issues of prisoners during the most recent Universal Periodic Review of Israel at the UN Human Rights Council, which took place in 2018. In that process, Ireland recommended that Israel ensure full respect for international human rights obligations, in particular those specified in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, towards all prisoners, and that the UNCAT definition of torture be incorporated into Israeli legislation.

Specifically in relation to the case raised by the Deputy, the Israeli authorities have a responsibility to ensure transparency around all the circumstances relating to this death, something which is important in relation to all deaths in custody. Israel must comply with its commitments under Article 91 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires the provision of adequate medical treatment for prisoners and the transfer of sick prisoners, who require special medical care, to hospitals.

My Department and I will continue to press on these issues in the relevant multilateral fora, and also, where appropriate, directly with Israel, both with the Israeli Embassy here and through our own Embassy in Tel Aviv. Ireland also provides financial support to Israeli and Palestinian NGOs who are active in relation to human rights issues, including prisoners. Their continued work is crucial in bringing these issues to light.

In relation to the specific individual referred to by the Deputy, my Department will continue to monitor this case through our Missions in the region.

### **Ebola Virus Outbreak**

24. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the role and supports Ireland will provide in response to the latest Ebola crisis in view of the recent declaration regarding the outbreak of the disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [34722/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I am concerned at the scale of the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is now the second largest recorded outbreak. As of 20 August, 2,927 people were recorded as having been infected during this outbreak, of whom 1,961 died.

Building on the experience of the 2014-16 West Africa Ebola outbreak, Ireland is supporting non-governmental organisations and the World Health Organisation in their work helping communities to protect themselves from the virus. To date Ireland has directly provided €2.75 million in funding, strengthening the capacity of health facilities to vaccinate and treat those in need and building preparedness in the wider region.

As a member of the EU, Ireland also contributes to the wider EU response to this Ebola crisis. To date, the EU has provided €47 million in humanitarian funding to the World Health Organisation, UN, Red Cross Movement and NGOs.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including through our Embassies in Tanza-

nia and Uganda, is closely monitoring the situation and stands ready to respond further to the evolving situation.

### **Syrian Conflict**

25. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to Irish persons aside from a person (details supplied) being held following the conflict in Syria and Iraq. [34723/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade closely monitors the situation on the ground in Syria through its accredited Embassy in Cairo and Honorary Consulate in Damascus, as well as through cooperation with international partners. The Department does not comment on individual consular cases.

### **Syrian Conflict**

26. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of efforts to return a person (details supplied) here; the meetings he has had in this regard; the progress made on the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34779/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Appropriate consular assistance is provided to all Irish citizens abroad where possible. Given the complex and sensitive nature of this consular case, it is not appropriate to go into details about options under consideration and ongoing contacts.

### **Passport Applications**

27. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when a passport will be issued in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34794/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008 (“The 2008 Act”). The Act provides, among other things, that a person must be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him/her. In order to meet this legal requirement, each person must demonstrate an entitlement to Irish citizenship in his/her passport application.

The applicant referred to was born in Ireland after January 1 2005. Any possible claim to citizenship for the applicant is governed by the terms of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 as amended (“The 1956 Act”). Section 6A of the 1956 Act provides that a person born in the State on or after 1 January 2005, where neither parent is an Irish or British citizen or otherwise entitled to reside in the State or Northern Ireland without restriction at the time of that person’s birth, may claim citizenship by birth in the State (and thereby establish eligibility for an Irish passport) only where a parent has been lawfully resident in the State for three years of the four years preceding his/her birth.

In such cases, proofs of lawful residence in the State are required to determine if a parent has the required three year residence. For non-EU parents, permission to remain in the State recorded on passports, and/or registration cards, as issued by the Garda National Immigration

Bureau (GNIB), are acceptable proofs of a parent's lawful residence in the context of a passport application.

In this case, proof of lawful residence in the State for the required time-period prior to the applicant's birth was not submitted in support of the passport application. In the absence of such proof of lawful residence, an entitlement to citizenship, and therefore eligibility for an Irish passport, was not established.

Citizenship, including naturalisation, comes under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality. Further information on citizenship and naturalisation is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

28. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34847/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are currently four Special Advisors working in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as outlined below:

Name		Salary Scale
Matthew Lynch	Special Advisor to Tánaiste	Principal Officer Salary Scale
Chris Donoghue	Special Advisor to Tánaiste	Principal Officer Salary Scale
Laura McGonigle	Special Advisor to Tánaiste	Principal Officer Salary Scale
Paul Fox	Special Advisor to Minister of State for European Affairs	Assistant Principal Officer Salary Scale

All appointments were made in line with "Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil" which included "Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial Offices" issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Every appointment in my Department is subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

### Passport Applications Administration

29. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when documentation and a refund will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35032/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am advised by the Passport Service that a member of Passport Service staff was in contact with the applicant by phone in mid-August. As per her request, the applications referred to were formally cancelled.

The Passport Service has returned all supporting documents that were submitted with these passport applications and has requested that the applicant provide bank account details, in writ-

ing, to facilitate the refund of fees paid in respect of the passport applications.

### Passport Services

30. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the countries other than EEA member states and Switzerland in which the passport card is accepted. [35173/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Irish passport card is valid for travel to 31 countries: all EU Member States, the members of the EEA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) and Switzerland.

The Irish passport card is fully compliant with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) regulations concerning requirements for passports in card format. Since the passport card was launched in 2015, over 193,000 Passport Cards have been issued.

### Departmental Expenditure

31. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35342/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department uses the product referred to in support certain administrative services.

The amounts detailed below have been spent between 2008 and 2019. Licence renewal is due on the 1 January annually.

Year Spent	Amount	Years Covered
2019		
2018	€4,054.94	2019
2017	€4,010.67	2018
2016	€8,034.36	2016 & 2017
2015	-	
2014	€3,634.65	2015
2013	€7,609.13	2013 & 2014
2012	€12,028.5	2012
2011	-	
2010	€15,697.61	2011
2009	€13,898.90	2010
2008	€9,248.44	2009

Should the use of this product continue, it is expected that the spend per year will remain at similar levels to 2019

### Human Rights

32. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Trade if he will report on the executions in Bahrain during the weekend of 27 July 2019; the action he and EU colleagues will take with the government of Bahrain in relation to the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35409/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The human rights situation in Bahrain is a matter of concern. I was deeply troubled to learn of the executions of three people in July, including human rights activists Ali Al Arab and Ahmed Al Malali. These executions follow on from a considerable erosion of fundamental freedoms in Bahrain in recent years, including freedom of opinion and expression.

On 27 July, the EEAS issued a statement with regard to the executions in Bahrain. The statement noted that “the death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which fails to act as a deterrent and represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity”. Ireland fully supports this statement.

The abolition of capital punishment is one of Ireland’s international priorities and we condemn its use in all circumstances. A moratorium on the death penalty had been in place in Bahrain since 2010, and we saw the resumption of capital punishment in Bahrain in 2017 as a very negative development. Ireland joins with the EU in calling on Bahrain to again introduce a moratorium on executions, as a step towards the abolition of the death penalty.

Ireland regularly raises our concerns on the human rights situation in Bahrain, and use of the death penalty, through the UN Human Rights Council. For example, in September 2018, Ireland expressed concerns about the ongoing restrictions on civil society space and the treatment of human rights defenders, and called on Bahrain to respect freedom of opinion and expression. In February 2019, Ireland reiterated concern at the ongoing detention of human rights defenders. In our most recent Item 4 statement at the Human Rights Council in June/July 2019, Ireland called on Bahrain to ensure respect for freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to a fair trial.

My Department regularly raises the issue of human rights abuses with the Bahraini authorities. Most recently, in March of this year officials from my Department raised our human rights concerns directly during a meeting with officials from the Embassy of Bahrain, which is based in London.

My Department will continue to monitor developments in Bahrain, and to call on the Bahraini government to deliver on its stated commitment to make progress in relation to human rights. We shall do so both directly with Bahraini officials, as well as at EU and international level, whenever opportunities arise.

## **Gender Recognition**

33. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of applications for passports that have involved gender recognition certificates. [35518/19]

34. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of applications for a passport that availed of section 11(2B) of the Passports Act 2008 (details supplied). [35534/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 34 together.

All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008 (“The 2008 Act”). Section 38 of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 amended section 11 of the 2008 Act to provide for the issuing of a passport in a new gender and, if applicable, in a new name. Section 38 of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 was commenced by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection on September 4 2015.

Section 11(2A) of the 2008 Act provides for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to consider applications from an applicant who wishes to have a passport issued to him or her in a new gender and, if applicable, a new name when that applicant produces their gender recognition certificate as issued by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Section 11(2B) of the 2008 Act provides for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to consider applications from an applicant who may not be eligible for a gender recognition certificate (for example, by virtue of being born overseas to an Irish born parent) but who wishes to have a passport issued to him or her in a new gender and, if applicable, a new name. Under this subsection, the applicant is required to submit a statutory declaration declaring that the applicant has a settled and solemn intention of living in the new gender for the rest of his or her life and understands the consequences of the application, and if appropriate, evidence to the satisfaction of the Minister of the use by the applicant of the new name in support of their passport application.

The Passport Service does not categorise or subdivide applications based on a request in the application to note a change of gender. Indicative figures from a manual count of existing records show that the Passport Service received 116 passport applications where a gender recognition certificate was produced and 38 applications where a statutory declaration was produced since 4 September 2015.

### **Consultancy Contracts Data**

**35. Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35577/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Preparation and planning for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) intensified in my Department in 2016 with the appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO), as required by the GDPR. My Department’s policy is that its DPO be a certified Data Protection Practitioner.

As part of the Department’s preparations, ahead of the coming into force of the GDPR, the DPO delivered a series of tailored training programmes for key staff at home and abroad. Since the GDPR came into force in May 2018, my Department has continued to upskill and train staff on the GDPR on an ongoing basis. As a result, there is considerable internal expertise on data protection, so that our reliance on external consultancies to provide advice and training on GDPR is modest.

The following table sets out the names of the external service providers that delivered and/or continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of the GDPR as well as the cost associated with each one.

Consultancy	Expenditure
PDP Training (2016-present) – including certification of current and former DPO as Data Protection Practitioners	€6,504.50
PDP GDPR/DP Conferences 2016, 2017 & 2018	€5,771.00
Public Affairs Ireland 2016, 2017 & 2018	€4,860.00
Institute of Public Administration 2018	€405.00
ICS Skills 2018	€1,750.00
Sytorus (Data Protection Specialists) 2018	€2,300.00
CMG Professional Training 2018 & 2019	€1,580.00
The Honorable Society of Kings Inns (2018-2019) - Deputy DPO completed Advanced Diploma in Data Protection Law	€2,350.00

Compliance with the GDPR is an ongoing obligation. In the coming year, my Department intends to roll out a suite of e-learning training modules to cover HQ and our missions abroad. This aligns with the Department's commitment to ongoing professional development and upskilling for staff, and the People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020.

### Departmental Customer Charters

36. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35645/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** From time to time my Department receives comments from members of the public giving feedback on how we could improve our services both at home and at our 88 Missions abroad. We are committed to constantly improving how we conduct our business and to ensuring that our staff across all offices, both in Ireland and our global network of Embassies and Consulates, act in a highly professional manner at all times.

Within my Department, the Passport Service received more than 733,000 and 780,000 passport applications in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In 2018, in excess of 862,000 applications were received. With this volume of applications, the Passport Service deals with the highest number of customers of any of the Divisions within my Department.

The Passport Service has a formal complaints procedure in place to allow citizens to give feedback on the quality of the service they receive. The Passport Service aims to investigate and respond to complaints within 20 working days.

The number of complaints received for the years requested is presented below:

Year	Number of complaints
2017	92
2018	118
2019	139

\*To 31 August

## **Foreign Policy**

37. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding the fires in the Amazon; if he will report on the contact he has made with the Brazilian authorities regarding the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35829/19]

42. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the widespread fires in the Amazon rainforest; the action he plans to take to deal with the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36099/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 and 42 together.

I am deeply concerned by the widespread fires that have devastated large areas of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil and neighbouring countries. The Taoiseach has made a statement on the matter, voicing his concerns and urging the Brazilian Government to honour its environmental commitments under the Paris Agreement, a key element of the EU Mercosur trade deal.

I welcome the action taken by President Bolsonaro in the midst of this crisis, to scale up the national response by mobilising the army to tackle the fires and to strengthen surveillance, as well as announcing a 60-day ban on setting fires. I understand that the Brazilian Government is also studying ways to increase penalties for environmental crimes and to identify the source of the fires. President Bolsonaro further announced that South American countries will meet in early September to discuss a coordinated response.

The Mercosur Agreement includes a detailed chapter on the Sustainable Development Goals and recognises the need to address the urgent threat of climate change and the role trade has in that regard, as well as underscoring the importance of both Parties implementing provisions of the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding, global agreement on climate change which puts in place the necessary framework for all countries to take ambitious mitigation action.

Recognising that climate change is a global phenomenon requiring collective action, Ireland is committed to working in step with the EU and our international partners, including Brazil, to find effective solutions and looks forward to related discussions and moving the agenda forward at the upcoming COP 25 in Santiago, Chile in December.

Brazil has affirmed the value and importance of bilateral cooperation and international financial support to contribute to the fight against fires and the protection of the Amazon rainforests, in line with national policies and complementary to multilateral mechanisms, outlining in particular existing instruments under the United Nation's Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC),

Ireland is an active participant in the UNFCCC, which contains several instruments to finance deforestation reduction and reforestation activities. Ireland, along with our EU partners, remains committed to the collective goal of mobilising USD 100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020.

Ireland's Ambassador to Brazil, Seán Hoy, visited the Amazon region in July and met with local government representatives and civil society organisations. Ireland will continue to monitor this issue closely and stands ready with our EU colleagues to support efforts to provide further practical assistance to the Brazilian Government.

## Citizenship Status

38. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding the citizenship of a child born abroad to a non-citizen in a same sex marriage in cases in which the non-birth mother is an Irish citizen; the reason the State does not recognise non-birth mother parentage with the result the child cannot secure citizenship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35963/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** All passports are issued in accordance with the provisions of the Passports Act, 2008, as amended (“The 2008 Act”). Under the 2008 Act, a passport cannot be issued to a person unless the Minister is satisfied as to the identity of the person and that the person is an Irish citizen.

Citizenship is governed by the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956, as amended (“The 1956 Act”), which is under the responsibility of the Minister for Justice and Equality. Legislative measures relating to citizenship do not fall within the remit of my Department. I will therefore confine my answer to an explanation of the current citizenship legislation under which the Passport Service, which operates under my Department, is subject to.

Section 7 of the 1956 Act addresses citizenship by descent and provides that a person is an Irish citizen from birth if at the time of his or her birth either parent was an Irish citizen. An additional requirement of registration is imposed in respect of children born outside the island of Ireland where the Irish citizen parent was also born outside the island of Ireland.

For the purposes of the 1956 Act, a parent is understood to mean either the “mother” or “father” of the child. For the purpose of Irish law, the mother of a child is the person who gives birth to the child or a female adopter of a child. In general, the “father” is the person identified as the genetic father of the child or a male adopter.

Under the current legislation, where the Irish citizen is neither the birth mother nor the genetic father or neither the male nor female adopter of the child, the child does not qualify for Irish citizenship by descent.

The issue of citizenship of children born to same-sex parents is currently being considered across Government.

## UN Resolutions

39. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he will develop a position on the UN treaty in the context of the publication of a revised legally binding instrument to regulate in international law the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises, that is, the UN Treaty on Business and Human Rights; and if Ireland will attend and engage constructively in the fifth session to negotiate the Treaty in order to stop corporate human rights violations. [36082/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The question of a legally binding treaty to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises has been under consideration by the Inter-Governmental Working Group on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises. The group was established on foot of a Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2014, led by a number of developing countries, including Ecuador and South Africa. Four sessions of the Group have taken place to date. In advance of the fourth and most recent session in October 2018, Ecuador

circulated a draft of a legally binding instrument. The group also held an informal consultation relating to the proposed instrument in Geneva in June this year, which Ireland attended. The next session of the group will take place in October 2019 and Ireland will continue to 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.

I am aware that a revised draft of the legally binding instrument has been circulated in advance of the next session of the group. Officials in my Department are in the process of reviewing the draft to assess whether Ireland's wide-ranging concerns in respect of the earlier document have been addressed.

While we are open to looking at options for progress on a legally binding treaty, we believe that all economic operators, whether transnational or purely domestic, should be treated in a non-discriminatory manner. We would also 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 22 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.

## **Human Rights**

40. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to increased threats and attacks against human rights defenders and the high levels of violence in Chocó, Colombia (details supplied); and if he will raise the lack of protection and intensity in the threats with his Colombian counterpart. [36083/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am aware of the difficult situation that exists for human rights defenders across Colombia, and of the specific case in Chocó, Colombia to which you refer. I take these threats very seriously, and have expressed on several occasions my complete rejection of any violence or intimidation perpetrated against those defending fundamental rights and freedoms.

Officials from my Department met with Mr Carlos Fernandez, a member of the Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (CIJP) in September 2018. Mr Fernandez was accompanied by Peace Brigades International (PBI) as the Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (CIJP) is one of the organisations that PBI protects in Colombia. My Department is pleased to support PBI in this important work and welcomes the regular engagement we have with the organisation and the human rights defenders it protects.

Our new resident Embassy in Bogotá has been engaging with civil society, EU and multi-

lateral partners on the human rights situation in the country, since it opened at the beginning of the year. We also regularly raise this issue in our exchanges with the Colombian Government, as well as in the Human Rights Council, most recently during the 30th session of the Universal Periodic Review, when we highlighted existing issues in Colombia and made a number of recommendations.

Ireland is committed to supporting human rights defenders across Colombia, and Ambassador Milton recently travelled to the Chocó region where she met with human rights organisations and representatives of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities threatened by illegal armed groups.

Ireland has a long-standing commitment to peace and security in Colombia. The Taoiseach underlined Ireland's continuing support for the Colombian peace process in his meeting with President Duque en marge of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2018.

The peace process is fundamental to improving the human rights situation in the country and Ireland has contributed more than €14 million in support of that since 2007, mainly channelled through the United Nations, and Colombian and international NGOs focusing on human rights, conflict prevention, peace-building and supporting livelihoods for rural populations.

As well as financial support, Ireland has also provided ongoing support in the form of lesson-sharing based on our own experience of peace-building and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. Most recently, earlier this year my Department shared lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process with Colombia, facilitating a series of discussions with the government around the implementation of the peace accords.

Great strides have been made in the implementation of the peace accords in Colombia since they were signed in November 2016. However, significant challenges remain, including in the areas of rural reform, reincorporation of former combatants and the protection of human rights defenders, civil society activists and social leaders.

Not least among the lessons we have learned in 20 years of implementation of the Good Friday Agreement is how long it takes to build a sustainable peace and that it is not a linear process. Ireland will remain a committed supporter of Colombia and its efforts to secure long-lasting peace and security for its people.

I, along with officials at my Department in Dublin and at our Embassy in Bogotá, will continue to monitor the human rights situation across the country closely and to engage with our civil society, EU and international partners on this important issue.

## **Human Rights**

41. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Turkish Government has removed three democratically elected Kurdish mayors from office and Turkish authorities arrested more than 400 political activists in August 2019 as part of a deepening crackdown on Kurdish political parties (details supplied); his views on this development and the worsening human rights and democratic situation in Turkey; and if he will raise the issue with his Turkish counterpart. [36084/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Irish Government, together with our European partners, continues to view the situation in Turkey with regard to human rights, rule of law, and democracy with grave concern.

The Conclusions on Enlargement adopted on 18 June at the General Affairs Council noted that there has been continued backsliding on fundamental rights in Turkey, and that arrests, detentions, and other measures targeting journalists, academics, civil society actors, and elected officials cannot be condoned. Both the EU and the Government have repeatedly called on Turkey to reverse these negative trends and allow Turkish citizens to freely exercise their fundamental rights.

The dismissal of three democratically elected mayors and their replacement with Governors appointed by the central Government is a particular cause for concern. Such measures undermine the democratic outcomes of the local elections that were held at the end of March, and deprive voters of political representation at the local level. Anti-terror legislation must not be used as a political tool and must be exercised with respect for fundamental rights, the rule of law, and democracy.

Together with our European partners, we will continue to monitor developments in Turkey, and raise our concerns on human rights, freedom of expression, rule of law, and democracy.

*Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 37.*

### **Rapid Response Initiative**

43. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a new recruitment campaign for the rapid response roster will be carried out before the end of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36104/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** A mustering process refreshing the membership of the Rapid Response Roster was undertaken last year. Following completion of a training programme by successful applicants, the Irish Rapid Response Corps currently has over 120 experts who can be rostered to provide short notice surge capacity to our UN partner organisations.

As the envisaged lifespan of the current roster is three to four years, there are no plans to undertake an additional muster for the Rapid Response Roster before the end of 2019.

### **Departmental Internships**

44. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36149/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Internship programmes within my Department are normally remunerated.

There is an arrangement with two international colleges (University of Notre Dame and the National School of Public Administration in Warsaw) whereby short term placements are offered in the Department to international students for a period of between four and six weeks on an unpaid basis. These intern placements, while are filled on an annual basis, contribute to deepening understanding of work in peace and reconciliation on the island of Ireland and our membership of the European Union .

The respective colleges nominate the candidates and approach my Department with a request for the placements.

Please see details below:

Year	4-Week Placement	6-Week Placement
2015	2	2
2016	2	1
2017	2	1
2018	2	1
2019 (to 31 August)	1	0

### Cyber Security Protocols

45. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36229/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department takes cyber security very seriously and takes appropriate measures and deploys specialised skills to minimise the risk to our data networks and assets. Any threatening activity is monitored and logged. The Department fully co-operates with the National Cyber Security Centre and implements recommendations made by that agency. It is not considered appropriate to give detailed information on the Department's security systems.

### Departmental Operations

46. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36245/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has a number of procedures in place to protect its ICT systems in the event of serious incidents. This is especially important, given the global reach of the Department and the threats posed by cybersecurity. The Department operates multiple datacentres with Disaster Recovery plans in place to failover in the event of disruption. These failover procedures are regularly tested. Appropriately skilled engineers are deployed to ensure business continuity and service delivery. The Department also makes mobile technology available to its employees to increase its options in the event of a site being unavailable.

### Northern Ireland

47. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position on the talks with the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding the need to have the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive restored at an early date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36505/19]

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

continuing absence of the power-sharing Executive and Assembly in Northern Ireland and the North South Ministerial Council is of grave concern for the Government as it is for the British Government.

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.

I have engaged extensively with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland throughout the latest talks process, to encourage the parties to reach an accommodation. I continued this engagement over the summer months and I remain in regular and ongoing contact with Secretary of State Smith at the present time, to work to secure agreement between the parties to get all of the institutions of the Agreement up and running again.

All five political parties have engaged constructively in the talks process with that objective over the last number of months. 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 and leadership by the party leaders in Northern Ireland. The two largest parties have a particular responsibility to reach an accommodation to secure the formation of a new power-sharing Executive.

The awful murder of Lyra McKee and the outpouring of public feeling that followed demands a serious response at political level. People want the devolved power-sharing institutions up and running again to represent their interests and deal with the issues and challenges that Northern Ireland faces at present, not least the difficulties raised by the UK exit from the European Union. The functioning of the North South Ministerial Council is also urgently required, to bring together the Executive and the Government to oversee and develop co-operation on the island, and as a vital part of the Good Friday Agreement.

In this context, the political parties, in particular the two largest parties, must live up to their responsibilities and be open to fair and workable compromises on the small number of outstanding issues, to secure the overall interests of people in Northern Ireland and to protect and operate again the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement again.

This will be difficult, but the two Governments believe that this can, and must, be achieved. Accordingly, the Government will continue to do everything possible to support continuing engagement and progress in discussions between the political parties, working with the UK Government in any scenario, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement.

## **Brexit Preparations**

48. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the background of the campaign his Department and others commenced on 4 September 2019 regarding increasing Brexit preparation; the details of the procurement process; the person or body responsible for co-ordinating same; the costs involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36782/19]

49. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the involvement of his Department in the public relations campaign that started on 4 September 2019 on national and local radio on Brexit preparation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36800/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I pro-

pose to take Questions Nos. 48 and 49 together.

The Government-wide ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’ public information campaign was launched on 20 September 2018.

In the initial phase of this campaign, my Department organised “Getting Ireland Brexit Ready” public information events in Cork, Galway, Monaghan, Dublin, Limerick and Donegal throughout autumn 2018 to inform and advise citizens and businesses about Brexit preparedness and the range of support measures and resources that the Government has put in place. These events brought together over a dozen Agencies and their parent Departments – the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport - under one roof and were attended by approximately 2,500 people over the October-November period.

In the lead up to the March and April Brexit deadlines, my Department working closely with the Department of the Taoiseach and other Government Departments initiated a Brexit preparedness public information campaign. This campaign ran to ensure that key audiences are aware of the potential impact of a no deal Brexit and the mitigation measures that they can take, with the support of Government where appropriate and with particular reference to the gov.ie/Brexit website. This campaign activity was across TV, radio, print, internet and social media.

Building on the ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’ roadshows and the broad ranging information campaign in advance of the March and April Brexit deadlines, I along with Minister Heather Humphreys and Minister Helen McEntee launched ‘Getting Your Business Brexit Ready – Practical Steps’ campaign on 4 September. This campaign informs businesses and consumers on the practical steps that all businesses should take now to prepare for the UK’s departure from the EU. Central to this campaign is a user-friendly digital booklet, which provides a comprehensive overview for businesses on the core steps they should take and can be accessed at gov.ie/Brexit. The Practical Steps campaign will complement existing business focussed Government initiatives and events taking place in September and October.

In addition to this booklet, a two week national and local radio campaign is urging businesses to take action and review readiness under 9 key areas. This campaign targets businesses and other affected sectors and encourages them to take the necessary steps to help mitigate the risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October 2019.

Under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach, through the Office of Government Procurement, a contract was awarded to TBWA for the provision of integrated creative and digital campaign services. This contract was procured in accordance with standard public procurement rules. As the campaign is currently on going, it is not possible to provide full costs at this time to the Deputy, but they will be available on its conclusion.

### **Brexit Preparations**

50. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which he remains satisfied that all possible actions have been taken by his Department in anticipation of a UK crash-out from the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36922/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Government remain firmly of the view that the best way to ensure an orderly UK withdrawal, in a way that addresses the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland, is to ratify the Withdrawal Agreement. It still offers the best path to an orderly Brexit.

It is the Government's assessment that there is a significant risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October. Work on no deal Brexit preparations therefore has the highest priority across Government. To be clear, a no deal Brexit will have profound implications for Ireland on all levels. These include macroeconomic, trade and sectoral challenges, both immediately and in the longer term. It will also pose particular risks for the Good Friday Agreement, for the all-island economy and for Northern Ireland's economy, political stability and community relations.

In terms of Ireland's preparedness measures, the Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update, published on 9 July, reflects the extensive work which has taken place at EU level and on a whole-of-Government basis, including the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019 (Brexit Omnibus Act), to prepare for a no deal Brexit.

The Action Plan sets out the next steps to be taken, by Government Departments and State Agencies, businesses and individuals, between now and 31 October. It puts particular emphasis on the need for increased preparedness measures, by exposed businesses in particular.

As part of Government's work to support businesses in preparing for Brexit, on 4 September I launched 'Getting Your Business Brexit Ready - Practical Steps', which highlights the nine key steps all businesses should take now to prepare for the UK's departure from the EU.

In parallel with our preparedness work at national level, the Government is working closely with the European Commission on how, in the absence of the Withdrawal Agreement, to meet the shared twin objectives of protecting the integrity of the Single Market and Ireland's place in it, and protecting the Good Friday Agreement.

It is only by Government, business and citizens working together nationally and with our EU partners that we can aim to mitigate as far as possible the impacts of a no deal Brexit, and ensure that we are as prepared as we can be for the changes it will bring.

### **Insurance Industry**

51. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the cessation by a company (details supplied) to provide specialist insurance here; if he has engaged with the company on the matter; if he has sought to engage other insurance providers regarding providing an alternative specialist cover here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34783/19]

52. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding insurance costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35034/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 51 and 52 together.

I am aware of the issues facing many businesses in the leisure, sports and tourism sectors when it comes to the affordability and availability of insurance. Unfortunately, neither I, nor the Central Bank of Ireland, can compel any insurer to continue operating in the Irish market as this is a matter of a commercial nature, and the company in question has made its decision 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, the Government cannot direct insurance companies to cover

certain types of risk, such as those in the leisure, sports or tourism sectors. A further constraint is the fact that for constitutional reasons, Government cannot direct the courts as to the award levels that should be applied.

While there is unfortunately no quick fix solution to this complex matter, I wish to re-emphasise however that this issue remains a priority for the Government. The Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG), which was established in July 2016, and which produced two reports, is continuing to work to implement the recommendations of the Cost of Motor Insurance Report and the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance Report. Its most recent Progress Update, the Ninth, was published in July 2019 and shows that the vast majority of recommendations and actions due by Q2 2019 have been completed. To that end, the key achievements to date from the two reports, including the following:

- The establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission and the publication of its two reports, which included a benchmarking of award levels between Ireland and other jurisdictions for the first time. This showed that award levels for soft tissue injuries in Ireland were 4.4 times higher than in England and Wales;

- The enactment of the Judicial Council Act 2019, in July which provides for the establishment of a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. It is now a matter for the Judiciary to put in place the Judicial Council and to operationalise the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee, which will introduce new guidelines to replace the Book of Quantum. 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;

- The commencement and prioritisation by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) of its work to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries, as part of its Fifth Programme of Law Reform;

- The establishment of the National Claims Information Database in the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) to increase transparency around the future cost of private motor insurance. The CBI is due to make its first report by the end of 2019, and will also make recommendations to me regarding potentially expanding its scope to include employer and public liability insurance;

- Reforms to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board through the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Act 2019 to strengthen the powers of PIAB around compliance with its procedures;

- Commencement of the amendments to Sections 8 and 14 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to align the timeframes by which claims should be notified to businesses with GDPR time limits on the keeping of CCTV footage 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, resulting from the failure of Setanta Insurance; 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 July 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, particularly those relevant to businesses.

With respect to insurance for the leisure, sports and tourism sectors, I am aware of the withdrawal of a number of underwriters from the Irish market recently, including the company in the details supplied and that this has caused a problem for a number of small businesses which were or are due to renew their premiums since then. The company is a UK-authorized company and conducted its business in the Irish market on a Freedom of Services basis, and cited Brexit as its primary reason for its departure. Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Michael D'Arcy TD, has met with the company and it is understood that certain parts of the company's leisure book were not profitable over the last number of years so it is likely that this has played a key part in its decision to exit the Irish market. However, the underwriter remains committed to the other parts of the Irish market it serves.

I acknowledge that the level of awards and the inconsistency in such awards is undoubtedly a factor in many insurers' decisions not to continue in the Irish market. It is for this reason that I believe it is important to emphasise that the single most essential challenge which must be overcome if there is to be a sustainable reduction in insurance costs is to bring the levels of personal injury damages awarded in this country more in line with those awarded in other jurisdictions, and the establishment of the Judicial Council in the coming months is very important in this regard.

In light of this you should note that Minister of State D'Arcy is due to meet with a number of UK insurers/underwriters in London next week to advise them of these recent legislative changes and promote Ireland as a place to continue to write business. I think this is an important exercise as hopefully it will encourage some insurers to rethink their position about the Irish market.

I believe that Irish based insurers should also reflect on these reforms and in that context Minister of State D'Arcy has been engaging with them in order to seek a commitment that they will reduce premiums and widen their risk appetite to reflect savings made or potential savings, in particular if there is a recalibration of award levels downwards. I am also encouraged by the comments made by a number of insurers at the Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach Oireachtas Committee in July about the passing on of savings arising from a recalibration of award levels downwards.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Deputies that important reforms are taking place and that I am confident that if the level of awards are reduced as a result of the operationalisation of the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee, then the insurance premium and coverage issues that are being experienced by the leisure, sports and tourism sectors and many businesses more generally should recede.

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

**53. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the criteria for the primary medical certificate in order for persons with disabilities to avail of VRT reductions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35419/19]

**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.

### **Vehicle Registration Data**

54. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance the number of second-hand private vehicles imported here from the United Kingdom in each of the past five years in tabular form. [35420/19]

55. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance the number of valuation tests carried out by the National Car Testing Service on second-hand private vehicles imported from the United Kingdom in each of the past five years in tabular form. [35421/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 54 and 55 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the numbers of used Category A vehicles registered in Ireland from 2014-to date, having previously been registered in the UK, are as follows:

Year	Total used VRT category A importations from UK
2019 to end July	60,289
2018	97,511
2017	91,386
2016	69,541
2015	45,495
2014	52,468

The registration figures relate to cars, SUVs and similar vehicles and include registrations completed by private individuals and authorised motor dealers.

Under the provisions of section 133, Finance Act 1992, all vehicles, both new and used, are assigned a value by Revenue that is called the open market selling price (OMSP). The OMSP is the price, inclusive of all taxes and duties, that a vehicle might reasonably be expected to fetch on a first arm's length sale in the open market of the State by retail. Every vehicle is also assigned a statistical code by Revenue. The statistical code contains data particular to a vehicle such as the make, model and version and the OMSP. When a previously registered vehicle is declared for registration the OMSP taken from the statistical code is depreciated by Revenue in line with the age, mileage and condition of the vehicle. This depreciated value is then used by Revenue for the purposes of applying the tax.

Examination of cars at the NCTS Centres is carried out on Revenue's behalf by the NCTS operators, Applus. However, the assignment of vehicle values is a function carried out by Revenue.

### Fuel Oil Specifications

56. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to provide exemptions to islanders to use tractor diesel for boats used for personal use particularly in circumstances in which they are returning to the island when the ferries have ceased with crossings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36319/19]

152. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the provision made for persons using private pleasure craft such as, boats, sea crafts and so on to access their island homes on a regular basis when the impending changes to the law regarding the use of marked gas or oil or MGO in private pleasure craft is implemented from 1 January 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36483/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 56 and 152 together.

I take it that the reference 'tractor diesel' in Parliamentary Question number 36319/19 is referring to Marked Gas Oil, commonly known as MGO or green diesel. MGO is diesel that has been marked with fiscal markers to indicate that it has been released for consumption at a reduced rate of taxation. Council Directive 95/60/EC on the fiscal marking of gas oil and kerosene sets out the legal framework for the use of a common fiscal marker across the EU. It obliges all Member States to ensure that fuel released for consumption at a reduced rate of taxation is marked with the appropriate Euromarker and that controls are in place to ensure that such marked fuel is not used improperly, i.e. for non-relieved purposes.

MGO that is used for a relieved purpose, such as in an agricultural tractor, is subject to

Mineral Oil Tax (MOT) at a reduced rate of €102.28 per 1,000 litres. Diesel that is used as a fuel in road vehicles is subject to MOT at the standard rate of €479.02 per 1,000 litres. A full relief from MOT for fuel used in commercial sea navigation is provided for in Section 100(2) (a) of Finance Act 1999. This exemption from taxation for fuel used for commercial navigation is mandatorily prescribed in Council Directive 2003/96/EC on the taxation of energy products and electricity (the Energy Tax Directive).

Commercial sea navigation includes commercial sea-fishing, the carriage of goods or passengers or the supply of services for a consideration, and navigation for public authority purposes. As fuel used for commercial navigation is exempt from taxation, MGO may legitimately be used for this purpose. Where the reduced rate of taxation of €102.28 per 1,000 litres has been paid, the entity using the fuel for commercial navigation may apply to Revenue for a repayment.

Fuel used for navigation for non-commercial purposes (defined in EU and national legislation as private pleasure navigation) is subject to MOT at the standard rate of €479.02 per 1,000 litres. I am taking it that the Deputy's reference to 'boats used for personal use' in Parliamentary Question 36319/19 means private pleasure navigation. Section 97A of Finance Act 1999 allows the use of MGO for private pleasure navigation subject to the owner of the craft submitting an annual return to Revenue and paying the difference between the MGO reduced rate of MOT and the standard rate that applies to private pleasure navigation. This means that where MGO is used for private pleasure navigation the owner must pay €376.74 per 1,000 litres of fuel used, €376.74 being the difference between €479.02 (the standard rate of MOT that applies to private pleasure navigation) and €102.28 (the reduced rate for MGO used for relieved purposes).

In 2013 the European Commission raised certain questions in relation to the arrangements provided for in Section 97A of Finance Act 1999. The Commission questioned whether the arrangements constituted a proper implementation of the Energy Tax Directive and whether they adhered to the requirements of Directive 95/60 on fiscal marking of gas oils and kerosene. In 2014 the Commission formally requested Ireland, by way of reasoned opinion, to amend its national legislation to ensure that MGO could no longer be used in private pleasure craft. In the absence of a satisfactory response the matters were referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). In October 2018 the CJEU declared that Ireland had not applied the minimum level of taxation for motor fuels and was in breach of the Energy Tax Directive. The Court further declared that as the use of marked fuel in private pleasure craft had been permitted, where there is no entitlement to an exemption or reduction, Ireland had breached Directive 95/60 on the fiscal marking of gas oils and kerosene.

Ireland has notified the Commission that it accepts the judgement of the Court and has undertaken to amend the relevant provisions of excise law. On this basis, I intend to bring forward amending legislation in Finance Bill 2019, to the effect that the use of MGO for private pleasure navigation in the State will no longer be permissible. Fuel used for private pleasure navigation will continue to be subject to the standard rate of MOT. It is important to note that the use of MGO for commercial navigation will continue to be permitted and there will be no change to the exemption from MOT for fuel used for commercial navigation.

## Vehicle Registration

57. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that vehicles can have ownership registered to persons under 17 years of age and minors and also to fake names with bogus addresses and that in many instances these vehicles are being used in criminal and illegal activity; his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36723/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am informed by Revenue that the current legislation governing the registration of vehicles, provided for in Finance Act 1992, Part II, Chapter IV. Section 131(2), does not specify a minimum age for owners.

The question of persons using fake names and bogus addresses to acquire a vehicle for illegal activities is a law and order issue.

### **Tax Yield**

58. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount of revenue generated by applying the financial transactions tax currently applied in a number of EU countries to financial transactions here. [34713/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to accurately estimate from data held by Revenue the yield of a financial transactions tax. The Deputy may be interested to note, however, that the yield from the Irish stamp duty of 1% on transactions in shares, stocks and marketable securities was €420.7m in 2018 and €425.3m in 2017.

### **Brexit Preparations**

59. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 194 of 11 July 2019, the number of the 57 credit institutions and 59 insurance firms from the UK or Gibraltar that have applied for or have already received authorisation from the Central Bank which would enable them to continue to do business here in the event of a disorderly Brexit; the value of the business done or the market share of firms that have not to-date sought authorisation from the Central Bank; the exposure here in this regard in the event of a disorderly Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34812/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Since the UK voted to leave the EU, the Central Bank has instructed firms on the need to have appropriate contingency plans in place to ensure continuity of business and to address key risks that may arise from Brexit.

In relation to credit institutions, as at end July, the majority of the 57 credit institutions selling financial products and services from the UK and Gibraltar to Ireland, are implementing plans to mitigate the risks to Irish customers. However, some risks to customers still remain including disruption / discontinuation of services or, where firms engage in unauthorised activity, lack of access to the Irish Consumer Protection Framework or the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman. While the Central Bank is not the home regulator for these credit institutions, through continued engagement with both credit institutions, the home regulator and subsequent analysis, the Central Bank believes that the exposure is quite small. Nonetheless, the Central Bank will continue to press credit institutions to continue to minimise this risk. The Central Bank will also consider the use of their regulatory powers on a case-by-case basis if a firm continues to conduct business in Ireland without the required authorisation.

In relation to how many credit institutions have applied for authorisation from the Central Bank. The Central Bank does not publish data on the number of applications for authorisation received. The Central Bank does however publish a list of firms that are granted authorisation by them on their public Registers on their website (<http://registers.centralbank.ie/Download-sPage.aspx> ).

In relation to the information sought on credit institutions in terms of the value of the business done or the market share of firms that have not, to date, sought authorisation from the Central Bank and the exposure here in relation to same in the event of a disorderly Brexit; I have been informed by the Central Bank that as these firms are prudentially regulated by their home authority and the Central Bank is not the home regulator, they cannot provide such information.

The Central Bank have informed me that there are a number of other ‘appropriate contingency plans’ for credit institutions which would mitigate the risks to Irish customers in the event of a disorderly Brexit, including receiving authorisation from another EEA Member State; continuing to service Irish customers where the law allows for this; transferring the book of business to a regulated entity or closing accounts.

It is the responsibility of each firm to satisfy itself, including through obtaining advice from its legal advisors, of its licensing and regulatory obligations under Irish financial services legislation, and (where relevant) seek alternative authorisations. Notwithstanding that primary responsibility, the Central Bank continues to actively engage with financial services firms regarding their Brexit contingency plans and communications to customers. They are also working closely with UK regulatory authorities.

### **Insurance Firms**

In relation to the part of this question that relates to insurance firms, there are some clarification that need to be made. This PQ is a follow on from PQ No. 194 of 11 July 2019 which referenced that the “latest insurance figures report 59 UK firms are actively writing Irish risk on a freedom of movement of services basis”. However, this PQ appears to be using this figure of 59 insurance firms as being the number of firms that have applied for or already received authorisation from the Central Bank, this is not the case. Furthermore the PQ of 11 July 2019 requested information on UK firms which was provided (59 UK insurance undertakings) but this PQ refers 59 insurance firms from the UK or Gibraltar.

In that respect, I am advised by the Central Bank that 84 UK and Gibraltar authorised firms wrote Irish non-life and life risk on a Freedom of Service (FoS)/Freedom of Establishment (FoE) basis in 2017.

The total gross written premium (GWP) in 2017 on an FoS and FoE basis was:

- Non-Life: €1.9bn
- Life: €3.6bn

The Central Bank has received the Brexit plans for 82 of the 84 firms (98%) who operated here in 2017.

In relation to the ability of these firms to continue to write Irish risk, should they wish to do so, the plans indicate that 66 firms will or have established an Irish or other EU entity, use fronting arrangements or will apply to the Central Bank to establish a third country branch.

In relation to the other 16 firms, they advised the Central Bank that they had ceased writing Irish risk, were no longer authorised or would cease writing Irish risk. These firms will rely on the temporary run-off regime for existing contracts.

These firms accounted for the following percentage of 2017 gross written premium (GWP):

- UK Non-life 2017 GWP                      Less than 1%
- UK Life 2017 GWP                              27%

- Gibraltar Non-life 2017 22%.

These firms did not write any specific specialty or niche line of business.

Finally, the Deputy will be aware that my Department and the Central Bank have worked closely to protect customers of insurance products in event of a “no deal” Brexit. As I mentioned briefly above, in that regard, provisions in the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019 allow for a temporary run-off regime, which will allow certain UK and Gibraltar insurers and brokers to continue to service existing insurance contracts with Irish policyholders in the event of a “no deal” Brexit.

### Tax Compliance

60. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of instances and the value of tax involved in recent years in which the large cases division of the Revenue Commissioners issued reassessments of the amount of tax due; the circumstances in which such reassessments may arise; if this only arises in cases in which new information comes to light; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34814/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that Large Cases Division was split into two Divisions in May 2018. The new Divisions are: Large Corporates Division (LCD) and Large Cases-High Wealth Individuals Division (LC- HWI).

The following table below, which reflects the combined LCD and LCD-HWI, sets out the number of instances where an original assessment was amended for the 4 years 2015 to 2018. The Table also sets out the increase in tax liability arising from the amended assessments.

Year	Number of amended assessments	Amount of original assessments (€ billion)	Increase in liability from amending the assessments (€ billion)	Total (€ billion)
2018	915	€4.99	€2.35	€7.34
2017	664	€2.49	€0.26	€2.75
2016	458	€1.85	€0.07	€1.92
2015	337	€1.45	€0.23	€1.68
Total	2374	€10.78	€2.91	€13.69

Revenue has confirmed that a significant portion of the increased liabilities arising from the amended assessments set out in the table are currently under appeal to the independent Tax Appeals Commission. Revenue has also confirmed that there is no relationship between the year in which the assessment is amended and the tax year or accounting period to which the liability relates.

The circumstances where assessments may be amended include:

- The outcome of a Revenue audit or other compliance intervention.
- A disclosure by the taxpayer that the original assessment was incorrect (a disclosure may be entirely unprompted or may be prompted following the receipt of a letter from Revenue indicating that it is going to start an audit or other compliance intervention).
- Where a tax return contains an ‘expression of doubt’ on a tax issue and Revenue subse-

quently disagrees with the position taken.

- Where an additional tax liability is identified following discussions between a taxpayer and Revenue on a technical interpretation.

### **Motor Insurance Regulation**

61. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount collected to date as part of the Motor Insurers Insolvency Compensation Fund; his plans for the fund; when collections are expected to cease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34817/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Motor Insurers Insolvency Compensation Fund (MIICF) is an ex-ante fund which has been set up to collect contributions from motor insurers in order to fund the increase in compensation for third party motor claims from 65% to 100% arising from a motor insurer insolvency. This change was introduced by the Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018 and became operational on 1 December 2018. What it means in practical terms is that compensation levels payable from the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF) for third party motor insurance claims as a result of a motor insurer insolvency are aligned with the compensation levels paid out by the Motor Insurance Bureau of Ireland (MIBI) where a motorist is in a collision with an unidentified or uninsured driver.

The 2018 Act requires motor insurers to contribute an amount equivalent to 2% of gross motor insurance premiums annually to the MIICF until it reaches €150m, and thereafter a rate of 1% until it meets its target level of up to €200 million, when contributions cease. MIBI is required to invest these monies prudently to ensure that they are available to recoup the ICF for 35% of any future third party motor insurance claim which it is required to pay.

Department of Finance officials have been engaging closely with MIBI in relation to their new role. On the 30th July MIBI submitted to the Minister the ‘Motor Insurers Insolvency Compensation Fund Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2018’. This has been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. At end-December 2018, following one month of contributions made to it by motor insurers, the total contributions made by members equalled €2,498,972.

It is not possible to say exactly when contributions will cease as that will depend on amongst other things the volume of gross motor insurance premiums written in a year and whether there are any calls upon the fund. However, if we were to base our projections on the amount of just under €2.5 m collected for December 2018, this would result in an annual collection of €30m a year, which means after 5 years, the deduction rate would fall to 1%. Therefore another 3 to 4 years of collection at this lower level would be required before the €200m threshold was crossed. This would suggest a period of 8 to 9 years before contributions cease in a steady state scenario, and assuming no call upon the fund during this period.

### **Ministerial Advisers Data**

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Ministers of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34846/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that Ministerial appointments in the Department of Finance are made in line with “Instructions to Person-

nel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil” which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The information on Special Advisers in my Department, requested by the Deputy are shown in the following table.

Minister or Minister of State	Name of Special Adviser	Salary
Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	Deborah Sweeney	€101,114 = 5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC. The cost of this post is shared equally with the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.
Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform	Ed Brophy	€101,114 = 5th point Principal Officer (Standard) PPC
Michael D’Arcy, Minister of State (with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance)	Caroline Hofman	€67,659 = 1st point Assistant Principal (Standard) PPC

Special Advisers are appointed under Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. A Special Adviser to a Minister or to a Minister of State, as in the case may be, shall

(a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –

(i) providing advice,

(ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and

(iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

The appointments of Advisers are kept under review given the breadth of my responsibilities across two Departments.

### Financial Services Regulation

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there are penalties or fines for financial entities or persons operating here without Central Bank authorisation; the number of warnings issued by the Central Bank in each year since 2015 for companies operating without such authorisation; the value of fines imposed in the companies operating without authorisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34869/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am informed by the Central Bank that a monetary penalty can be imposed by a court on an unauthorised provider of financial services, if it is convicted of operating in the absence of authorisation. Depending on the relevant Act/Statutory Instrument, the monetary penalty varies.

Unlike entities that are authorised by the Central Bank, unauthorised entities are not subject

to the Central Bank's Administrative Sanctions Procedure ('ASP') regime and associated sanctioning powers.

The Central Bank does not have the power to impose any fines on such entities, however, fines may be imposed on an entity operating in the absence of authorisation following criminal conviction by a Court. There were no criminal convictions in the years since 2015.

The Central Bank publishes a list of unauthorised firms in respect of whom warning notices have been published at the following link:

<https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/how-we-regulate/authorisation/unauthorised-firms/search-unauthorised-firms>.

The number of unauthorised providers of financial services published on the Central Bank's list of unauthorised firms for each year since 2015 is provided below:

2015: 11

2016: 19

2017: 20

2018: 30

2019: 31 (as at end August 2019).

### **Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme**

64. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of allowing capital gains on Employment and Investment Incentive, EII, shares to be capital gains tax applicable rather than income tax applicable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34870/19]

65. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of allowing capital losses on Employment and Investment Incentive, EII, shares to be allowed for capital gains tax purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34871/19]

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of introducing a scheme for microenterprises similar to the seed enterprise investment scheme in the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34889/19]

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if under the general block exemption regulation, GBER, it is possible to loosen the connected person restrictions for the scheme; the estimated full-year cost of implementing a 30% limit by which a person is only deemed connected if they or an associate owns more than 30% of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34927/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 to 66, inclusive, and 68 together.

With regard to the Deputy's proposal to allow capital gains on Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) shares to be capital gains tax applicable rather than income tax applicable, the tax treatment of gains on the disposal of EII shares depends on how those shares are disposed of and may be subject to either Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax (CGT), depending on whether the shares are disposed of to a third party or through buyback of the shares by the relevant company.

Revenue have advised me that it is not possible to differentiate the gains realised from a disposal of EII shares separately to other gains on tax returns, nor is it possible to separately identify income or Income Tax specifically associated with the disposal of EII shares. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an estimate of the tax cost of applying CGT to all gains associated with EII shares.

Regarding allowing capital losses on EII shares to be allowed for capital gains tax purposes, I am advised by Revenue that information in respect of losses on EII shares are not separately available on tax returns and therefore an estimate of the tax cost cannot be provided.

Regarding the Deputy's proposal of introducing a scheme for microenterprises similar to the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) in the UK, I am advised by Revenue that this measure cannot be costed as there is no basis from tax return data on which to estimate uptake of a scheme similar to the SEIS.

However, it should be noted that in 2019, I brought forward the Start-up Capital incentive (SCI) for start-up micro-enterprises (an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed €2 million) which is, in many respects, similar to the UK Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme. In addition, SCI specifically takes account of the reduced restrictions applied in the General Block Exemption Regulations to connected persons which otherwise apply in the case of larger SMEs.

With regard to the Deputy's proposal in relation to connected person restrictions, The General Block Exemption Regulations ('GBER') have direct effect across all member states. Ireland does not have any discretion in its implementation and, therefore, it is not possible to loosen the connected person restrictions.

By way of a general comment, the Deputy will be aware that my Department has undertaken a consultation process with stakeholders in relation to a number of tax incentives which may benefit SMEs, including EII. Specifically in relation to EII, the work builds on the changes made to the incentive in Finance Act 2018. The intention is that, on foot of the issues raised and analysis of the incentive by my Department, proposals will be brought forward for my consideration in the context of the Budget and Finance Bill process this year with the aim of ensuring that EII operates in an efficient and effective manner.

### Tax Reliefs Costs

67. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of increasing the entrepreneurial relief for capital gains tax to 12.5% and removing the lifetime limit of €150,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34895/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is assumed the Deputy is referring to increasing the capital gains tax rate in respect of the revised CGT Entrepreneur Relief from 10% to 12.5% and removing the lifetime limit which is currently €1 million.

I am advised by Revenue that on the basis of tax returns associated with 2017, the estimated tax gain from increasing the tax rate in respect of Entrepreneurial relief to 12.5 per cent is in the region of €9 million.

In relation the tax cost of abolishing the limit, the estimated tax cost of various changes to the limit are available on page 14 of the Revenue Ready Reckoner, which is available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf>. The tax cost of abolishing the limit would exceed these published costs.

It should be noted that these gains and costs do not take into account the impact of any behavioural change as a result of the proposals. Under the assumption of no behavioural change, the Ready Reckoner shows that increasing the lifetime to €15m could cost around €84m. The tax cost of completely abolishing the lifetime limit would exceed this, but it is not possible to accurately estimate the cost based on the available data.

*Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 64.*

### **Tax Credits**

69. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the proportion of the cost of the research and development tax credit that arises from such services being outsourced to third parties by the company availing of the credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34928/19]

70. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the proportion of the cost of the research and development tax credit that arises from such services being outsourced to universities by the company availing of the credit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34929/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 and 70 together.

The Research and Development (R&D) Tax Credit, as set out in section 766 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, allows companies claim a 25% tax credit in respect of expenditure incurred on qualifying R&D activities. Companies may be eligible to claim the R&D tax credit in respect of some outsourced R&D activities and there are different restrictions which apply to outsourced activities depending on whether they are outsourced to a third party or to a university or higher education institute.

Where a company outsources some of its R&D activities to third-parties (who may carry out the R&D in Ireland or anywhere else in the world), the amount of expenditure on outsourcing in respect of which they may claim the R&D tax credit is restricted to the higher of €100,000 or 15% of the R&D expenditure incurred.

Where a company outsources some of its R&D activities to a university or higher education institute (who may be located in Ireland or in an EU or EEA State), the amount of expenditure on outsourcing in respect of which they may claim the R&D tax credit is restricted to the higher of €100,000 or 5% of the R&D expenditure incurred.

I am informed by Revenue that information in respect of the tax cost of the research and development tax credit is published on their website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/r-and-d-tax-credits.aspx>.

It is not possible to separately identify the cost associated with services outsourced to third parties or to universities and higher education institutes. Revenue have introduced a question in the CT1 corporation tax return form to collect data on R&D outsourcing by companies. However, Revenue advises that this is an optional field, therefore robust data is not currently available in respect of these distinct elements of the credit.

### **Tax Reliefs Costs**

71. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of removing the restriction to 100% of the employee's annual emoluments for the key employee engagement programme, KEEP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34930/19]

72. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of removing the restriction to 100% of the employee's annual emoluments for the key employee engagement programme and to introduce a flat €250,000 limit over three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34931/19]

74. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of removing the restriction on employer share buy-backs under the KEEP scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34933/19]

75. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of introducing a safe harbour approach to share valuation for early stage companies availing of the KEEP scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34934/19]

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year cost of enabling a worker to retain KEEP options when they move to another company within the company group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34935/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 71, 72 and 74 to 76, inclusive, together.

The Deputy is seeking information on the estimated annual cost of a number of different policy changes to the Key Employee Engagement Programme. Unfortunately, the position is that base data are not available which enable the information sought to be provided on any kind of reliable basis. However, as regards the specific questions raised, the following paragraphs seek to reply to these as far as possible.

With regard to the Deputy's proposal to remove the restriction to 100% of the employee's annual emoluments for the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) and the Deputy's follow-on proposal to remove the restriction whilst also introducing a flat €250,000 limit over three years, I am advised by Revenue that the cost of the measures proposed would depend on the potential increased uptake of the KEEP. As Revenue have no way to account for a behavioural response by employers and employees, it is not possible to provide a cost estimate for this measure.

Furthermore, as such share options are granted at market value, there is no tax event at the date of grant. Any cost arising (in terms of income tax relief provided) will only be known when and if such share options are exercised. There is no guarantee that all options granted will be exercised.

Regarding the Deputy's proposal to remove the restriction on employer share buy-backs under the KEEP scheme, I am advised by Revenue that there are no specific restrictions on employer share buy-backs contained within the KEEP legislation. Also, there is no indication on the potential scale of share backs effected should any legislative change be introduced. It is therefore not possible to provide a cost estimate in relation to such a proposal.

With regard to the Deputy's proposal to introduce a safe harbour approach to share valuation for early stage companies availing of the KEEP scheme, Revenue advise me that there is no basis on which to cost the measure outlined.

Finally, regarding the Deputy's proposal to enable a worker to retain KEEP options when they move to another company within the company group, I am informed by Revenue that,

owing to the uncertainty as to the numbers of KEEP options that will be exercised and the lack of any information on the likely numbers of relevant employees changing employments within groups, there is no basis on which to cost the measure outlined.

### **Tax Code**

73. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of increasing the remuneration limit under the KEEP scheme from 50% to 100%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34932/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Finance Act 2018 removed the requirement for the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) that qualifying share options granted could not exceed 50% of the annual emoluments of the qualifying individual in the year of assessment. Employers may now award qualifying KEEP options of up to the value of 100% of an employee's annual emoluments (i.e. equal options and emoluments).

I also replaced the three-year limit with a lifetime limit and increased the quantum of share options that can be granted under the scheme from €250,000 to €300,000.

As KEEP falls within the State Aid rules it was necessary to obtain approval from the EU Commission prior to commencing the amendment. Following such approval, I recently signed a Commencement Order on this matter which is effective from 1 January 2019.

It was estimated at the time of Budget 2019 that the amendments to the remuneration limits under KEEP would not affect the projected maximum cost of the incentive, which is €10 million per annum.

*Questions Nos. 74 to 76, inclusive, answered with Question No. 71.*

### **Irish Fiscal Advisory Council Administration**

77. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the annual operating cost for the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council in 2018 and 2019, respectively. [34971/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council is funded directly by the Exchequer. Funding is categorised as non-voted current expenditure. As per the recently published Finance Accounts 2018, the operating cost of the Council in 2018 was €0.675 million.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2012 provides for an expenditure ceiling of €0.8 million for the Fiscal Council in 2012. This sum is to be adjusted by the annual percentage change in the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices published by the Central Statistics Office for each subsequent year.

The projected operating cost of the Council in 2019 is €0.83 million, of which €0.35 million has been expended to end-July as per the July Fiscal Monitor.

### **Gender Proofing of Policies**

78. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department is utilising the SWITCH model in its development of gender budgeting processes to be implemented

across all Departments. [34980/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department, as well as the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Health, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform represent the main stakeholders in the ESRI's Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes (SWITCH) model. The ESRI developed this tax and benefit micro simulation model in the 1990s and they now maintain it annually.

Officials from the Department of Finance regularly conduct analysis of the distributional impacts of tax changes using SWITCH along a number of dimensions, including gender, with these assessments feeding into the budget decision making process. This analytical capacity has been available to all model stakeholders since 2018 and now facilitates the development of the wider gender budgeting process. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection publishes an annual Social Impact Assessment, which includes an analysis of the distributional impact of Budget measures along the gender dimension. The most recent analysis found that women across all income quintiles benefitted, on average, more than men as a result of measures introduced in Budget 2019.

The Programme for Partnership Government commits the Government to “develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights” and gender budgeting plays an important part in this. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform chairs an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group, of which the Department of Finance is a member. The aim of the group is to develop gender budgeting in Ireland in line with best international standards.

### Tax Code

79. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of increasing by €100,000, €500,000, €1 million and €2 million, respectively, the threshold at which businesses must use the invoice system as opposed to cash receipts system for VAT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34985/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the estimated temporary cash flow impact on Exchequer receipts, of increasing the threshold at which businesses must use the invoice system as opposed to cash receipts system for VAT by €100,000, €500,000, €1 million and €2 million is provided in the following table.

Increase	New Threshold	Cost (€million)
€100K	€2.1m	€10m
€500K	€2.5m	€45m
€1 Million	€3.0 m	€92m
€2 Million	€4.0 m	€166m

### VAT Rebates

80. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the tax back programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35003/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the VAT

Consolidation Act of 2010 allows retailers to make repayments of VAT to travellers, under certain conditions; Revenue has no role in processing these repayments.

Operating the scheme is optional for a retailer and any repayment to a traveller may be processed directly by the retailer or through an agent by agreement with the retailer. The decision to charge a fee in respect of the cost of processing a repayment and the level of such fees is a business decision for the retailer, as is the decision to outsource this work and associated charges to a service provider.

A retailer or agent that offers repayments under the scheme must notify the traveller of any fees to be charged. Any consumer that was not informed of such fees should pursue the matter with the retailer.

### **Irish Collective Asset Management Vehicles**

81. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Finance if Irish collective asset-management vehicles as incorporated bodies will be required to provide information on beneficial ownership to the register of beneficial ownership; if this information will be made publicly available; if there is an up-to-date membership list in accordance with Regulation 18 of the European Union (Anti-Money Laundering: Beneficial Ownership of Corporate Entities) Regulations 2019 (details supplied); and if not, his plans to introduce legislation or requirements to that effect. [35028/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicles (ICAVs) incorporated under the ICAVs Act 2014 are currently required to locally hold information on their beneficial ownership as specified in SI 110 of 2019.

Legal entities incorporated under the Companies Act and the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1893 to 2014, are required to centrally file their beneficial ownership information with the Register of Beneficial Ownership (RBO). The Registrar was appointed by the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to this role in July 2019.

Similarly the ICAVs will also be required to provide information on beneficial ownership to a central Register of Beneficial Ownership as set out in Article 30 of the 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive (5AMLD). This information will be accessible to the public in accordance with the provisions of the 5AMLD.

The transposition work in this regard is ongoing. The transposition deadline for the requirement for corporate and other legal entities to centrally file under Article 30 of 5AMLD is 10 January 2020 and officials are progressing regulations in accordance with this deadline.

### **Tax Forms**

82. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the facilities in place at Revenue Commissioners offices nationally for persons to obtain hard copy forms to claim tax relief such as tax credits and tax free allowances; the staff assistance available to persons who wish to make such claims in hard copy format; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35106/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that it offers a wide range of online and other service options to support taxpayers in voluntarily complying with their tax and duty obligations.

The online services including for example, 'Myaccount', Revenue Online Service' (ROS), eTax Clearance and 'MyEnquiries' are fully secure and available on a 24/7 basis. The systems are also intuitive and very user-friendly.

For those who do not use online services, Revenue has significantly improved its telephone services. For example, a customer can order a form by ringing the 24-hour automated 'Forms Ordering Service' on telephone number 01-7383675 and leaving voicemail details of the forms required, which will be immediately forwarded to the requested postal address. Alternatively, customers can request forms via email from [custform@revenue.ie](mailto:custform@revenue.ie).

Revenue accepts that not all customers are e-enabled and prefer to visit public offices to obtain hard-copy forms and/or seek assistance. All forms are available in these public offices and on the rare occasion that stocks run out can be quickly ordered and forwarded to the customer. The staff in the public offices will assist and advise on the completion of forms and provide any assistance required on request.

Where a Revenue public office is not easily accessible, customers can make an appointment to visit a local office at a time that best suits their individual circumstances and meet an official who will assist as necessary, including completing forms. The appointments service telephone numbers are available at link; <https://www.revenue.ie/en/contact-us/customer-service-contact/pay-as-you-earn-payee.aspx?gcd=0047>

Finally, if the Deputy is aware of a specific individual that requires assistance he can advise the person to contact Revenue at 01-8655400 where arrangements can be made to deal with the matter.

## **Tax Code**

83. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of income a couple with joint assessment can earn without being subject to income tax in circumstances in which both parties are under 65 years of age; the position in circumstances in which one party is under 65 years of age and the other is over 65 years of age; the amounts by which there is a PAYE allowance available to one or other of the persons involved; the income threshold they must cross before they are liable to pay income tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35108/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Couples under the age of 65 are liable to tax under the normal system of rate bands and tax credits, and their own personal circumstances will determine their tax-free income thresholds for the year(s) in question. Further information is available on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/tax-relief-charts/index.aspx>.

A person aged 65 and over is fully exempt from income tax where his or her total income from all sources is less than the relevant exemption limit. For 2019, the exemption limits are €36,000 for a married couple or civil partners and €18,000 for a single individual. Only one member of the couple is required to be 65 or over at any time in the year for the increased exemption limit of €36,000 to apply. Where a couple have dependent children, the exemption limit is increased by €575 per child for the first 2 children and €830 for each child thereafter. Where an individual exceeds the exemption limit, he or she is liable to tax based on the normal system of tax rates, rate bands and tax credits, subject to the application of marginal relief where relevant. Further information on the application of the exemption limit and associated marginal relief is available in Revenue's Tax and Duty Manual on the Revenue website at <https://www>.

revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax-corporation-tax/part-07/07-01-18.pdf.

Other supports for the over 65s may apply depending on personal circumstances, including the Age Tax Credit which is available to all individuals aged 65 or over who do not qualify for an exemption from income tax. This credit is currently set at €245 for single individuals or €490 for a married couple or civil partners. As with the exemption limits mentioned above, only one member of the couple must be 65 or over at any time in the year to be eligible for the increased Age Tax Credit of €490. Further information on the income tax credits and reliefs for individuals over 65 is available in Revenue's Tax and Duty Manual on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax-corporation-tax/part-15/15-01-26.pdf>.

In relation to the PAYE tax credit (employee tax credit), this credit of €1,650 is available where an individual is in receipt of income that is taxable under the PAYE system. In addition to wages, this includes benefits-in-kind, occupational pensions and payments received from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). The credit is also available to Irish resident individuals who are in receipt of a social security pension received from another EU Member State or wages from abroad, where tax was deducted under a PAYE type system. Further information is available on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/income-and-employment/employee-tax-credit/index.aspx>.

### **Bankruptcy Data**

84. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of bankruptcies initiated by the Revenue Commissioners; the number of adjudications in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the combined tax debts in respect of such bankruptcies in each year; the amount subsequently recovered in each period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35177/19]

85. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the number of cases following on from bankruptcies initiated by the Revenue Commissioners in which a person or a family lost their home in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35178/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 84 and 85 together.

I am advised by Revenue that its clear preference is to engage with taxpayers experiencing tax payment difficulties and to agree mutually acceptable solutions rather than deploying debt collection/enforcement sanctions to secure payment of outstanding liabilities. In general, Revenue petitions for bankruptcy to the High-Court as a last resort, where all other avenues of enforcement have been exhausted.

The court process generally allows time for the parties to come to an arrangement. However, where this is not possible, the High-Court will proceed with the bankruptcy adjudication. Once debtors are adjudicated bankrupt, their assets, which may include a family home, vest with the Official Assignee, which is a function of the Insolvency Service of Ireland. Once a person is adjudicated as bankrupt, Revenue is legally obliged to accept its share of any asset distribution in accordance with its status as a preferential creditor.

While Revenue would be aware of a bankrupt's assets from its own debt collection/enforce-

ment action (pre-bankruptcy), it has no authority to instruct the Official Assignee on the sale of any assets, including the family home. Therefore, the Deputy's Question regarding the loss of family homes in Revenue-initiated bankruptcy cases is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

The following table sets out the number of bankruptcies initiated by Revenue, the number of adjudications, the combined tax debts involved, and the amount recovered in the period 2015 to date. It should be noted that cases can take several years to progress through the Courts and an adjudication or recovered tax debt in one year is likely to relate to a bankruptcy petition from an earlier year.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
Bankruptcies Initiated by Revenue	19	13	20	21	4
Bankruptcy Adjudications	11	8	22	6	3
Combined Adjudicated Tax Debt	€6.2m	€9.2m	€13.9m	€2.7m	€0.5m
*Recovered Tax Debt from the Official Assignee	€0.02m	€0.48m	€0.24m	€0.24m	€0.97m

\*Includes both Revenue initiated cases and Non-Revenue initiated cases as a breakdown between both sub-sets is not readily available from the Official Assignee.

### Tax Code

86. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of lowering the €250 eligibility threshold for capital reliefs on individual donations to sports capital projects to €200; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35188/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Section 847A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for Donations to certain sports bodies. The current eligibility threshold for donations to sports capital projects is €250. The relief is based on the entire donation, not just on the portion exceeding €250. The most recent data available, relating to 2017, indicate that the relief costs €0.3 million.

Revenue have advised me that it is not possible to estimate the cost impact of a reduction to €200 in the threshold as it is not possible to predict whether donor behaviour might change on foot of a lower threshold. For example, where new donors opt to only contribute the reduced minimum amount or where current donors opt to reduce their contribution to the minimum amount.

### Summer Economic Statement

87. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the margin of compliance with the expenditure benchmark and the structural balance under EU fiscal rules under the scenario outlined in table 6 of the summer economic statement in each of the years 2020 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35276/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The margin of compliance with the ex-

penditure benchmark can be found in row n of Table A1 in Annex 1 of the Summer Economic Statement (SES). This assessment is consistent with the estimates published as part of the Stability Programme Update (SPU) 2019 and further takes into account the orderly Brexit scenario ('Scenario A').

As the Deputy will appreciate, the SES consists of high-level, indicative scenarios and does not include a full set of detailed macro-economic and fiscal forecasts as published bi-annually in the SPU and Budget. Accordingly the full set of inputs, to provide an updated assessment of the fiscal rules, are not currently available.

The next set of official forecasts will be published as part of Budget 2020 in October.

### **Summer Economic Statement**

88. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the indicative nominal budgetary package in table 6 of the summer economic statement under an orderly Brexit scenario in each of the years 2020 to 2024 if the general Government balance were to be 0% in each of the years in tabular form; the margin of compliance with the expenditure benchmark and the structural balance under the EU fiscal rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35277/19]

90. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the nominal GGB figure were added to the indicative nominal budgetary package in table 6 of the summer economic statement then the GGB would be zero for each of the years; if so, the reason this would give a greater budget package in each of the years than the gross fiscal space outlined in table 7 in which deficits in the GGB are forecasted for 2021 to 2024, inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35279/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 and 90 together.

Simplistically, adding the nominal general government balance (GGB) presented in Table 6 of the Summer Economic Statement 2019 (SES) to the indicative nominal budgetary package would result in the nominal budgetary package increasing by the same amount and the GGB accordingly falling to zero each year, all else being equal.

Assessment of the expenditure benchmark and structural balance is based on European Commission forecasts and, as a result, a direct one-to-one comparison following the above hypothetical reallocation is not possible. This assessment furthermore relies upon numerous variables, including the composition of the new budgetary package and macroeconomic factors.

The difference between the GGB and fiscal space is conceptual in nature. The GGB represents the projected difference between general government revenue and general government expenditure. Fiscal space, which is derived from the expenditure benchmark, represents the legally permitted increase in expenditure and is effectively decoupled from revenue performance.

As the Deputy is aware, this Government is committed to framing the budgetary parameters based on what is appropriate for Ireland and not simply a full and literal application of legally permitted limits. My Department, as well as other commentators such as the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, have repeatedly highlighted the unsuitability of the harmonised fiscal rules. The Summer Economic Statement included the fiscal space table purely for transparency and completeness.

**Summer Economic Statement**

89. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the structural balance under EU fiscal rules according to table 7 of the summer economic statement notwithstanding the concerns over using fiscal space; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35278/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Forecasts of the main economic and fiscal variables (including the structural balance) were published in the Stability Programme Update (SPU) 2019 in April. These forecasts are consistent with the baseline budgetary package (i.e. €2.8 billion).

Revised forecasts will be published by my Department in October alongside the Budget. The Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2019 sets out two potential scenarios that will impact on Budget 2020, namely an orderly Brexit or a disorderly Brexit. A further full set of macroeconomic and fiscal forecasts were not produced by my Department in line with its policy of only doing so twice a year, i.e. SPU and Budget.

Table 7 of the SES is a simple illustration of the amount of fiscal space consistent with scenario A. While it attempts to demonstrate the impact on the general government balance of the full utilisation of available fiscal space, this is done in a static manner for illustrative purposes. It is clearly stated that it is not the intention of this Government to use any of this additional fiscal space, rather, the budgetary package outlined in table 6 will be adhered to, should Britain exit the EU under the orderly assumptions. Therefore, any calculations based on the use of this fiscal space are purely hypothetical.

The following table provides an estimate of the structural balance consistent with Table 7 of the SES based on a ceteris paribus assumption that the output gap remains unchanged when the full available fiscal space is used.

-	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Structural Balance based on Table 7 (per cent of GDP)	-0.1	-0.7	-1.1	-1.7	-2.1

*Question No. 90 answered with Question No. 88.*

**Summer Economic Statement**

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the forecasted Exchequer borrowing requirement under the scenario outlined in table 6 of the summer economic statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35280/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Exchequer Borrowing Requirement (EBR) is a bottom-up forecast based on updated macroeconomic forecasts endorsed by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC). The forecast is conducted twice annually; in Spring, in advance of the Stability Programme Update, and again in Autumn, in advance of the Budget. Therefore there is no EBR forecast corresponding to Summer Economic Statement 2019. Instead, the Summer Economic Statement provides a top-down estimation of the resources expected to be available for the forthcoming Budget.

The next formal EBR forecast will be set out in the White Paper on Receipts and Expenditures which will be published in advance of the Budget and will set out the no-policy-change

position for 2020.

### **Tax Data**

92. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of waiving PRSI and USC on interest earned from lending through crowdfunding for all crowdfunding loans and for crowdfunding loans to just SMEs, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35293/19]

93. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of taxpayers in a year who have received income by way of interest from loans given through crowdfunding platforms based on the most recent tax data available; the amount of income tax, USC and PRSI paid on that income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35294/19]

94. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of taxpayers in a year who have lent to SMEs here through crowdfunding platforms based on the most recent tax data available; the amount of income tax, USC and PRSI paid by these taxpayers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35295/19]

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the average loan size per taxpayer lent through crowdfunding platforms based on the latest tax data available; the average loan size for SME loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35296/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 to 95, inclusive, together.

I am informed by Revenue that there is no requirement to report interest on crowdfunding loans separately to other interest on tax returns, or for investors to report details of loans made via crowdfunding in their income tax returns. Therefore, there is no basis on which to provide the information sought.

### **Departmental Websites**

96. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the reason links from search engines or other sources to documents found on the website of his Department now link to a Department home page rather than the document itself; his plans to rectify the situation; the advice taken before the change was implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35325/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In relation to my Department, I wish to advise that ICT services are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Government department websites are currently undergoing a significant change in how they present online content to citizens and businesses, with a view to making them easier to use and more accessible to all members of society. Over time, department websites are being moved to one single website, gov.ie, giving people a one stop shop for accessing information on government services and organisations.

It is generally seen as best practice to pursue the consolidation of public service information into one consistent accessible website. The most digitally advanced countries within the EU (see the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2018 - Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Latvia and Malta),

have already moved to a single digital gateway approach. Furthermore, a 2016 market research exercise carried out by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform found that the concept of a single, online portal for government was positively received by both the general public and representative bodies alike. This view was again confirmed by a subsequent market research exercise carried out in late 2018.

Following a government decision to migrate all ministerial department websites to gov.ie, work has proceeded on this basis. So far, 5 departments have moved their website content to gov.ie - the Departments of the Taoiseach; Public Expenditure and Reform; Rural and Community Development; Transport, Tourism and Sport; and Finance.

As a part of the migration to gov.ie, content from websites are reworked and moved into the gov.ie website (for example, efforts are made to make the services content easier to understand through the use of plain English). Post migration, the internet addresses for the new content within gov.ie is different from the addresses of the content, including documents, on the old websites.

The migration of a website to a new one with a different address necessarily breaks links to the old website content from external sources. This is suffered for all website migrations, including the department websites in question. This issue is temporary in nature as search engines re-index content on the internet, and also as external sites (that are not search indexes) update their links to point to the new location of content. Over time, the issue of finding broken links and being redirected to a department's homepage on gov.ie will become less and less frequent, and will eventually cease to occur.

To reduce the impact of the temporary ill effects caused by these website migrations, the occurrence of visitors to broken links within gov.ie is monitored via site analytics. In conjunction with each department's content manager, work is continuously being undertaken where possible to redirect such broken links to the correct and new location within gov.ie. Furthermore, prior to website migration into gov.ie, work is undertaken to pre-emptively set up such redirects to popular content so as to reduce the likelihood of this issue arising.

Between search engine re-indexing and the ongoing efforts based on website analytics, the user experience of gov.ie in regards to the matter the Deputy refers will improve over time.

## **Departmental Expenditure**

97. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35341/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department uses Lotus Notes for a small number of legacy systems for which perpetual licenses were purchased prior to 2009. Accordingly, the Lotus Notes licenses held by my Department have not been renewed in the period 2009 to date. Therefore no expenditure on licences has been incurred during this time, nor are there currently any plans to do so.

## **Departmental Surveys**

98. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide historic data held by his Department to provide comparative reference points (details supplied). [35360/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Officials from the Department of Finance and the ESRI published a paper in 2016 titled “Scenarios and Distributional Implications of a Household Wealth Tax in Ireland”, within which the table referenced by the Deputy was presented. The data are drawn from the first wave of the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS), which the CSO carried out in 2013 and results of which were published in 2015. The second wave of the HFCS is due to be published later in 2019.

Historic data on aggregate household net wealth is available in the Central Bank of Ireland’s published Quarterly Financial Accounts. The latest data shows that the net worth of Irish households reached a new high of €772 billion in Q1 2019, equating to roughly €444,000 per household. This analysis shows that the rise in net financial assets held by household was driven primarily by increased value and volume of investment in financial assets. It also shows that household debt fell by €0.6 billion relative to Q4 2018. At €136.9 billion, household debt is now at the lowest level since 2005.

### Debt Repayments

99. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the repayment schedule for bilateral loans to the UK; the capital amount repaid to date by transaction; the amount outstanding; if the repayments are made in sterling or euro; the cost to date in euro of each repayment in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35411/19]

100. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost in euro of each sterling interest repayment to date on bilateral loans from the UK; the applicable interest rate in each case; the projected interest costs for the remainder of 2019 and in 2020, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35412/19]

101. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the projected savings in 2019 and 2020 respectively to date on repayments on loans to the UK due to the fall in the value of sterling by interest and capital amounts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35413/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 to 101, inclusive, together.

The UK bilateral loan is a sterling loan which was drawn down in eight equal tranches of £0.4bn. The first tranche was drawn in October 2011 and the last in September 2013. At its peak, the loan totalled £3.2bn.

Each tranche is repayable seven and a half years after disbursement. Principal repayments are made in sterling. The first £0.4bn tranche of the loan was repaid in April of this year and the second in July. Therefore, a total of £0.8bn has so far been repaid, which leaves £2.4bn outstanding. The euro equivalent value of the principal repayments made to date is €1.1bn and that of the six future repayments is €2.8bn. These figures include the impact of currency hedging transactions.

The principal repayment schedule, including the two tranches already repaid, is set out in the following table.

Year	Month	Repayment £bn
2019	Apr	0.4

Year	Month	Repayment £bn
	July	0.4
	Sep	0.4
2020	Feb	0.4
	Apr	0.4
	Sep	0.4
	Dec	0.4
2021	Mar	0.4

Each of the eight individual tranches of the loan is at a fixed interest rate. Including a service fee of 0.18%, the weighted average sterling interest rate across the tranches was 2.6%, with the rates on the individual tranches ranging from 2.31% to 3.37%. Following the first two of the principal repayments, the weighted average sterling interest rate has fallen to just below 2.5%.

The National Treasury Management Agency, in its role in managing the National Debt, hedged the currency exposure on the UK bilateral loan. This means that any sterling appreciation or depreciation against the euro does not materially affect the aggregate euro equivalent value of the interest and principal repayments. The issue of interest savings from sterling depreciation therefore does not arise.

Interest is payable twice annually, in June and in December. Accrued interest is also paid at the point of maturity. Interest payments are in sterling. The euro equivalent values of each interest payment to date, including the 0.18% fee, are set out in the following table. The figures include the impact of hedging.

Year	Month	€m equivalent
2019	Jul	1
	Jun	30
	Apr	4
2018	Dec	36
	Jun	36
2017	Dec	36
	Jun	36
2016	Dec	37
	Jun	37
2015	Dec	36
	Jun	35
2014	Dec	36
	Jun	34
2013	Dec	37
	Jun	27
2012	Dec	11
	Jun	22
2011	Dec	4

The estimated euro equivalent interest payments for the remainder of 2019 and the full year 2020 are approximately €25m and €30m respectively.

### Tax Credits

102. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of increasing the home carer's tax credit by increments (details supplied) in tabular form. [35435/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The cost of an increase to the Home Carer Tax credit of €50 is shown in Revenue's Ready Reckoner available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/ready-reckoner/index.aspx>. The current maximum value of the HCC is €1,500. The costs of increasing the credit as requested by the Deputy can be calculated on a straight-line basis and are set out in the following table:

Home Carer Credit – Maximum Value	First Year Cost of Increase €m	Full Year Cost of Increase €m
€1,600	6.6	7.6
€1,700	13.2	15.2
€1,800	19.8	22.8
€1,900	26.4	30.4
€2,000	33	38
€2,100	39.6	45.6
€2,200	46.2	53.2
€2,300	52.8	60.8
€2,400	59.4	68.4
€2,500	66	76

The above estimates have been generated by reference to 2020 incomes as calculated on the basis of actual data for the year 2017, the latest year for which returns are available, adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. The estimates are provisional and may be revised. They assume no behavioural change by taxpayers.

### Brexit Preparations

103. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of firms that have still not obtained an EORI number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35458/19]

104. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of firms without an EORI number that have been telephoned by the Revenue Commissioners to inform them of the need to obtain an EORI number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35459/19]

154. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies and economic operators that have applied and received an economic operators' registration and identification number by month and operator headquarters location by country from July 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36621/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 103, 104 and 154 together.

I am advised by Revenue that it is actively engaging with businesses regarding Brexit through a multi-layered comprehensive trader engagement programme. The programme is designed to maximise trader understanding of the potential impact of Brexit and to support and encourage businesses to take the practical steps necessary to be prepared and ready for the implications of Brexit.

The current phase of Revenue's Trader Engagement Programme started on 15 July 2019. The engagement programme encompasses all businesses (approximately 92,000) that traded with the UK in 2018. These businesses were identified by Revenue through analysis of VAT Information Exchanges system (VIES) returns. Each business that traded with the UK in 2018 has been written to and is being provided with suggestions regarding practical preparatory steps to take based on their trade pattern in 2018.

Additional follow up telephone contact is being made with businesses that have the largest volumes of trade with the UK (greater than €5,000) and those that trade most frequently with the UK (at least quarterly). This is a total of approx. 42,000 such businesses. At the end of August 2019, Revenue had contacted over 19,000 of these businesses to offer further advice and support. Revenue expects to complete the telephone contact to the remainder of the approx. 42,000 businesses by 20 Sept 2019.

Acquiring an Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number is the minimum requirement for businesses that wish to trade with, or through, the UK post-Brexit. There has been a significant increase in registrations for EORI numbers with almost 5,000 businesses registering in August 2019 alone. This represents a 600% increase when compared with July 2019 and brings the total number of registrations to date in 2019 to just over 13,200. Full details of EORI registrations, since 2016, broken down by year and month are provided in Table 1. The EORI registration data maintained by Revenue does not allow for the compilation of data relating to headquarter location.

88% of the import trade with the UK in 2018 was carried out by businesses who now have an EORI number. This indicates that businesses that are going to be significantly impacted by Brexit are responding to the call to be prepared. Details of 2018 imports from the UK are provided in Table 2.

It is a similar picture for exports, with 95% of the export trade being carried out by businesses who now have an EORI number. Details of 2018 exports to the UK are provided in Table 3.

The data does indicate that there are still over 2,000 businesses who have trade with the UK in excess of €100,000, and in some cases more than €1 million, who do not have an EORI number. Such businesses, if they intend to continue to trade with the UK post Brexit, are putting their businesses at significant risk if they do not prepare now for Brexit. It is critically important that these businesses take the necessary preparatory action now.

A significant proportion of smaller businesses, with trade value of less than €5,000 at both import (82%) and export (62%), do not have an EORI number. Getting an EORI number is an important first step if they intend to trade with the UK post-Brexit. They should also undertake the other preparatory steps advised by Revenue to mitigate the risks presented by Brexit.

I very much welcome Revenue's intensified Brexit engagement with businesses and I strongly urge all businesses who receive a Brexit preparedness letter from Revenue to take note of its advice, thereby ensuring they are Brexit ready by 31 October.

**TABLE 1 - EORI REGISTRATIONS BY YEAR & MONTH**

YEAR	YEAR TOTAL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2016	2,902	260	213	260	271	312	234	182	204	274	250	332	110
2017	2,594	244	158	221	188	271	259	190	268	198	248	138	211
2018	2,976	243	183	187	215	268	201	210	211	219	301	436	302
2019*	13,207	384	2233	2077	1386	489	462	805	4960	411			
TOTAL	53,252*												

**NOTES**

\*THE NUMBER OF EORI REGISTRATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER RUNS TO 02/09/2019

\*53,252 is the total registrations including the years before 2016

**TABLE 2 - Statistics related to VIES Imports from the UK in 2018**

Threshold value	Number of cases	Overall value of imports	% value of imports where cases have an EORI registration	% value of imports where cases do not have an EORI registration	% with an EORI	% not registered for EORI
Overall	91,769	€20.5 bn	88%	12%	33.2%	66.8%
< €5,000	50,425	€52.3 m	22.1%	77.9%	17.4%	82.6%
€5 - €50k	25,248	€475 m	42.4%	57.6%	41%	59%
€50 -€100k	5,302	€375.3 m	54.7%	45.3%	54.1%	45.9%
€100k - €1m	8,467	€2.59 bn	79.4%	20.6%	75 %	25%
Cases above €1m	2,327	€17.01 bn	91.6%	8.4%	90.3%	9.7%

**TABLE 3 - Statistics related to VIES Exports to the UK in 2018**

Threshold value	Number of cases	Overall value of exports	% value of exports where cases have an EORI registration	% value of exports where cases do not have an EORI registration	% with an EORI	% not registered for EORI
Overall	11,787	€15.36 bn	95.4%	4.6%	61%	39%
< €5,000	6,084	€1.46 m	76.6%	23.4%	37.8%	62.2%
€5 - €50k	1,698	€36.88 m	79.3%	20.7%	78.9%	21.1%
€50 -€100k	689	€50 m	83.2%	16.8%	83%	17%
€100k - €1m	2,106	€760 m	89.6%	10.4%	87.8%	12.1%
Cases above €1m	1,210	€14.5 bn	95.7%	4.3%	94.2%	5.8%

### Stamp Duty

105. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if persons who develop schemes under a planning permission and commencement notice a number of years old can benefit from the stamp duty refund under section 61 of the Finance Act 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35465/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the Stamp Duty Refund scheme was introduced in respect of non-residential land that was purchased on or after 11 October 2017 at the increased Stamp Duty rate of 6% and subsequently developed for residential purposes. The scheme was intended to incentivise the building of houses and apart-

ments following the increase in the rate of Stamp Duty on the purchase of land from 2% to 6% (Budget Day 10 October 2017).

A refund of the difference (some or all, depending on the particular circumstances) between the previous rate of 2% and the increased rate of 6% may be claimed where certain conditions are satisfied. The main conditions are that the purchaser must have paid Stamp Duty at the rate of 6% when acquiring the land, construction work must have started within 30 months of the land being purchased and the residential development must be completed within two years of the start of construction.

As the scheme is contingent on Stamp Duty being paid at the rate of 6%, any residential development started on foot of planning permission and commencement notice relating to land purchased before 11 October 2017 would not come within the scope of the scheme. Such land would have been subject to the previous 2% rate of Stamp Duty.

### Tax Incentives

106. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if tax incentives to support farmers will be introduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35548/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** With less than five weeks to go, I do not propose to discuss the details of measures which may or may not be under consideration as part of the Budget. However, the Deputy will be aware that there is already in place a wide range of tax supports to assist farmers, including capital allowance regimes.

### General Data Protection Regulation

107. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35576/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Department of Finance is aware of its additional responsibilities as a controller and processor of personal data under GDPR. The Department pre-empted the changes in legislation and held GDPR training for staff.

I wish to inform the Deputy of the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training - this has been presented in the following table.

This training was completed in preparation of the implementation of GDPR in May 2018 and ongoing CPD for staff.

180.Year:	2017	2018	2019
Total Spend: (€19,349.90)	€5828.60	€10,730.50	€2790.80

180.Year:	2017	2018	2019
GDPR training or preparation training relating to GDPR or Data Protection with the names of the providers of this service.	Course:GDPR Essentials Level 1 Provider:Public Affairs Ireland.Cost:€2060	Course:GDPR Advanced Training.Provider:Public Affairs Ireland.Cost:€1100	Course:Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection Provider:Institute of Public Administration.Cost:€2700
	Course:Certificate in Data Protection Provider:Public Affairs Ireland.Cost:€980	Course:GDPR Training for Senior Managers.Provider:Public Affairs Ireland.Cost:€850	Course:Government Membership for IAPP Provider:International Association of Privacy Professionals-Cost:€90.80
	Course:Data Protection Summit Provider:Happening Conferences and Events Ltd. Cost:€750	Course:GDPR Training for staff of the Department. Provider:Public Affairs Ireland. Cost:€8600	
	Course:Certificate in Data Protection course.Provider:Institute of Bankers in Ireland-Cost:€1450	Data Protection Materials:Data Protection Book.Provider:Gill and Macmillan.Cost:€180.50	
	Course:EU Data Protection Seminar.Provider:Academy of European Law (ERA) Cost:€588.60		

### Tax Code

108. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to change the threshold for siblings in relation to capital acquisitions tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35613/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I would say that consideration of possible changes to CAT rates and thresholds, including in respect of inheritances or gifts to siblings generally takes place as part of the consideration of any changes to the tax system which is undertaken as part of the annual Budget 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.

### Departmental Customer Charters

109. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35644/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In line with the Department's Customer Service Charter 2018-2020, complaints regarding customer service received can be made to the relevant Unit/Division in the first instance, or to the Customer Service Officer in Corporate Affairs. If the complaint is not resolved the Department's Customer Service Charter highlights the role of the Department's Appeal's Officer and further recourse to the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate a complaint.

The number of complaints received in the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 are as follows:

Year	Number of Complaints
2017	0
2018	1
2019 (to date)	0

### Tax Reliefs Data

110. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax relief claimed on subscriptions to professional organisations by workers and self-employed persons in 2018 by each professional organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35654/19]

111. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax relief claimed by businesses on subscriptions to business representative bodies in 2018 by each business representative body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35655/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 110 and 111 together.

I am advised by Revenue that there is no requirement for workers or self-employed persons to separately declare professional subscriptions in their tax returns (allowable subscriptions are included in their allowable expenses). There is also no requirement for businesses to declare subscriptions to business representative bodies in their tax returns. It is therefore not possible to provide the data requested by the Deputy.

### Tax Reliefs Costs

112. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full year cost of restoring trade union subscription tax relief at the level it was at before its abolition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35656/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** A review of the appropriate treatment for tax purposes of trade union subscriptions and professional body fees was carried out by my Department in 2016 and included in the 2016 report on tax expenditures published on Budget day 2016. The review may be found at the following link:

([http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax\\_Expenditures\\_Report%202016\\_final.pdf](http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Report%202016_final.pdf))

The review concluded that:

“...analysis of the scheme using the principles laid down by the Department’s Tax Expenditure Guidelines shows that it fails to reach the evaluation threshold to warrant introduction in this manner.

The reinstatement of this tax relief would have no justifiable policy rationale and does not express a defined policy objective. Given that individuals join trade unions largely for the well-known benefits of membership, and the potential value of the relief to an individual would equate to just over €1 per week, this scheme would have little to no incentive effect on the numbers choosing to join. There is no specific market failure that needs to be addressed by such a scheme, and it would consist largely of deadweight.”

Given the conclusions of the review, I have no plans to reintroduce such a relief.

I am advised by Revenue that the cost and the numbers availing of the relief prior to its abolition are available at the following link:

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

The following table sets out details of the cost of the relief in the seven years immediately prior to its end.

Year	Cost (€ million)	No. of Claims
2004	10.7	248,300
2005	11.8	272,100
2006	19.2	294,300
2007	20.7	316,300
2008	26.4	341,900
2009	26.7	345,800
2010	26	337,500

I am further advised by Revenue that these figures may not provide an accurate indicator of future costs of a new scheme and there is no other basis available to Revenue on which to estimate such costs.

### Tax Reliefs Data

113. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the special assignee relief programme in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35662/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** SARP was introduced in Budget 2012 as part of a strategy to promote Foreign Direct Investment into Ireland, and to allow Ireland to compete internationally to attract highly skilled and mobile executives who act as key decision makers within organisations.

The measure provides income tax relief on a portion of income earned by employees, who are assigned by their employer to work in Ireland, and who previously worked abroad for that employer for a minimum of six months. There is no exemption or relief from USC and PRSI is payable where the individual is not liable to social insurance contributions in the home country.

I am advised by Revenue that 2016 is the latest year for which data are currently available on the Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP). The cost of the scheme in that year was €18.1 million.

The latest available costs can be found in Revenue's Cost of Tax Expenditures publication which is available at the following link: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-tax-expenditures.pdf>

I am advised by Revenue that the 2017 SARP report is expected to be published in the coming weeks, at which point the cost for the relief in 2017 will become available at the above link.

Finally, as the Deputy may be aware, following on from concerns I had regarding the increasing cost of the incentive, I amended the SARP legislation in Finance Bill 2018 to reinstate an upper salary threshold at the level of €1 million. This change came into effect for new entrants to the programme from 1 January 2019 and for existing beneficiaries of the programme from 1 January 2020.

In accordance with the Department of Finance Tax Expenditure Guidelines, SARP is currently the subject of an independent review, carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants, this year. The review exercise affords an opportunity to look at all elements of the relief and it also includes consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

### Stamp Duty

114. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance the number of successful applications under the residential development stamp duty refund scheme since its introduction to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35714/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the number of successful applications under the Residential Development Stamp Duty Refund Scheme (Section 83D Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999) since its introduction to date (23 August 2019) is 661. A tabular breakdown is set out below for the Deputy's information.

Type of Application	Breakdown	Percentage of Total Successful Applications	Refund Value	Percentage of Total Refunded
Single Dwelling Unit	610	92%	€1,447,754	23%
Multiple Dwelling Unit	51	8%	€4,798,711	77%
Total	661	100%	€6,246,465	100%

### VAT Rate Application

115. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to guidance in relation to food supplements issued by the Revenue Commissioners from May 2007 (details supplied); if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that food supplements were zero rated on 1 January 1991; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35731/19]

148. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Finance the reason for the 23% VAT rate for health supplements; if his attention has been drawn to the guidance published by the Revenue Commissioners in May 2007 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36296/19]

162. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to ensure that food supplements remain at the zero VAT rate. [36766/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 115, 148 and 162 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the document referred to by the Deputies was an internal document prepared in 2007 and that it was never published on the Revenue website. The document has no legal value or authority over VAT legislation in place on 1 January 1991 or subsequently and has no legal effect. It does not mean that food supplement products were legally zero rated on 1 January 1991 or subsequently.

Irish VAT legislation does not provide a zero rate for food supplement products; instead there is a legislative provision for zero rating food and drink. The zero rate for food and drink is provided for under a derogation from EU VAT law which allows Member States to retain certain zero rates for goods and services which were expressly covered in their national VAT legislation on 1 January 1991. The legislative provision for food and drink was in place on 1 January 1991, however there was no legislative provision for food supplement products and therefore they cannot be legally zero rated.

Shortly after the introduction of VAT Revenue allowed the zero rate to be applied to certain food supplement products (vitamins, minerals and fish oils). This concessionary approach expanded as the market developed over the years and resulted in the zero rating by Revenue of further similar products, including products other than vitamins, minerals and fish oils.

The evolution of the scope of the concessionary treatment of certain types of food supplement products was well understood by the industry and by agents representing clients in the food supplements sector. Revenue has already acknowledged that the scope of its zero rating concession had broadened progressively over time to the point that it had become increasingly difficult to maintain an effective distinction between food supplement products that could benefit from the zero rate and those that were standard rated. Revenue acknowledges that this concessionary approach was unsatisfactory and led to diverging and inconsistent practices. There were continuous efforts by elements in the industry to expand the zero rate to products that should be standard rated, including products claiming to enhance male fertility, promote hair growth, help to boost tanning, avoid a hangover and reduce stress.

Revenue conducted a comprehensive review of the VAT treatment of food supplement products, including getting an expert report on the definition of food for the purposes of the VAT Consolidation Act. The expert prepared a detailed, scientific report that concluded that food supplement products are not conventional food. Based on the expert report and its own legal analysis, Revenue concluded that the status quo was no longer sustainable.

Following this review, Revenue engaged with my Department concerning policy options that might be considered in the context of Finance Bill 2018. The relevant legislation was not changed in Finance Act 2018 and therefore Revenue issued new guidance in December 2018 which removed the concessionary zero rating of various food supplement products with effect from 1 March 2019. Following representation from Deputies and from the industry, I wrote to Revenue outlining my plans to examine the policy and legislative options for the taxation of food supplement products in the context of Finance Bill 2019. 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 consideration of any legislative changes in the context of Budget 2020.

My Department carried out a public consultation on the taxation of food supplement products. The consultation sought input from a wide range of interested parties, including from health and nutrition experts and the Minister for Health. The results of the consultation were included in the recently published 2019 VAT Tax Strategy Group ('TSG') paper as part of the Budget 2020 process. Several options have been set out on the VAT treatment of food supplement products in the TSG paper, available here:

<https://assets.gov.ie/19123/083625ae43d948c88917c749a2ff6b57.pdf>

### **Tax Reliefs Data**

116. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who availed of the sportspersons relief tax scheme in each of the past ten years in tabular form. [35734/19]

117. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue forgone or refunded on the sportspersons relief tax scheme in each of the past ten years in tabular form. [35735/19]

118. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered extend-

ing the sportsperson relief tax scheme to players of Gaelic football or hurling. [35736/19]

119. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Finance if he has met with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to discuss the extension of the sportsperson relief tax scheme to players of Gaelic football or hurling. [35737/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 116 to 119, inclusive, together.

Section 480A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) provides tax relief for certain sportspersons on earnings which derive directly from participation in the sport concerned, such as prize money and performance fees, but not other earnings such as sponsorship fees and income from advertisements or endorsements.

Where the eligibility criteria for the relief are met, the individual is entitled to a deduction of 40% of certain income arising in any ten years (as chosen by the individual) within the period spanning the year of retirement and the fourteen years preceding that year.

For the purposes of the legislation, the qualifying individual must have engaged in a 'specified occupation' or 'specified profession' as outlined in Schedule 23A of the legislation, to include the following:

- Athlete
- Badminton Player
- Boxer
- Cricketer
- Cyclist
- Footballer
- Golfer
- Jockey
- Motor Racing Driver
- Rugby Player
- Squash Player
- Swimmer
- Tennis Player

With regard to the Deputy's question on the cost and the number availing of the relief, the following table outlines this information for the ten years between 2008 and 2017 (the latest year for which data are available):

Year	Exchequer Cost €M	Number availing of the relief
2017	0.4	31
2016	0.6	45
2015	0.5	38
2014	0.3	38

Year	Exchequer Cost €M	Number availing of the relief
2013	0.3	46
2012	0.3	25
2011	0.3	23
2010	0.3	45
2009	0.2	15
2008	0.2	17

Extension of the tax relief to gaelic games players as mentioned by the Deputy would raise a number of issues and challenges. From the Deputy's question, it is not clear as to what level of playing activity such relief might apply. Given the amateur status of the players, income from sources not related to the playing of gaelic games might need to be taken into account. This would have implications for the tax system that would need to be carefully examined. In addition, equity issues might arise as regards the equal treatment of players from both within and outside the jurisdiction.

As regards discussions between the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and me on an extension of the scheme as described by the Deputy, I anticipate that the subject may well be raised in pre-budget meetings.

### Tax Reliefs Application

120. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Finance if the disregard of the first €3,000 when calculating tax relief for third level fees will be revised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35739/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Section 473A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for tax relief at the standard rate of income tax (20%) in respect of qualifying fees paid by an individual for a third level education course, subject to the terms and conditions set out in that section. Qualifying fees mean tuition fees in respect of an approved course at an approved college, reduced by the amount of the student contribution which, in the case of a full-time course, is currently €3,000.

In 2017, the most recent year for which data are available, the Exchequer cost of the measure was some €15.2m. Full details of the relief, including the terms and conditions that apply, are set out on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/index.aspx>

The maximum level of the student contribution of €3,000 has remained unchanged since 2015. However, at this relatively short remove, it is well established practice, for me as Minister for Finance, not to comment on changes to tax policy that may or may not be included in the annual Budget.

### Insurance Industry

121. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance when the key information report on employer and public liability insurance claims will be published; if an organisation (details supplied) has submitted the required data in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35808/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware, Recommendation 4 of the Cost of Insurance Working Group's (CIWG) Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance required the Department of Finance to publish a key information report on employer liability (EL) and public liability (PL) insurance claims by Q4 2018. In order to do this, the CIWG's data sub-group developed a template with specified key metrics which was sent to Insurance Ireland by Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Michael D'Arcy TD, in May 2018. In it, he requested that the completed data submission be returned by the end of Q3 2018 to allow sufficient time for the production and publication of the report by the end of Q4 2018.

Insurance Ireland was unable to meet this deadline. However in their most recent update to my Department in late July, they indicated that they have circulated a data request to their members to complete and return, and that it is expected this work will take six weeks to complete. Following the return of the data they will require outside expertise to aggregate and anonymise the data. They stated that it was their goal to have the output of this data to the Department for review six weeks after the receipt of final data from members. I would add that following receipt of the data return, my Department, with technical assistance from the Central Bank of Ireland, will need a certain amount of time to review it and produce a report on the basis of it, therefore it is possible that such a report will not be published until at least Q1 2020.

### **Revenue Commissioners Investigations**

122. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if officials of the Revenue Commissioners have visited a site (details supplied) in County Kildare to date in 2019; if so, the nature and-or reason for inspection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35833/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Section 851A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 requires Revenue to uphold taxpayer confidentiality and prohibits the release of any information that could lead to the identification of taxpayers.

Revenue has however, assured me that it carries out a full range of risk-based interventions to combat all types of tax evasion and non-compliance. These interventions include visits to construction sites, many of which are conducted on a multi-agency basis with other Departments or Bodies, including the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The site visits are primarily focussed on identifying and rectifying bogus self-employment situations and ensuring the proper operation of the PAYE system, but will also investigate any other forms of tax non-compliance found to be in operation.

### **Revenue Commissioners Investigations**

123. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the efforts the Revenue Commissioners make to engage with subcontractors to ensure that they are reimbursed the relevant contract tax and to resolve related filing issues; and the amount of tax which has not been returned in each of the years 2005 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [35952/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that extensive efforts are made to engage with sub-contractors (and their agents) to ensure that the Relevant Contracts Tax (RCT) system is operated correctly.

Since 1 January 2012, all RCT payment and return filing activity is conducted online using

the Revenue Online Service (ROS). The online facility provides sub-contractors with access to a range of reporting facilities, which enables them to view the contract payments made to them in any specified period and any related RCT withheld. Also, sub-contractors who have fiduciary tax liabilities as employers and/or who are registered for and required to deduct VAT, can offset any RCT withheld against those liabilities, provided they have filed the relevant tax returns.

Revenue also advises me that sub-contractors' annual tax returns (Form 11 or CT1) are pre-populated with the gross payments received, and the RCT withheld for the year. Additionally, the 'Summary Pay and File Liability' screen of the ROS annual return provides sub-contractors with the amount of RCT credit that is available for offset against either the balance of tax for that year or against the preliminary tax due for the following year. After the offsets are completed, any remaining credit is automatically refunded to the sub-contractor, providing all other tax returns are filed.

To ensure a high level of timely compliance across the self-employed sector, Revenue issues 'pay and file' reminders to all customers, including sub-contractors, to ensure they prepare for and file their tax returns on time. Also, in addition to making all RCT information available to sub-contractors through ROS, Revenue provides additional support via the Revenue website and through secure email channels and telephone services. These services responded to almost 80,000 requests for assistance from sub-contractors (or their agents) in 2018.

The following table sets out the amounts of RCT paid to Revenue by principal contractors and subsequently either offset or repaid to sub-contractors for the years 2007 to 2019 (year to date).

Year	RCT Gross	RCT Offsets	RCT Repayments	RCT Net
	€m	€m	€m	€m
2007	1,033.40	578.3	405.3	49.9
2008	826.7	504.7	389.3	-67.3
2009	436.5	224.8	265.5	-53.9
2010	312.4	140.0	181.7	-9.3
2011	267.3	103.5	169.9	-6.1
2012	174.3	96.0	75.9	2.4
2013	157.0	101.2	43.5	12.3
2014	200.8	121.2	48.7	31.0
2015	200.6	126.6	61.5	12.5
2016	255.5	161.0	54.6	39.9
2017	316.9	194.3	78.8	43.8
2018	364.7	229.7	97.0	38.0
2019 (to end-July)	293.5	172.0	71.8	49.6

The data for 2005 and 2006 cannot be provided as the IT systems at that time did not provide a breakdown between offsets and refunds.

### Proposed Legislation

124. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when he plans to bring forward the migration of participating securities Bill; when the legislation will be enacted; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [35962/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Post-Brexit when the UK becomes a third country, under the CSD Regulation, Euroclear UK & Ireland will no longer be able to provide its services into the Irish market.

In response to Brexit and its anticipated impact on the Irish market, Euronext Dublin (formerly the ISE) announced in October 2018 that it would transfer the settlement of trades in Irish equities and exchange traded funds from CREST, the settlement system operated by Euroclear UK & Ireland, to Euroclear Bank which is a CSD based in Belgium.

Following discussions with Euronext Dublin, Euroclear Bank, issuers, registrars and other market participants in the broader Irish market over recent months, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and I brought jointly sought and got Government approval, in July of this year, to draft primary legislation to provide an alternative scheme of arrangement for Irish issuers to migrate.

The enactment of this legislation entitled the Migration of Participating Securities Bill is a priority for the Government in the autumn term as part of our overall Brexit preparations and to minimise potential disruption to the Irish market and issuers from the change in settlement system. A drafter has been assigned by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, and the process of drafting the Bill is underway. I would note that the proposed legislation is complex and without precedent.

The Government's intention is to have the legislation in place this year. We believe that this is important so as to allow Irish issuers sufficient time to complete their own individual internal migration planning and hold the necessary shareholder votes during 2020. The Industry White Paper, issued by Euroclear, envisaged all issuers will be able to confirm by November 2020 that they have taken all necessary steps to migrate to the new settlement system. As I noted earlier, this project is a complex one and without precedent. As such, it is wise to allow sufficient time for testing of the new systems and settlement arrangement sufficiently in advance of the EU Commission's March 2021 migration deadline.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in Government and in the Oireachtas in the coming months on this important piece of legislation so as to ensure the smooth completion of our Brexit preparations in this important area.

### **Revenue Commissioners Staff**

125. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of additional Revenue Commissioners staff assigned to the Border with the UK in respect of preparedness for the forthcoming departure of the UK from the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36005/19]

126. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of Revenue Commissioners staff he plans to assign to the Border with the UK to work on counter-smuggling operations if there is an agreement with the UK by 31 October 2019 and in the event of a no-deal Brexit, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36006/19]

127. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if land or premises within 30 km of the Border with the UK for customs checks has been leased or purchased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36007/19]

128. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to date in 2019 and expected cost in 2019 to the Revenue Commissioners of expenses payable to staff being relocated to work in respect of the Border with the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36008/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 to 128, inclusive, together.

The Government has been clear that it is determined in the context of Brexit, deal or ‘no deal’, to avoid the need for a hard border on the island of Ireland. I am assured by Revenue that in line with that policy it has not purchased or leased land or premises nor has it any such plans, within 30km of the Border.

In preparation for Brexit, Revenue is, recruiting an additional 600 staff across a range of grades and is confident that this full additional resource will be in place by 31 October. Revenue has confirmed to me that these staff have not been specifically assigned to anti-smuggling work and that they are being recruited for the purposes of facilitating and supporting legitimate trade to get ready for Brexit.

I am aware that Revenue continues to adjust its recruitment and training and deployment plans in response to business needs, including Brexit-related developments. Revenue advises me that it will recruit and deploy resources based on the evolving business needs and to quickly confront any risks as they emerge. I remain open to consider any request from Revenue for additional resources if required.

The Deputy will be aware that given the increasing likelihood of a no deal Brexit, intensive discussions are taking place involving the Government, the EU Commission and our EU partners as to how we can meet the shared twin objectives of protecting the Single Market and Ireland’s place in it, and prevent physical infrastructure at the border. This work is looking at necessary checks to preserve Ireland’s full participation in the Single Market and Customs Union. Revenue is providing the necessary technical expertise and assistance to facilitate those discussions.

Revenue has assured me that it already implements a comprehensive risk-based intervention programme to identify, target and disrupt all forms of cross-border smuggling and criminality. Revenue’s priority focus on such activity will continue to be the case regardless of the eventual outcome of Brexit and the assignment of any additional resources will be determined (by Revenue) in the light of developments.

Revenue’s risk-based approach to illegal cross-border activity is, as the Deputy will be aware, facilitated and supported by very close cooperation with other agencies of the State, including An Garda Síochána, and also with colleagues in Northern Ireland through the North-South Joint Agency Task Force. I am satisfied that Revenue’s focus on cross-border smuggling is appropriate and well targeted, and I know that it is keeping the matter under active review as Brexit developments become clearer.

### **Real Estate Investment Trusts**

129. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number of real estate investment trusts here; and the estimated number of properties in the portfolios of such real estate investment trusts. [36029/19]

130. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the corporate

tax arrangements in respect of real estate investment trusts; the level of corporation tax that applies to such entities; the rate of effective corporation tax paid by such entities; his plans to commission a study of the REIT model in terms of its appropriate contribution to taxation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36030/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 129 and 130 together.

Finance Act 2013 introduced the regime for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in Ireland. The function of the REIT framework is not to provide an overall tax exemption but rather to facilitate collective investment in rental property by removing a double layer of taxation which would otherwise apply on property investment via a corporate vehicle.

Property rental income and gains arising are exempt from tax within the REIT and are taxed at the investor level when distributed through dividend withholding tax at 20%. The legislation requires that 85% of all rental income profits be distributed annually to shareholders. The REIT is subject to corporation tax on income and gains not arising from the property rental business of the REIT. Distributions to certain limited classes of investors such as pension funds and charities do not suffer the withholding tax as they are more generally exempt from tax.

Given the important implications which developments in the property market can have for the economy, my Department actively monitors developments in this sector on an ongoing basis. In this context, the Deputy may be aware, as part of the 2018 Finance Bill process I committed that my officials would undertake a report on REITs, IREFs and Section 110 companies as they invest in the Irish property market. This report was presented to the Tax Strategy Group in July and is available on my Department's website.

There are currently four REITs operating in the Irish property market. Information in relation to the property held by REITs, taken from the 2018 published annual reports of the companies, is summarised in the TSG paper referred to in the above paragraph and is available here: <https://assets.gov.ie/19114/2de9c469825a47418526e1d5c217b44c.pdf>

I am advised by Revenue that, as there are fewer than 10 REITs, it is not possible to provide analysis such as the effective tax rate, due to Revenue's requirement to protect taxpayer confidentiality.

### **IBRC Legal Cases**

131. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the legal costs incurred by the State with respect to the successful case taken by a person (details supplied) in both the High Court and the Court of Appeal; if the costs are now fully discharged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36062/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by the Special Liquidators that a settlement agreement was entered into between the parties to the proceedings and, due to the confidentiality provisions in the settlement agreement, its terms cannot be referred to.

### **IBRC Legal Cases**

132. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of cases concluded in the courts with respect to the IBRC; the costs settled to date; the nature of each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36063/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Since the date of the Special Liquidation in 2013, IBRC has reduced the number of legal cases under active management from over 1,100 to approximately 82 sets of legal proceedings (comprising 63 cases as defendant, 19 recovery and enforcement actions) and one alternative dispute resolution case.

Many of these proceedings are high profile and/or are of significant value, involving former directors and officers of Anglo/INBS, claims of negligence by professional advisers, or substantial claims for damages against former borrowers concerning their loans and/or related security. Where IBRC is defendant, these cases concern inter alia, allegations of mis-selling of Swaps and investments, mismanagement, negligence, breach of contract and breach of duty.

I am advised by the Special Liquidators that for reasons of confidentiality they are not in a position to outline the costs settled to date in the various legal proceedings.

The Special Liquidators have published six progress update reports on the liquidation of IBRC, the most recent one in May 2019, these reports provide detailed information on the various workstreams ongoing in the liquidation including the legal workstream. All six reports are available on the Department of Finance website (<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/9d6c20-ibrc-progress-report-updates/>).

### **IBRC Operations**

133. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the sale of IBRCAC in 2014 including the proceeds versus the original value; the number of staff and investors originally involved; the number transferred to a company (details supplied) following the sale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36064/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** On 11 March 2015, Life Company Consolidation Group Limited (“LCCG”), through its Irish subsidiary, Life Company Consolidation Group Ireland Limited, acquired the entire share capital of IBRC Assurance Company Limited (“IBRCAC”) from IBRC (in Special Liquidation). Following the sale in March 2015 IBRCAC was renamed Harcourt Life Assurance Company Limited.

The successful completion of the IBRCAC share sale is referenced in the 2015 progress update report of the Special Liquidators, published on 27 May 2016 (<https://assets.gov.ie/9081/12579f1e834b427296e6c0a5cd3f1882.pdf>)

In relation to the other components of the question, I am advised by the Special Liquidators they are not in a position to provide the requested information due to commercial confidentiality.

### **Credit Union Regulation**

134. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Finance if his decision to approve a substantial increase to the industry levy on credit unions up to 50% by 2022 will be reversed; if he consulted with a committee (details supplied) in advance of the announcement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36076/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware, credit unions are regulated and supervised by the Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank who is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within his independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector

stability, and to protect the savings of credit union members.

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

Consultation Paper 95 “Joint Public Consultation Paper - Department of Finance and the Central Bank of Ireland - Funding the Cost of Financial Regulation” (CP95) was published in 2015 and set out proposals to move from partial industry funding of financial regulation towards full industry funding, noting the proposal set out in an earlier consultation conducted by the Central Bank (CP61 “Consultation on Impact Based Levies and Other Levy Related Matters”) to move credit unions to fund 50% of the cost of regulating the credit union sector.

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

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

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

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

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

Section 32D of the Central Bank Act 1942, as amended, provides that the Central Bank may, with the approval of the Minister for Finance, make Regulations prescribing an annual Industry Funding Levy to be paid by regulated financial service providers to the Central Bank of Ireland. The Industry Funding Levy is not specific to credit unions and there is no requirement under the legislation for the Central Bank to consult with anyone other than the Minister for Finance. Nor is there any legislative requirement for the Minister for Finance to consult with the Credit Union Advisory Committee (CUAC) or with any other third parties prior to providing his approval.

It is worth noting that credit union sector was consulted on the proposed changes to the industry funding levy in 2012/2013 and in 2015 and that the final report of the CUAC Implementation Group published in January 2019 made specific reference to the Central Bank’s intention to increase the industry funding levy for credit unions to 50% on a phased basis, which had been made public by the Central Bank in November 2018.

The Deputy might also wish to note that the Department of Finance, in collaboration with the Central Bank, held a public consultation on potential changes to the Credit Institutions Resolution Fund Levy, which is expected to reduce materially from 2020. The outcome, following the public consultation, will be published shortly.

It is also important to note that as Minister for Finance I have reduced the Stabilisation Scheme Levy materially and that since 2017 no further levies have been charged by the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo). I have previously committed to a further review of the Stabilisation Scheme in 2020.

On 28th August last, I held a meeting with the credit union representative bodies to discuss their views on the Industry Funding Levy and other credit union related matters. I reaffirmed the decision, outlined above, for increases to the Industry Funding Levy.

### **Tax Data**

135. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if the capital gains exemption on properties sold if they have been held for three years or more will apply to a company (details supplied) once it acquires assets currently owned by a company for three years or longer. [36088/19]

136. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if anti-avoidance measures introduced in the Finance Act 2017 by which stamp duty of 6% applies to the sale of shares which derive their value or part of their value from commercial property applies to Irish REITs. [36089/19]

137. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the rate of stamp duty that will be applicable to the sale of a company (details supplied). [36090/19]

138. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the stamp duty that will be paid as part of the sale of a company (details supplied). [36091/19]

139. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the shareholdings of a company (details supplied) between domestically held and international investors, respectively; and the increase in value of shares held by both domestic and international investors following the sale of the company to another company. [36092/19]

140. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if a company (details supplied) could be exempt from anti-avoidance non-resident rules in view of the grandfathering provision of 31 December 2020 regarding the non-resident exemption from capital gains tax on the sale of REIT shares; and if the company now controls 10% of another company and could potentially be exempt from capital gains tax on the sale of this holding. [36093/19]

141. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the assessment of the 2012 tax strategy papers that the introduction of a REIT regime here with generous tax exemptions for international investors and stipulations in double taxation treaties that dramatically reduce the effective tax rate paid by international investors, would result in significant tax leakage. [36094/19]

142. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he has carried out an analysis of the potential gross tax that will be exempted from payment as a result of a number of tax benefits afforded to REITs and property investors due to the sale of a company (details supplied). [36095/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 to 142, inclusive, together.

I understand that all of these questions relate to the potential sale of one specific company. I have been advised by Revenue that due to Revenue's requirement to protect taxpayer confidentiality under section 851A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, and due to the fact that this transaction has not yet taken place, it is not possible, or appropriate, to answer some of the specific questions asked. However, I can address most of the issues raised in general terms.

Finance Act 2013 introduced the regime for the operation of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in Ireland. The function of the REIT framework is not to provide an overall tax exemption but rather to facilitate collective investment in rental property by removing a double layer of taxation which would otherwise apply on property investment via a corporate vehicle.

Property rental income and certain gains arising from the disposal of rental properties are exempt from tax within the REIT but they are chargeable to tax at the investor level when distributed. The REIT legislation requires that 85% of all property rental profits be distributed annually to shareholders (and this is referred to as a “property income dividend”), to prevent an indefinite tax free roll up of property rental profits within the REIT.

REITs are designed to facilitate long term property rental structures. While they will often acquire property, it is acknowledged that it may be desirable to develop property within the REIT for use in the rental business. To prevent REITs being used as property development structures, there are special provisions dealing with property development within the REIT regime. If a REIT spends more than 30% of the value of a property it holds developing that property and sells that property within 3 years of the development, then any gains will be taxable at 25%. The REIT is also subject to corporation tax on income and gains, if any, not arising from the property rental business of the REIT.

In response to question 36088, the exemption from capital gains tax on a developed property which has been held for 3 years only applies to a disposal by a REIT. It does not apply to any subsequent disposal by any other person.

In response to question 36095, as set out above the REIT regime is not a tax exemption, but a regime to facilitate collective investment in Irish property. A paper on REITs and other investment vehicles as they invest in the Irish property market was prepared for the Tax Strategy Group and published on my Department’s website in July 2019. The paper addresses the policy rationale for introducing and maintaining REITs, the benefits of the regime and the taxation of REITs. It also sets provides details on the property held by REITs, as well as Irish Real Estate Funds (IREFs) and Section 110 companies as they invest in the Irish Property Market. The paper is available to download at the following link: <https://assets.gov.ie/19114/2de9c469825a47418526e1d5c217b44c.pdf>.

In response to question 36090, in the normal course, the sale of shares attracts stamp duty at a rate of 1%. In response to question 36089, the stamp duty anti-avoidance measure referred to is section 31C Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 which was introduced following the increase in the stamp duty rate on the acquisition of land and property from 2% to 6% in Budget 2018. The measure ensures that the higher 6% rate also applies where non-residential property held by an entity such as a company is indirectly sold by way of a sale of the shares in the company and, effectively, the non-residential property itself. To ascertain if the anti-avoidance measure applies it is necessary to look at the nature of the business carried out by the particular company when it is acquired. The measure applies where the company derives the greater part of its value, directly or indirectly, from Irish property that it acquired or developed with the sole or main aim of making a profit or gain from its disposal.

Not all companies deriving value from property would come within the measure. Although the greater part of their value might be attributable to their property assets, the sale of such companies by way of a sale of their shares is not chargeable to stamp duty at the rate of 6% because they won’t have acquired or developed the property with the sole or main aim of making a profit or gain from its disposal but from using the property for their core business. For example, the acquisition of hotels, office rental businesses, creches and shopping centres would not generally fall within the charge.

As explained above, for reasons of taxpayer confidentiality and as this relates to a proposed transaction, it is not possible to provide an answer to question 36091.

In response to question 36093, Finance Act 2012 brought in a relief from capital gains tax where a person acquired land or buildings between 7 December 2011 and 31 December 2013 (with Finance (No.2) Act 2013 extending this to 31 December 2014), and held that land or building for 7 years (with Finance Act 2017 reducing this to 4 years). Full relief is available when the land or buildings are held for up to 7 years after which the relief available is reduced in the proportion that 7 years bears to the period of ownership. This relief only applies to direct acquisitions of land or buildings, and not to shares which derive their value from land or buildings. Therefore, an acquisition of REIT shares did not fall within this exemption.

In relation to non-resident companies and grandfathering within section 23A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 as amended by Finance Act 2014, tax on the disposal of shares in a REIT cannot be avoided by Irish persons holding them through an offshore structure. There are targeted anti-avoidance rules which essentially charge an Irish resident to tax on gains which accrue to their offshore company (principally section 590 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997), or offshore trusts (principally sections 579 and 579A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997).

The 2012 Tax Strategy Group paper, referred to in question 36094, informed the design of the REIT regime in Ireland. The paper sets out the various policy considerations which informed the introduction of the REIT framework, including the need to attract alternative sources of investment capital to the property market and the potential benefits of a risk-diversified collective investment structure for small investors and for tenants. As identified in that paper, Ireland's dividend withholding tax ("DWT") rules provide that DWT does not in general apply where a dividend is paid to a resident of a country with which we have a double tax agreement. In bringing forward the REIT regime, amendments were made to the DWT rules such that that exemption does not apply to property income dividends paid by a REIT. Instead, DWT at the full rate of 20% is applied and those investors who are entitled to a lower rate under a double tax agreement may subsequently claim the appropriate refund.

It is also worth noting in this regard and in respect of question 36093, that where an investor holds more than 10% of the shares in the REIT, they are referred to in the REIT legislation as a "holder of excessive rights". In most cases where a dividend is paid to a holder of excessive rights, the REIT is charged to tax at 25% as if it had received the dividend. This means that the tax collected by the State on dividend payments to large shareholders cannot be reduced under a double tax agreement.

Finally, in response to question 36092, Revenue does not hold details of the location of investors in companies, or the share price of a company. If such data was collected, it would be confidential taxpayer information.

### **Tax Collection Forecasts**

143. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount that would be generated if the 2% stamp duty on houses that are sold for in excess of €1 million was increased to 3%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36107/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that a Ready Reckoner providing estimated impacts for potential changes to a wide range of taxes and duties is available at [www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf](http://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf).

Regarding your question on stamp duty, the Ready Reckoner provides the estimated impact

of increasing the rate of Stamp Duty on the excess of considerations on residential properties over €1 million to 3% on page 19.

### **Departmental Internships**

144. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36148/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the Department of Finance does not offer unpaid internships.

The Economics Division of the Department of Finance has offered a twelve week paid internship to the successful candidate in its Economic Policy Competition each year since 2014. This is an essay-based competition that assesses undergraduate students' understanding of the Irish economy. The Department engages directly with third-level institutions to advertise the Economic Policy Competition and to target it to final year and penultimate year students. Candidates are required to submit a 150-word summary with a supporting 2,000-word submission on one of two policy questions that are provided by the Department. The Department accepts a maximum of three submissions from each participating institution – individual applications are not accepted. The Department invites the students with the top submissions for interview, from which the winner of the competition is chosen.

Details of the 2019 Competition are available on the Department's website at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/53da3e-test/> It is expected that the 2020 Competition will be launched in the coming weeks.

### **Employment Investment Incentive Scheme**

145. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to further issues and delays with issuing of RICT certificates under the EIIS scheme to investors in time for the annual tax return and that the same issues were encountered in previous years; the steps being taken to rectify same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36198/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Employment Investment Incentive Scheme ('EII') is a scheme that is covered by Article 21 of Commission Regulation No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014, declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (referred to as the "General Block Exemption Regulation" or "GBER"). Revenue has informed me that the increased level of complexity arising from the requirement to determine compatibility with GBER means that each application takes longer to process.

For applications that are currently awaiting certification, Revenue has informed me that, of those on hand, over 70% are currently actively under review by a member of the EII Division. Decisions are reached on all complete applications without undue delay and certificates issued. However, the complexities of the scheme's requirements, have meant that a large volume of applications are incomplete when first received, adding to delays.

Finance Act 2018 introduced changes to the administration of the scheme from 1 January

2019, including the move from certification of the relief by Revenue to self-assessment. Revenue expect that this change may alleviate some of the delays that may have existed.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

146. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff for cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36228/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In relation to my Department, I wish to advise that ICT services are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. On behalf of my Department the OGCIO has specialist resources, with the appropriate skills and expertise, tasked with managing cyber security. OGCIO implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of people, processes, and technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions, including monitoring and analysing logs.

### **Departmental Operations**

147. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36244/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department has developed a business continuity management system policy framework on business resilience and continuity management, and also has an incident management plan, which sets out the Department's predetermined actions to providing a response system to an incident or emergency occurring that could potentially affect its operations.

Work is currently being undertaken on business continuity management plans across a number of areas of the Department and representative staff recently undertook business continuity management training in August 2019.

ICT systems within the Department are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, who have indicated that its ICT solutions have inbuilt resilience as a matter of course, and disaster recovery plans and sites.

*Question No. 148 answered with Question No. 115.*

### **Tax Code**

149. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there is flexibility for certain not-for-profit providers such as music schools and community organisations in the application of the Revenue Commissioners' guidance relating to the taxation of part-time lecturers, teachers and trainers (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36314/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Chapter 4 of Part 42 of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 imposes a legal obligation on all employers to make deductions at source under the PAYE system from the payment of emoluments to employees and to report these amounts to Revenue as they are being paid.

I am advised by Revenue that part-time lecturers/teachers/trainers are generally engaged under a contract of service (employee) as opposed to a contract for service (self-employed). Accordingly, payments made to such individuals should be made net of statutory deductions for Income Tax, USC and PRSI under the PAYE system.

Revenue has also confirmed to me that this position need not apply for periods up to 31 August 2019 in situations where a guest lecturer provides a ‘once off’ lecture (maximum of once or twice per year to the same body). Such lecture fees must of course be returned by the persons concerned under self-assessment rules.

This exception does not apply from 1 September 2019 and all payments made to guest lecturers from that date forward should be paid net of statutory deductions for Income Tax, USC and PRSI under the PAYE system. This is in accordance with the new administrative arrangements introduced for PAYE as part of the PAYE Modernisation project on 1 January 2019.

Revenue’s Tax and Duty Manual, which is available at TDM 05-01-11 contains further clarifications on this issue.

### **Pension Provisions**

150. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding taxation of German pensions; his views on whether persons should not have to pay twice for the same pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36361/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that a person’s Irish tax position depends on the source of the taxable income involved and the tax residence and domicile position of the individual. For example, where a person is tax resident and domiciled in Ireland, s/he will be liable to Irish income tax on his or her worldwide income. This is subject to any relief afforded by a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA). However, where a person is tax resident but not domiciled in Ireland, s/he will be liable to Irish income tax on Irish source income and foreign income to the extent it is remitted (brought into) the State. This is also subject to any relief afforded by a DTA.

Regarding the case in question, Revenue has confirmed that the tax returns filed by the taxpayer (and her deceased husband) for the years in question were completed on the basis of them both being Irish tax resident, but excluded information relating to their domicile status. When completing the tax returns for 2013 to 2018 (self-assessment), the taxpayer/s declared and paid Irish tax on their German Social Welfare Pension/s. The surviving spouse subsequently received a tax bill from the German tax authorities in respect of the same income. As Irish taxes were already paid on this income, the bill from the German authorities created a double taxation situation.

Article 17 of the Ireland/Germany DTA deals with pensions payable under social insurance legislation. Specifically, Paragraph 2 of Article 17 provides sole taxing rights to Germany as the payments are made under German social insurance legislation. As such, the amounts involved in the case in question should not have been included on the self-assessment Irish tax returns filed for the relevant years.

The taxpayer is therefore entitled to seek amendment of the relevant returns. However, any such refund claim/s must be made in accordance with section 865(4) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This requires that claims must be made no later than the end of the fourth year following the end of the relevant tax year and Revenue has no discretion to operate outside of the legislation as set down.

Article 25 of the Ireland/Germany DTA provides that where a person has been taxed in a manner that is not in accordance with the provisions of the agreement, s/he may present a case to the Competent Authority in the State of residence with a view to obtaining agreement between the relevant States to resolve the position. Such a process is referred to as a Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP)

Revenue has confirmed to me that the Irish Competent Authority will engage directly with the person's representative with a view to determining if a MAP can be used to resolve the issue.

### VAT Rate Application

151. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if the VAT free limit will be increased (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36406/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** VAT is governed by the EU VAT Directive, with which Irish VAT law must comply. The VAT Directive provides that VAT registration thresholds may only be raised by Member States to maintain their value in real terms, that is, they may only be increased in line with inflation. Our VAT thresholds were increased to their current values, €37,500 for services and €75,000 for goods, on 1 May 2008 and as the Central Statistics Office figures show the consumer price index is below the level it reached in 2008, therefore it is not possible to increase these thresholds.

Ireland's VAT registration thresholds for small enterprises and the self-employed are among the highest in the EU.

*Question No. 152 answered with Question No. 56.*

### Primary Medical Certificates Eligibility

153. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to improve the criteria for the primary medical certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36538/19]

**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.

*Question No. 154 answered with Question No. 103.*

## **Fiscal Policy**

**155. Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if funds from the contingency reserve fund established under the National Surplus (Reserve Fund for Exceptional Contingencies) Act 2019 can be withdrawn and used to fund supports for businesses exposed to markets affecting the UK's withdrawal from the European Union within the terms of the legislation and the fiscal rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36622/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The creation of the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund (known as the Rainy Day Fund) forms part of the Government's policy to stabilise the public finances and increase the State's resilience to external economic shocks.

The Fund is intended as a reserve which may be drawn upon under certain circumstances, outlined under section 9(2) of the Act, contingent on Government and Oireachtas approval. One criteria for drawdown is that it can be used to remedy or mitigate the existence of "exceptional circumstances" in the State. Under the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012, such circumstances are defined as either a period of severe economic downturn or a period during which an unusual event outside the control of the State has a major impact on the financial position of the general government.

The Fund is intended, therefore, to be used as a defined-purpose instrument to address severe events, as opposed to the normal fluctuations within the economic cycle. This approach would align it with the current EU fiscal rules framework, whereby it could be accommodated as an "unusual event" under the existing Stability and Growth Pact provisions. Withdrawals from the Fund will be transferred directly to the Exchequer so as to support the State's voted

expenditure to address the specific downturn.

The Government has taken extensive actions to prepare for the fallout of Brexit including dedicated measures, and economic and fiscal policies to get Ireland Brexit ready in Budgets 2017, 2018 and 2019. These policies include amongst others moving to fiscal balance, the rolling out of support schemes, and the provision of advice to businesses. I would, therefore, envisage the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund only being used for an extreme outcome, i.e. a “tail-risk” Brexit and in advance of seeking approval to withdraw from the Fund, the magnitude of the impact must be properly considered.

The Act deliberately does not describe specific events, such as Brexit or others, so as to give flexibility to Governments to withdraw from the Fund for all severe downturns, many of which are not possible to specify in advance.

### **Tax Reliefs Data**

156. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the projected cost in 2019 of the special assignee relief programme; the number of employers and employees availing of the scheme; the average benefit accruing to participants in the scheme at the last count; and the minimum salary level that applies to the scheme. [36679/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) was introduced in Budget 2012 as part of a strategy to promote Foreign Direct Investment into Ireland, and to allow us to compete internationally to attract highly skilled and mobile executives who act as key decision makers within organisations.

The measure provides income tax relief on a portion of income earned by employees, who are assigned by their employer to work in Ireland, and who previously worked abroad for that employer for a minimum of six months. There is no exemption or relief from USC, and PRSI is payable where the individual is not liable to social insurance contributions in the home country. The minimum salary level applicable to the Scheme is €75,000 per annum, excluding all bonuses, commissions or other similar payments, benefits, or share based remuneration.

Due to variable elements involved, it is not possible for my Department or Revenue to provide a projected cost for the relief for 2019 which could be relied upon for accuracy. I am advised by Revenue that 2016 is the latest year for which data are currently available on SARP. The cost of the scheme in that year was €18.1 million in respect of 793 individuals. On that basis, it can be assumed that the average benefit accruing to participants in the scheme for the year 2016 was €22,824.72.

Revenue have advised me that, according to their records, there were 249 unique employer register numbers recorded by the companies which submitted a SARP employer return in 2016. However, it must be noted that companies can operate different branches under several employer register numbers and that associated companies will also be counted separately.

Finally, as the Deputy may be aware, following on from concerns I had regarding the increasing cost of the incentive, I amended the SARP legislation in Finance Bill 2018 to reinstate an upper salary threshold at the level of €1 million. This change came into effect for new entrants to the programme from 1 January 2019 and for existing beneficiaries of the programme from 1 January 2020.

In accordance with the Department of Finance Tax Expenditure Guidelines, SARP is currently the subject of an independent review, carried out by Indecon Economic Consultants, this

year. The review exercise affords an opportunity to look at all elements of the relief and it also includes consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

### **Excise Duties Yield**

157. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue in 2020 from increasing excise duty on diesel to the same level as that of petrol. [36680/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the estimated yield from increasing Excise on diesel to the same level as that of petrol is shown on page 21 of the Revenue Ready Reckoner available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf>.

### **Pensions Data**

158. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated revenue from reducing the maximum allowable pension fund to €1.7 million. [36681/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Standard Fund Threshold is the maximum allowable pension fund allowed at retirement for tax purposes and was introduced in Finance Act 2006 to prevent over-funding of pensions through tax-relieved arrangements.

Information on the numbers and values of individual pension funds or on individual accrued benefits in pension schemes is not generally required to be supplied to Revenue. Therefore, there is no readily available underlying data or methodology on which to base reliable estimates of any possible yield that might be realised from the reduction in the Standard Fund Threshold outlined.

### **VAT Yield**

159. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated extent of below cost selling of alcohol here; the impact this has on VAT revenues; and the way in which this is tracked by his Department or others on behalf of the State. [36682/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** VAT returns are submitted to the Revenue Commissioners. As regards calculating the VAT impact of below cost sales of alcohol, separate figures are not available for input VAT on goods that were subsequently sold at a discount because traders' VAT returns show only the total input VAT and the total output VAT for the period covered by the return.

### **National Training Fund**

160. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the projected revenue from the 0.1% increase in the national training fund levy in 2020; and the way in which this is factored in arriving at the net fiscal space position as set out in the Summer Economic Statement. [36683/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As indicated in the Budget 2019 Tax Policy Changes the increase from 0.9 per cent to 1.0 per cent in the National Training Fund levy

is expected to yield an additional €74m in 2020. The increase in the levy, therefore increases fiscal space as a discretionary revenue raising measure.

Fiscal space represents the additional capacity arising from the permitted expenditure growth rate that is available for expenditure increases and/or tax reductions. Fiscal space may be increased through the introduction of discretionary revenue measures that increase revenue and conversely it is reduced by discretionary revenue measures that lower revenue.

The above increase is included in the net discretionary revenue measures shown in the Stability Programme Update (SPU) 2019 (tables A6 and A8).

There have been no changes to discretionary revenue measures as presented in the SPU, therefore, this is included in the calculations underlying the 2019 Summer Economic Statement fiscal space table.

### Stamp Duty

161. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the amount raised in each of the past three years through the stamp duty on rental property in cases in which the full rent is above €2,500; and his plans to abolish the duty. [36686/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the amount raised in each of the last three years through Stamp Duty on leases, where the consideration is greater than €2,500, is provided in the following table.

Year	Stamp Duty paid (million)
2018	€20.08
2017	€7.27
2016	€8.71

I assume that the Deputy is referring to the monthly residential rental threshold of €2,500 for all leases executed before 25 December 2017 and €3,333 for leases executed on or after that date.

As set out in Schedule 1 of the Stamp Duty Consolidation Act 1999, under “LEASE”, Stamp Duty is not payable on a lease for a residential house or apartment if:

- the rent is €40,000 or less per year (€30,000 if the lease was executed before 25 December 2017), and
- the period of the lease is 35 years or less, or is for an indefinite period.

I am advised by Revenue that the amount raised in each of the last three years through Stamp Duty on residential leases is provided in the following table.

Year	Stamp Duty paid (million)
2018	€0.14
2017	€0.2
2016	€0.15

I have no plans at this time to amend the legislation on this Stamp Duty.

*Question No. 162 answered with Question No. 115.*

## **Research and Development Supports**

163. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of firms by size (details supplied) that have applied for the knowledge development box scheme for SMEs since being established in tabular form. [36845/19]

164. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of firms by size (details supplied) that have applied for the research and development tax credit in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [36846/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 163 and 164 together.

The most recent data on the annual cost and the number of claimants of the Knowledge Development Box (KDB) for the years 2016 and 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](http://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. Therefore, more claims in respect of the year ended 31 December 2017 may be made by September 2019.

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 information in respect of the size of the firms availing of the relief.

Information in respect of the tax cost and number of claimants of the Research and Development (R&D) tax credit by size of firm in respect of the years 2012 to 2017, the most recent year for which comprehensive data are available, is published on the Revenue website at:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/r-and-d-tax-credits.aspx>.

Information in respect of 2018 will be published in 2020 when the returns have been filed and analysed.

## **Insurance Costs**

165. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to implement further recommendations of the cost of insurance working group in view of the escalating costs of insurance for many sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36878/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At the outset, as the Deputy is aware 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. A further constraint is the fact that for constitutional reasons, I cannot direct the courts as to the award levels that should be applied.

While there is unfortunately no quick fix solution to this complex matter, I wish to re-emphasise however that this issue remains a priority for the Government and we have been taking a range of actions. The Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG), which was established in July 2016, and which produced two reports, is continuing to work to implement the recommendations of the Cost of Motor Insurance Report and the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance Report. Its most recent Progress Update, the Ninth, was published in July 2019 and shows that the vast majority of recommendations and actions due by Q2 2019 have been completed. To that end, the key achievements to date from the two reports, including the following:

- The establishment of the Personal Injuries Commission and the publication of its two reports, which included a benchmarking of award levels between Ireland and other jurisdictions for the first time. This showed that award levels for soft tissue injuries in Ireland were 4.4 times higher than in England and Wales;

- The enactment of the Judicial Council Act 2019, in July which provides for the establishment of a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. It is now a matter for the Judiciary to put in place the Judicial Council and to operationalise the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee, which will introduce new guidelines to replace the Book of Quantum. 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;

- The commencement and prioritisation by the Law Reform Commission (LRC) of its work to undertake a detailed analysis of the possibility of developing constitutionally sound legislation to delimit or cap the amounts of damages which a court may award in respect of some or all categories of personal injuries, as part of its Fifth Programme of Law Reform;

- The establishment of the National Claims Information Database in the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) to increase transparency around the future cost of private motor insurance. The CBI is due to make its first report by the end of 2019, and will also make recommendations to me regarding potentially expanding its scope to include employer and public liability insurance; Reforms to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board through the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Act 2019 to strengthen the powers of PIAB around compliance with its procedures;

- Commencement of the amendments to Sections 8 and 14 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004 to align the timeframes by which claims should be notified to businesses with GDPR time limits on the keeping of CCTV footage 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, resulting from the failure of Setanta Insurance; 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 July 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, particularly those relevant to businesses.

I would like to assure the Deputy that the Cost of Insurance Working Group will continue to focus on implementing the remaining 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 also believe that it is important to emphasise that the single most essential challenge which must be overcome if there is to be a sustainable reduction in insurance costs particularly for small businesses is to bring the levels of personal injury damages awarded in this country more in line with those awarded in other jurisdictions, and the establishment of the Judicial Council in the coming months is very important in this regard.

In addition and in light of all of the reforms that have taken place or are soon to take place, my colleague, Minister of State D'Arcy, has been engaging with insurers in order to seek a commitment that they will reduce premiums and widen their risk appetite to reflect savings made or potential savings in the coming years, in particular if there is a recalibration of award levels downwards. I am also encouraged by the comments made by a number of insurers at the Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach Oireachtas Committee in July about the passing on of savings arising from a recalibration of award levels downwards.

In conclusion, I am hopeful that the cumulative effects of the completion of the two Reports' recommendations including a reduction in award levels will lead to reductions in pricing in particular for small businesses and a more competitive and sustainable insurance market.

### **Financial Services Regulation**

166. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he continues to monitor the activities of the financial organisations or their agents in relation to penalised borrowers (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36913/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Both the Government and the Central Bank of Ireland (Central Bank) are both strongly of the view that the current regulatory framework provides sufficient protections to consumers.

The Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears 2013 (CCMA) provides a strong consumer protection framework, aimed specifically at the process to be followed by relevant firms, to ensure borrowers in arrears or pre-arrears in respect of a mortgage loan secured on a primary residence are treated in a timely, transparent and fair manner. Banks, retail credit firms and credit servicing firms are all required to comply with the CCMA as a matter of law.

The CCMA sets out the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process, (MARP), a four-step process that regulated entities must follow:

- Step 1: Communicate with borrower;
- Step 2: Gather financial information;
- Step 3: Assess the borrower's circumstances; and
- Step 4: Propose a resolution

The regulated entity must base its assessment of the borrower's case on the full circumstances of the borrower including personal circumstances, overall indebtedness, information provided in the Standard Financial Statement, current repayment capacity and past repayment history. In order to determine which options for alternative repayment arrangements (ARAs) are viable for each particular case, the regulated entity must explore all of the options for ARAs

offered by that regulated entity.

Where an ARA is offered to the borrower, the regulated entity must inform the borrower of the reasons why the ARA offered is considered to be appropriate and sustainable for the borrower's individual circumstances. Where the borrower's circumstances have changed, in line with Provision 40 of the CCMA, any change to the ARA must be appropriate and sustainable for the borrower's circumstances.

It should be noted that neither I, nor the Central Bank can interfere with the strategy, commercial decisions or the legitimate contractual rights of regulated entities where such firms are complying with their regulatory and contractual obligations. Regulated entities are entitled to rely on their contractual rights and make their own commercial decisions while always adhering to consumer protection legislation.

### Stamp Duty

167. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the first and full year yield from a 2% points increase in stamp duty on non-residential property transfers on all amounts in excess of €500,000. [36929/19]

168. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the first and full year yield from an increase to 5% for stamp duty on residential property transfers on all amounts in excess of €1 million. [36930/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 and 168 together.

I am advised by Revenue that a Ready Reckoner providing estimated impacts for potential changes to a wide range of taxes and duties is available on the Revenue website at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/ready-reckoner.pdf>.

On page 19 of the Ready Reckoner, a wide range of detailed information is shown on changing the Stamp Duty rate applicable to properties transferred in excess of various thresholds.

While the Ready Reckoner does not show the particular costings requested by the Deputy, they can be estimated on a straight-line basis from those displayed. It should be noted that these Ready Reckoner estimates do not reflect the impact of any behavioural change.

A first year cost is not available as it would be dependent on the date of introduction of any change.

### Tax Data

169. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the first and full year yield from each percentage point increase in the minimum effective tax rate of persons earning more than €400,000 per annum. [36931/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that a 1% increase in the average effective rate of income tax on taxpayer units with gross incomes in excess of €400,000 would raise an estimated €37m and €49m on a first and full year basis respectively.

This estimate is based on actual data for 2017, the latest year for which data are currently

available. Taxpayers who are married or in a civil partnership are counted as one taxpayer unit and their incomes are combined.

### **Tax Data**

170. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the first and full year cost of refunding unused income tax credits to all low paid workers. [36932/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The matter of refundable tax credits was looked at in some detail in 2002 by the Working Group established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. The Group was chaired by the Department of Finance and included representatives from ICTU, IBEC, the various farming organisations, the Community and Voluntary Pillar, relevant Government Departments and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

The Working Group found that there were significant disadvantages with such a system. These included the potential negative impacts on the incentive to work, labour supply, labour force participation and overall productivity and output. The Commission on Taxation in its 2009 report also did not recommend the introduction of refundable tax credits.

Furthermore, the cost of providing refundable tax credits would be extremely high. Revenue have in the past estimated the cost of providing a limited refundable tax credit, that is, refundable only to those currently on the tax record, at approximately €2 billion per annum.

I am aware that certain Groups have proposed different schemes for refundable tax credits which are based on a number of arbitrary restrictions such as age, hours worked, income and PRSI contributions in the previous year. These Groups have claimed much lower costs for these schemes. However, my Department and the Revenue would dispute these lower costings.

What is not in doubt, however, is that refundable tax credits can have a negative impact on the incentive to work. In these times when we need to encourage people to join the workforce and remain in the workforce very significant difficulties exist with the use of refundable tax credits.

The income tax and USC changes I introduced in the last number of Budgets will benefit all those who currently pay income tax and/or USC. The minimum wage has also been increased over recent Budgets and now stands at €9.80 per hour, in an effort to support those on lower incomes. Continued progress in this area will be made in the context of resources available in Budget 2020 balanced against all of the competing demands.

### **Tax Data**

171. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the first and full year yield from standard-rating all discretionary tax reliefs and expenditures that cost in excess of €10 million per annum in revenue foregone; and the breakdown for each tax relief and expenditure. [36933/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the full year estimated yields from standard-rating discretionary tax reliefs and expenditures, which currently apply at the marginal rate, and cost in excess of €10 million per annum in revenue foregone, are as follows.

Reliefs and Expenditures	Full Year Yield (€m)
Approved Profit-Sharing Schemes	24
Dispositions (including Maintenance Payments)	6
Donations to Charities and Approved Bodies	12
Employment and Investment Incentive	10
Exempt Income Rent A Room	0.7
Exemption of Certain Earnings of Writers, Composers and Artists	5
Exemption of Interest on Savings Certificates, National Instalment Saving & Index Linked Saving Bonds	27
Health Expenses (Nursing Homes)	7
Carry forward of excess relief under the High-Income Earners Restriction	49
Pension Contributions	553
Rental Deduction for Leasing of Farm Land	5

These yields are based on actual 2017 data, except for the High-Income Earners Restriction Carry Forward estimate, which is based on 2016 data. It is not possible to provide a first year costing due to the nature of the data utilised and how it is maintained on Revenue's systems.

### Tax Credits

172. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the cost in income forgone of the research and development tax credit. [36934/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is assumed the Deputy is referring to the tax cost of the research and development tax credit.

I am advised by Revenue that information in respect of the research and development tax credit, including the tax cost up to 2017 (the most recent year for which comprehensive data are available), can found in the research and development tax credits area of their website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/index.aspx>. Information in respect of 2018 will be published in 2020 when the returns have been filed and analysed.

### Garda Stations

173. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of a Garda station (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34744/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW actively manages a portfolio of some 2,500 properties throughout the country, that ranges from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitors centres, Garda stations, among others. At any given time it is normal that a number of properties are vacant. In the case of the OPW portfolio, there are 98 properties currently vacant, reduced from

over 200 that were vacant in 2014.

The majority of these are former Garda stations closed under the 2012/13 closure programme. As these stations were subject to examination under the recent policing review, the OPW was specifically requested not to dispose of them. Now that this review is completed, the future of the remaining stations will be determined.

When a property is deemed suitable for disposal, the OPW will, in the first instance, offer it for use to other public bodies (e.g. local authorities, LDA, HSE etc.) prior to it being placed on the open market.

Following the conclusion of the reviews of closed Garda stations, and when it was confirmed by An Garda Síochána that the property remained surplus to its requirements, the Office of Public Works recommenced the process of identifying alternative State use for the property, in line with the OPW's disposal policy on surplus vacant property.

The OPW policy with regard to non-operational (vacant) State property, including the former Garda station at Brosna is to:

1. Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by either Government Departments or the wider public sector.

2. If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

3. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property, the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to a detailed written submission, which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer).

The Brosna Heritage Society contacted the OPW by phone in 2014 and again in 2017 indicating their interest in the property. The OPW wrote to the Society explaining the criteria required in order for the Commissioners of Public Works to licence the former Garda Station to a community group and requesting a business case. No business case has been received to-date.

If there is no alternative State interest in the former Garda station at Brosna, the OPW will proceed to dispose of the property in line with the above policy.

## **Garda Stations**

174. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will address a matter regarding a former Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34775/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW actively manages a portfolio of some 2,500 properties throughout the country, that ranges from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitors centres, Garda stations, among others. At any given time it is normal that a number of properties are vacant. In the case of the OPW portfolio, there are 98 properties currently vacant, reduced from over 200 that were vacant in 2014.

The majority of these are former Garda stations closed under the 2012/13 closure programme. As these stations were subject to examination under the recent policing review, the

OPW was specifically requested not to dispose of them. Now that this review is completed, the future of the remaining stations will be determined.

When a property is deemed suitable for disposal, the OPW will, in the first instance, offer it for use to other public bodies (e.g. local authorities, LDA, HSE etc.) prior to it being placed on the open market.

The OPW policy with regard to non-operational (vacant) State property, including the former Garda station at Moyvane is to:

1. Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by either Government Departments or the wider public sector.

2. If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

3. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property, the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to a detailed written submission, which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer).

The OPW is in discussion with Kerry County Council who have expressed an interest in the property.

If Kerry County Council decide not to proceed with the acquisition of the property and there is no other State requirement for the property, the Commissioners of Public Works will consider the business plan submitted by the Community Group.

### **Equality Proofing of Budgets**

175. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department will prepare an annual equality budget statement to be read by him alongside the Budget Statement as recommended by the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight. [34983/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The ongoing work regarding Equality Budgeting in Ireland follows the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to ‘develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights’. The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 also contains a related commitment.

The elements that make gender and equality budgeting work such as impact analysis and evaluation are important in any good budgetary process. Gender and equality budgeting should not to be seen as something separate from the budget process, the intention is to embed a gender and equality perspective throughout the budgetary process, with a whole of year budgetary focus.

A pilot programme of equality budgeting was introduced for the 2018 budgetary cycle, anchored in the existing performance budgeting framework. International experience has shown the importance of setting specific and measurable targets. This approach works well in terms of transparency around objectives and measuring progress. For the first cycle of equality budgeting, a number of diverse policy areas were selected with associated objectives and indicators

published in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2018. Progress towards achieving those targets was reported on in the Public Service Performance Report 2017.

Responsibility for proofing expenditure programmes, the selection of indicators, and making progress towards achieving the high level goals articulated is a matter for the individual spending Departments in the first instance. The role of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is to facilitate the initiative and provide support for Departments to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment.

Following the achievements of the pilot programme, Equality Budgeting was expanded in 2019 to further develop the gender budgeting elements and to broaden its scope to other dimensions of equality including poverty, socioeconomic inequality and disability. In addition to the six equality objectives identified in the pilot (Phase 1), a further eight objectives were added for 2019 (Phase 2). This means nine Government Departments are now actively engaged with Equality Budgeting. An update in the Public Service Performance Report 2018 outlined progress in the pilot.

To further guide the roll-out of equality budgeting, an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group was established, holding its first meeting in September 2018. The group has to date met on five occasions. This group is comprised of a broad range of relevant stakeholders and policy experts to provide advice on the most effective way to advance equality budgeting policy and progress the initiative.

My Department, in liaison with the Department of Justice and Equality have commissioned the OECD to undertake a Policy Scan of Equality Budgeting in Ireland. This will take stock of actions taken to mainstream equality considerations as part of the budget process. It will also provide options and recommendations on future directions for Equality Budgeting in Ireland, in light of international experience. This report is expected to be finalised in September 2019.

Once the final report has been received from the OECD, my Department will decide how best to progress Equality Budgeting. Along with the findings of the OECD, this process will enjoy input from the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group.

### **Public Sector Staff Retirements**

176. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has issued the report as per section 3A(6) of the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 as inserted by section 3 of the Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018 on the public servants forced to retire between 6 December 2017 and the commencement of the Act due to reaching 65 years of age; if appropriate remedies to assist this cohort have been found; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35051/19]

228. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which accommodation has been or can be reached in respect of returning public servants who have expressed a wish to remain in employment for some time after their anticipated retirement age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36725/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 228 together.

As the Deputies are aware, on 5 December 2017, the Government made the decision to increase the compulsory retirement age to 70, for public servants recruited prior to 1 April 2004. Primary legislation was necessary in order to bring that change into effect. It was made clear at

the time that until such legislation was enacted, the compulsory retirement age of 65, which applied to the vast majority of this cohort, remained in effect and pre-2004 public servants reaching that age would be required to retire.

Interim arrangements were provided for the cohort of public servants who reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 between the date of the Government Decision and the enactment of the legislation because, while they would be aware of the Government's decision, they would be unable to avail of it. The interim arrangements permitted these individuals to be rehired post-retirement for a period of 1 year until they reached the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory). Without those specific arrangements, they would have been required to cease working on reaching the age of 65.

The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018 was enacted on 26 December 2018. Under the Act, any relevant public servant who had not already reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 before that date has a new compulsory retirement age of 70.

Enactment of the legislation had no effect on those public servants who retired at 65 prior to the 26 December 2018 and who availed of a one year contract under the interim arrangements. Their contract terms continue to apply and they cease working when they reach the age of 66, as previously provided for.

Section 3 of the 2018 Act also provides that I, as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, within three months of the passing of the Act, would prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the public servants who were forced to retire between 6 December 2017 and the commencement of the Act, due to reaching the age of 65 years, and on potential remedies to assist this cohort of worker. This Report was laid before the Oireachtas on 26 March 2019 and is publicly available on the [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) website and in the Oireachtas Library online catalogue.

Having considered all of the issues outlined in the Report, I am satisfied that the interim arrangements were an appropriate temporary policy response at the time of the Government Decision, pending enactment of the legislation. The terms of those arrangements were clear, unambiguous and made known to those who availed of them. Accordingly, for the reasons set out in the report, I decided not to make any changes to those terms.

Individual public servants who wish to clarify issues regarding their retirement age are advised to contact their employer's HR office who are best placed to assist them.

### **Public Sector Pensions Legislation**

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he plans to remove the public service pension reduction from public service pensioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35631/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Financial Emergency Measures in Public Interests (FEMPI) Act 2015 and the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 (the 2017 Act) substantially lessened the impact of the public service pension reduction (PSPR) by way of changes which have occurred or are due to occur on 1 January in each of the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. These changes mean that, as of 1 January 2018, most public service pensions have not been subject to the PSPR.

The PSPR rates applying in 2019 and from 2020 are set out as follows. When the PSPR amelioration provisions in the 2017 Act are fully in place from 1 January 2020, only a small number of public service pensions will remain affected by the PSPR. Section 27 of the 2017

Act states that the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform will, no later than 31 December 2020, issue an order which will specify a date for the full removal of the PSPR from that residual group of PSPR-affected pensions. The date so specified in the order will effectively be the date of the complete abolition of the PSPR.

Pensions awarded pre-March 2012: The PSPR position with effect from 1 January 2019 and 2020 is as per the following table.

Annualised amount of public service pension	Reduction
Up to €39,000 (€54,000*)	Exempt
Any amount over €39,000 (€54,000*) but not over €60,000	12%
Any amount over €60,000 but not over €100,000	17%
Any amount over €100,000	28%

\* Effective 1 January 2020

Pensions awarded in the period 1 March 2012 to 1 April 2019: The PSPR position with effect from 1 January 2019 and 2020 is as per the following table.

Annualised amount of public service pension	Reduction 2019	Reduction 2020
Up to €60,000	Exempt	Exempt
Any amount over €60,000 but not over €100,000	3%	1%
Any amount over €100,000	8%	6%

Pensions awarded in respect of retirements after the FEMPI 2013 grace period, which expired on 1 April 2019, have not been subject to PSPR.

### Garda Stations

178. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the delivery of a Garda station for Bailieborough, County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36261/19]

217. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when new accommodation will be provided at a Garda station (details supplied); the timescale for the provision of new modern and adequate accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36404/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 178 and 217 together.

The Planning process for this project was completed in December 2018 and a full Design Team is now in place. Tender documentation is being prepared and it is envisaged that this will take a number of months to complete. It is not possible at this early stage of the project to be definitive about a completion date.

### Public Procurement Regulations

179. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

his plans to amend the public sector procurement system in order that organisations can procure supplies locally; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that while in theory local suppliers can tender for procurement business, in practice the system favours larger companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36553/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Government recognises the importance of the SME sector and continues to enhance the already substantial measures to support SMEs in accessing the public procurement market. Significant work has been undertaken by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to ensure that public procurement is accessible by all businesses, including SMEs. My colleague, Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan, in accordance with the Programme for Government, chairs quarterly meetings of the SME Advisory Group so that the voice of industry is heard at first hand by Government.

The OGP have developed a suite of measures aimed at assisting SMEs to access public procurement opportunities (circular 10/14). These include:

- employing proportionate turnover requirements with turnover limited to twice the contract value,
- the division of public contracts into lots,
- the provision for “consortia bidding” to assist SMEs to participate in procurement procedures where they would not have the relevant capability or scale, and
- requiring public bodies to advertise contracts for goods and services valued above €25,000 (ex. VAT) on the national eTenders portal

Other measures include undertaking market analysis prior to tendering to understand the competitive landscape and encouraging businesses to register on eTenders, the Government's national tendering platform. Specific supports are also provided by InterTrade Ireland (ITI) and Enterprise Ireland (EI) to assist SMEs in preparing for public tenders.

There is a commitment in the Programme for Government to “Refine the new procurement structures in place, such as the OGP, as they bed down and make adjustments according to best international practice and in conjunction with Irish businesses”. This review of the Procurement Reform Programme is currently underway and the views of SMEs have been sought from industry representatives which sit on the SME Advisory Group including IBEC, ISME, Small Firms Association (SFA), Construction Federation of Ireland (CIF) and Chambers Ireland. Their contributions, as well as those received from Government Departments (including bodies under their aegis) are now being considered. The views of the Health, Education, Local Government and Defence Sectors and opposition spokespeople on public procurement have also been sought in this process. The feedback from this engagement will inform the future direction and shape of public procurement.

## **Public Sector Pay**

180. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of payments made to former Ministers who lost their seats in the 2011 general election or who did not contest the 2011 general election in tabular form. [35297/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to former Ministers is contained in the 2011 Fi-

nance Accounts as published at the following link; <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48b743-finance-accounts-2011-statement-14-annuities-pensions-etc-for-forme/>

It should be noted that severance payments for Ministers were abolished under the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) Amendment Act 2014 and no members of the current Government will receive such payments.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

181. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Ministers of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34851/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that Ministerial appointments in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil”, which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by my Department.

The details requested by the Deputy on Special Advisers in my Department are shown in the following table.

Special Adviser	Salary
Deborah Sweeney	€101,114 The cost of this post is shared equally with the Department of Finance.
Niamh Callaghan	€90,920

Special Advisers are appointed under Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. A Special Adviser to a Minister or to a Minister of State, as in the case may be, shall

(a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –

(i) providing advice,

(ii) monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and

(iii) performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

The appointments of Advisers are kept under review given the breath of my responsibilities across two Departments.

### Departmental Staff Data

182. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department or the Office of Public Works can search for the record of employment in the 1950s of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[34925/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works has undertaken a comprehensive search of its employment records and has no record of employment of the person, in County Kerry, for whom details were supplied.

### Equality Proofing of Budgets

183. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the review of the gender budgeting pilot in his Department has been conducted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34960/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The ongoing work regarding Equality Budgeting in Ireland follows the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to ‘develop the process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights’. The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 also contains a related commitment.

The elements that make gender and equality budgeting work such as impact analysis and evaluation are important in any good budgetary process. Gender and equality budgeting should not to be seen as something separate from the budget process, the intention is to embed a gender and equality perspective throughout the budgetary process, with a whole of year budgetary focus.

A pilot programme of equality budgeting was introduced for the 2018 budgetary cycle, anchored in the existing performance budgeting framework. International experience has shown the importance of setting specific and measurable targets. This approach works well in terms of transparency around objectives and measuring progress. For the first cycle of equality budgeting, a number of diverse policy areas were selected with associated objectives and indicators published in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2018. Progress towards achieving those targets was reported on in the Public Service Performance Report 2017.

Responsibility for proofing expenditure programmes, the selection of indicators, and making progress towards achieving the high level goals articulated is a matter for the individual spending Departments in the first instance. The role of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is to facilitate the initiative and provide support for Departments to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment.

Following the achievements of the pilot programme, Equality Budgeting was expanded in 2019 to further develop the gender budgeting elements and to broaden its scope to other dimensions of equality including poverty, socioeconomic inequality and disability. In addition to the six equality objectives identified in the pilot (Phase 1), a further eight objectives were added for 2019 (Phase 2). This means nine Government Departments are now actively engaged with Equality Budgeting. An update in the Public Service Performance Report 2018 outlined progress in the pilot.

To further guide the roll-out of equality budgeting, an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group was established, holding its first meeting in September 2018. The group has to date met on five occasions. This group is comprised of a broad range of relevant stakeholders and policy experts to provide advice on the most effective way to advance equality budgeting policy and progress the initiative.

My Department, in liaison with the Department of Justice and Equality, commissioned the OECD to undertake a Policy Scan of Equality Budgeting in Ireland. This Scan has been conducted during the past three months, with the final report expected from the OECD during September 2019. The report will examine actions taken to mainstream equality considerations as part of the budget process. It will also provide options and recommendations on future directions for Equality Budgeting in Ireland, in light of international experience. In addition to guidance from the Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group, this report will inform the future development of Equality Budgeting in Ireland.

### **Office of Public Works Properties**

184. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Office of Public Works owned and-or managed and-or leased properties that have and are not being used and-or are vacant and-or are not yet assigned to a body by status, location and duration of vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35069/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW actively manages a portfolio of some 2,500 properties throughout the country, that ranges from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitors centres to Garda stations, among others. At any given time it is normal that a number of properties are vacant. In the case of the OPW portfolio, there are 98 properties currently vacant, reduced from over 200 that were vacant in 2014.

The majority of these are former Garda stations closed under the 2012/13 closure programme. As these stations were subject to examination under the recent policing review, the OPW was specifically requested not to dispose of them. Now that this review is completed, the future of the remaining stations will be determined.

When a property is deemed suitable for disposal, the OPW will, in the first instance, offer it for use to other public bodies (e.g. local authorities, LDA, HSE etc.) prior to it being placed on the open market.

#### **Closed Garda Stations**

An interim report of the Policing Authority identified six stations for re-opening on a pilot basis. These were -

- Ballinaspittle, Co. Cork
- Bawnboy, Co. Cavan
- Donard, Co. Wicklow
- Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow
- Rush, Co. Dublin
- Stepside, Co. Dublin

This second review, carried out by the Garda Inspectorate, was published in December 2018. Following the publication of the review, the OPW and An Garda Síochána engaged in discussions to determine the future use of the former Garda stations. Following these discussions, An Garda Síochána advised the OPW in May 2019 that 47 of the former Garda stations are surplus to requirements. The OPW is now processing these properties in accordance with

its disposal policy.

The OPW's policy on disposal of surplus State property is as follows:

- Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by both Government departments and the wider public sector.

- If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

- If no State requirement is identified, or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property, the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to detailed written submission, which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer)

### **Sites**

Sites in State ownership (OPW) range in size from a plot of ground measuring 300 square metres to one site of 31 acres. These sites were acquired over the years for a variety of uses including: customs posts, met stations, sites for the Courts Service or An Garda Síochána. They also include sites acquired for the purposes of the Government's decentralisation programme for Government Departments/Offices.

The majority of these sites have been identified as being suitable for transfer to other State bodies or are being retained for future State development. The future use or disposal of the remainder is under consideration.

As a matter of policy, no property or site is disposed of until there is absolute certainty that there is no alternative State use for it.

Alternative State use, in accordance with the OPW disposal policy, has been explored for each of those properties and sites identified as being prepared for disposal.

### **Leased Property**

There is one vacant leased property at Clare Street, Dublin 2. The lease expires in January 2020 and will not be renewed.

### **Properties and sites not allocated or assigned**

The following table identifies properties and sites that are not currently allocated to other State Bodies and excludes properties and sites that are being assigned for alternative State use, for transfer to other State Bodies and are under consideration for community use.

#### **List of vacant Properties and Sites not assigned**

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Cavan	Redhills	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Cavan	Stradone	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2002

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County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Cavan	Ballyconnell	Former Customs Post Site	0.3 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	
Cavan	Farnham Road, Cavan Town	Decentralisation Site	10.8 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	2006
Clare	Broadford	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Clare	Doonbeg	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Clare	Inagh	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Clare	Lahinch	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Clare	Quin	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Cork	Woodville, Blarney	Residence		Being prepared for disposal	2010
Cork	Adrigole	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Cork	Ballyfeard	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Cork	Ballygurteen	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Cork	Clonakilty	Former Agricultural Offices		Alternative State use being examined.	2014
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 4)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	1995

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 5)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	2005
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 7)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 8)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 9)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 10)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	Pre 1983
Cork	Crosshaven (cottage No. 11)	Former Coastguard Cottage		Being prepared for disposal	1996
Cork	Crosshaven	Site	1 acre	Being prepared for disposal	
Cork	Goleen	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Cork	Knocknagree	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Cork	Rathduff	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Cork City	McCurtain Street	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2013
Cork City	St Luke's, Ballyhooley Road	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	1992
Donegal	Ballyshannon	Former Customs Post Site		Alternative State use being examined.	
Donegal	The Mall, Ballyshannon	Residence		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Donegal	Bunbeg	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2008
Donegal	Buncrana	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2007

Questions - Written Answers

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Donegal	Castlefin	Residence		Alternative State use being examined.	Early 1990s
Donegal	Castlefin	Site	0.2 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	
Donegal	Malin	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Dublin	10-11 Castle Street	Building		Retained for strategic purposes.	1999
Dublin	44 O'Connell Street	Building		Options being considered.	2018
Dublin	45 O'Connell street	Building		Options being considered.	2018
Dublin	Dalkey	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Dublin	Spruce House / Leeson Lane	Site	0.5 acres	Planning for new office development secured.	
Dublin	Kill O'The Grange	Site	1 acre	Alternative State use being examined.	2007
Dublin	Halston Street. (Former Debtors' Prison).	Building		Alternative State use being examined.	2006
Dublin	Hawkins House	Building		Options being considered.	2018
Dublin	Kill O'The Grange	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Galway	Eyrecourt	Site	0.8 acres	Being prepared for disposal	
Galway	Ballymoe	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Galway	Corrandulla	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Galway	Kilconly	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Galway	Kiltullagh	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Galway	Leenane	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Galway	Maam	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2004
Galway	Letterfrack	Site	c. 0.84 acres	Being prepared for disposal	
Galway	New Inn	Site	0.82 acres	Being prepared for disposal	
Galway	Portumna	Former DSP Office		Being prepared for disposal	2013
Kerry	Killarney (Muckross Road)	Site	0.62 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	1981
Kerry	Ballylongford	Residence		Being prepared for disposal	2012
Kerry	Camp	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Kerry	Kilgarvan	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Kildare	Rathangan	Former Garda station		Advertised for sale.	2003
Laois	Portlaoise	Decentralisation Site	9 acres	Alternative State use	2007
Leitrim	Dromahair	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Leitrim	Drumkeeran	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012

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County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Leitrim	Glenfarne	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Leitrim	Keshcarrigan	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Limerick	Castletown Conyers	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Limerick	Galbally	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Limerick	Kilfinane	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Limerick	Shanagolden	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	22012
Longford	Ardagh	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Longford	Ballinalee	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Louth	Ferryhill	Former Customs Post Site	0.3 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	
Louth	Carrickarnon	Former Customs Post Site	10 Hectares	Alternative State use being examined.	
Mayo	Claremorris	Decentralisation Site	2.7 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	2007
Mayo	Knock	Decentralisation Site	2.4 Hectares	Being prepared for disposal	2007
Mayo	Ballina	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal	2005

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Mayo	Ballyglass	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Mayo	Bellacorrick	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Mayo	Blacksod	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Mayo	Hollymount	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Monaghan	Castleblayney	Former Customs Post Site	3.6 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	
Monaghan	Scotstown	Site	0.42 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	
Monaghan	Clontibret	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2012
Monaghan	Clontibret	Residence		Alternative State use being examined.	2012
Monaghan	Corrinshigagh	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Monaghan	Newbliss	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2013
Monaghan	Smithborough	Former Garda station		Alternative State use being examined.	2012
Offaly	Edenderry	Decentralisation Site	2.1 acres	Alternative State use being examined.	2007
Offaly	Birr	Former Met Station		Being prepared for disposal.	2009
Roscommon	Knockcroghery	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013

County	Location	Property Type	Size of Site	Current status	Year of last use
Roscommon	Tarmonbarry	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2012
Sligo	Ballymote	Former Garda station		Being prepared for disposal.	2009
Sligo	Cliffoney	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Tipperary	New Inn (Tipperary)	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Tipperary	Rearcross	Site	0.5 acres	Being prepared for disposal.	
Waterford	Ardmore	Building		Being prepared for disposal.	2010
Waterford	Ballyduff	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013
Wexford	Roche's Road	Former Garda station		No alternative State interest. Community interest.	2017
Wicklow	Ashford	Former Garda station		Options being considered.	2003
Wicklow	Hollywood	Former Garda station		OPW disposal policy following reviews of closed Garda stations	2013

### Pension Provisions

185. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the 1984 Civil Service superannuation scheme constitutes discriminatory treatment for disabled civil servants according to the 2002 Institute of Public Administration report (details supplied); if consideration will be given to refunding contributions to officers who retire single; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35085/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Civil Service Spouses' and Children's Contributory Pension Scheme provides pensions to the spouse and children of members who die in service, or after they have qualified for pension (or preserved pension). Membership of the Scheme was made compulsory for male established civil servants appointed on or after 1 January 1969 and for female established civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 1981. Officers serving prior to the relevant dates were given options to join.

Following discussions with staff interests, a ‘revised’ scheme was introduced in 1984 which provides for a wider range of beneficiaries than under the ‘original’ scheme. In order to meet the additional costs of the wider definition of beneficiaries, the contribution refund arrangements were made more restrictive than in the original scheme. The revised scheme was made compulsory for all civil servants joining after 1 September 1984, while serving staff, including those who were members of the original scheme, had the option to join.

Regarding the Spouses’ and Children’s Schemes contribution arrangements, I am in agreement with the Commission on Public Service Pensions, which found in its Final Report (2000) that the schemes are structured on a group insurance basis and that member contribution rates take account of the fact that payment of benefits will not arise in respect of all members; accordingly, the Commission did not recommend any change in the refund arrangements for membership contributions.

I have no proposals to amend the revised scheme rules to provide for a refund of contributions where a member is single on retirement, including in the context raised by the Deputy. I am satisfied that the Revised Civil Service Spouses’ and Children’s Contributory Pension Scheme meets the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts, 1998 – 2015 in relation to all of the grounds of discrimination set out in the legislation, including on grounds of disability.

### **Pension Provisions**

186. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent to which a pension for a person (details supplied) will be restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35114/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is not possible to provide a precise response to the Deputy’s question. Based on the information provided, the situation potentially involves a number of measures to which different rules and policies apply.

Insofar as the potentially relevant measures may apply, the position is as follows:

1. In general, a person employed in the public service in the period in question would have been subject to the pension related deduction (PRD), a deduction from the taxable remuneration of public servants with an entitlement to, or in receipt of, a public service pension. PRD refunds only apply where an individual had no public service pension benefit in the current or any previous public service employment. If the person to whom the question relates was employed in a pensionable capacity or had an entitlement to a public service pension benefit from any public service employment, he would be subject to PRD in accordance with the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009. In such circumstances, partial refunds might arise where the individual had not reached relevant thresholds. The individual’s main public service employer is responsible for making such refunds.

2. If that person had an entitlement to a separate public service pension, the pension in payment may have been considered for abatement in accordance with the Pensions Abatement Act 1965.

3. Finally any pensions in payment would have been subject to the public service pension reduction (PSPR), a reduction applicable to public service pensions in accordance with the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2010.

In the circumstances, I would suggest that, in the first instance, the individual should seek

a more detailed explanation from their employer as to the reason for the deduction applied in this case.

### **Departmental Websites**

187. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason links from search engines or other sources to documents found on the website of his Department now link to a Department home page rather than the document itself; his plans to rectify the situation; the advice taken before the change was implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35330/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Government department websites are currently undergoing a significant change in how they present online content to citizens and businesses, with a view to making them easier to use and more accessible to all members of society. Over time, department websites are being moved to one single website, gov.ie, giving people a one stop shop for accessing information on government services and organisations.

It is generally seen as best practice to pursue the consolidation of public service information into one consistent accessible website. The most digitally advanced countries within the EU (see the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2018 - Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Latvia and Malta), have already moved to a single digital gateway approach. Furthermore, a 2016 market research exercise carried out by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform found that the concept of a single, online portal for government was positively received by both the general public and representative bodies alike. This view was again confirmed by a subsequent market research exercise carried out in late 2018.

Following a government decision to migrate all ministerial department websites to gov.ie, work has proceeded on this basis. So far, 5 departments have moved their website content to gov.ie - the Departments of the Taoiseach; Public Expenditure and Reform; Rural and Community Development; Transport, Tourism and Sport; and Finance.

As a part of the migration to gov.ie, content from websites are reworked and moved into the gov.ie website (for example, efforts are made to make the services content easier to understand through the use of plain English). Post migration, the internet addresses for the new content within gov.ie is different from the addresses of the content, including documents, on the old websites.

The migration of a website to a new one with a different address necessarily breaks links to the old website content from external sources. This is suffered for all website migrations, including the department websites in question. This issue is temporary in nature as search engines re-index content on the internet, and also as external sites (that are not search indexes) update their links to point to the new location of content. Over time, the issue of finding broken links and being redirected to a department's homepage on gov.ie will become less and less frequent, and will eventually cease to occur.

To reduce the impact of the temporary ill effects caused by these website migrations, the occurrence of visitors to broken links within gov.ie is monitored via site analytics. In conjunction with each department's content manager, work is continuously being undertaken where possible to redirect such broken links to the correct and new location within gov.ie. Furthermore, prior to website migration into gov.ie, work is undertaken to pre-emptively set up such redirects

to popular content so as to reduce the likelihood of this issue arising.

Between search engine re-indexing and the ongoing efforts based on website analytics, the user experience of gov.ie in regards to the matter the Deputy refers will improve over time.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

188. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35346/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department uses Lotus Notes for a small number of legacy systems for which perpetual licences were purchased prior to 2009. Accordingly, the Lotus Notes licences held by my Department have not been renewed in the period 2009 to date. Therefore no expenditure on licences has been incurred during this time, nor are there currently any plans to do so.

### **Tionscadail Oidhreachta**

189. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe an raibh comhráití idir Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí agus Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe maidir leis an ngá atá ann cur leis na saoráidí páirceála do rothair, busanna agus trapanna ag Cill Mhuirbhígh gar don áit a bhfuil oifig de chuid Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí le freastal ar na daoine a thugann cuairt ar Dhún Aonghasa; ar pléadh an fhéidearthacht go bhféadfadh an dá eagraíocht iarratas a dhéanamh faoin gCiste um Athghiniúint agus Forbairt Tuaithe de chuid na Roinne Cultúir Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [35350/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** Tá Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí ag iarraidh na deacaireachtaí páirceála a réiteach in Ionad Cuairteoirí Dún Aonghasa le tamall anuas.

Tar éis comhairliúcháin le páirtithe leasmhara áitiúla í 2018, reachtáladh cainteanna le bainistíocht sinsearach i gComhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe maidir le oibreacha beartaithe don bhóthair phoiblí in aice láimhe a chuirfeadh feabhas ar rochtain do bhusanna. Ní dhearna aon phlé maidir le áiseanna páirceála rothar nó cóiste capaill mar tá an limistéar atá i gceist faoi úinéireacht phríobháideach faoi láthair.

Níor phléadh an cheist maidir le maoiniú do na hoibreacha seo go mion leis an gComhairle Chontae, mar sin níor tháinig saincheist iarratais ar thacaíocht an gCiste um Athghiniúint agus Forbairt Tuaithe chun cinn.

### **Office of Public Works Projects**

190. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 78 of 28 March 2019, the status of the historical gates to the Phoenix Park removed in summer 2018; when the original gates will be restored and returned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35405/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin**

**Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works obtained permission, under Section 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2002 (as amended), for the temporary removal of gates and ancillary structures at eight separate vehicular and pedestrian entrances at the perimeter of the Phoenix Park and for their repair and reinstatement at their existing locations.

These works were required in order to facilitate the free and safe movement of people and vehicles for the Papal visit to the Phoenix Park in connection with the World Meeting of Families in August 2018. Seven pairs of gates and ancillary structures were finally deemed necessary for removal.

The painstaking process to engage the required specialist ironwork expertise, which is not available in-house to OPW, is nearing completion. A notice was published on eTenders, the Irish Government's electronic tendering platform administered by the Office of Government Procurement on Friday 30 August 2019 inviting tenders from ironworks specialist contractors for the refurbishment of the seven pairs of gates and, in addition, in situ works to the gates at the Knockmaroon Hill entrance plus other related repairs to railings near all of the gate locations. It is expected that a contract for these specialist works will be awarded by end October/early November with immediate commencement of the refurbishment works in the appointed contractor's own workshop.

Once all the gates have been refurbished and returned into the possession of the OPW, a separate contractor will be appointed to carry out masonry repairs to adjoining historic walls and piers, at each gate location where necessary and to remove the temporary gates currently in place. The final rehangings of all gates will then be carried out by the specialist ironworks contractor who restored the gates.

Once clarity is obtained from the appointed ironworks specialist contractor on the expected duration of restoration works (currently estimated at 6-9 months), this information will be posted on the Phoenix Park website ([www.PhoenixPark.ie](http://www.PhoenixPark.ie)).

### **Departmental Properties**

191. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if property valuations received by the Office of Public Works regarding 44-45 O'Connell Street, Dublin 1, since it acquired the properties to date will be required; the amount it originally paid for the properties; if the Office of Public Works has been offered off-market sums and-or land and-or property swaps to dispose of the properties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35408/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The building at 44 O'Connell Street was acquired by the Commissioners of Public Works (OPW) in 1941 for a price of IRL£7,440. The title to 45 O'Connell Street was assigned to the Local Government Board of Ireland in 1877 and passed to the Minister for Finance under the 1954 State Property Act. There was no payment involved. In 2008 the Minister for Finance conveyed title to the OPW for a nominal fee of €10.

Given the length of time the State has owned these properties considerable research is required in relation to historical valuations. OPW will revert to the Deputy directly on this as soon as possible.

These adjoining buildings are now vacant and are in a poor state of repair. In recent years OPW was approached by adjoining owners in relation to the possible acquisition of OPW's interest in the properties. However as the future use of the properties is still under active con-

sideration by the OPW the details of any discussions, including valuations etc. is highly commercially sensitive at this time.

### Departmental Schemes

192. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date on which he was consulted regarding the closing of applications for the deep retrofit scheme; if he has engaged with the Ministers for Housing, Planning and Local Government and Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the issue of the closure of the scheme; if he has received a request to provide further funding for the scheme and-or compensation for applicants who are a loss due to the cessation of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35566/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Responsibility for the deep retrofit scheme rests with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment. There was no consultation with my Department regarding the closure of the scheme.

In June of this year, officials in my Department provided sanction to allow the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment to allocate an additional €19.65m in capital funding to subhead C.4 “Sustainable Energy Programmes” in 2019 from savings in other areas of that Department’s Vote. That subhead provides funding for all of the DCCAE-operated energy efficiency schemes.

In relation to compensation for applicants, while this is also a matter for the Minister for Communications, Climate Action & Environment, I note that the Minister has announced that all applications to the scheme that were made before the July deadline will be assessed and honoured in line with the existing terms and conditions of the scheme.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

193. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training on same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35581/19]

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

2017		
Data Protection Training	Allone	€700.00
Data Protection Training	Allone	€675.00
Data Protection Training - GDPR	Public Affairs Ireland	€1,030.00
2018		
Certificate in Data Protection Course	UCD	€1,600.00
GDPR Essential - Level 1	Public Affairs Ireland	€3,960.00

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2017		
Certificate in Data Protection - GDPR	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in Data Protection - GDPR	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in Data Protection - GDPR	IPA	€2,200.00
0.5 Day Training x 3	IPA	€1,650.00
1 Day Training x 3	IPA	€3,300.00
DPER Specific GDPR Training	IPA	€8,300.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,100.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,100.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
2019		
GDPR - A Project Management Approach	IPA	€720.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
GDPR - DPO Training Programme	IACT	€888.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
Certificate in GDPR and Data Protection	IPA	€1,350.00
GDPR Awareness Briefings and Training	IPA	€1,100.00
GDPR Awareness Briefings and Training	IPA	€550.00
	Total	€41,023.00

**Public Sector Pensions**

194. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of pension restoration measures for civil and public servants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35614/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand that when the Deputy refers to pension restoration, he is referring to the amelioration or reversal

of the public service pension reduction (PSPR), the progressive reduction affecting certain public service pensions above specified amounts which was introduced on 1 January 2011 as part of the Government's response to the financial emergency. The Financial Emergency Measures in Public Interests (FEMPI) Act 2015 and the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 substantially lessened the impact of PSPR, by way of changes which have occurred or are due to occur on 1 January in each of the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. These changes mean that, as of 1 January 2018, most public service pensions are not subject to PSPR.

The Deputy will appreciate that while I exercise a policy role over public service pensions, my responsibility with regard to implementation relates to civil service pensions. The National Shared Services Office, who pay civil service pensions and some public service pensions, has informed me that the implementation of the PSPR reversal to these pensions is ongoing. It has been delayed to an extent, primarily due to impaired data that has prevented automatic processing. A dedicated project team continues to work full time reviewing each file for every pension potentially impacted, to correct any data inaccuracies in their records and ensure all arrears due are paid as soon as possible. The status at end of August 2019 was that in excess of 95% of the PSPR reversals due before 2019 have been applied, and over 90% of the PSPR reversals due in 2019 have been applied. Work continues on the remaining outstanding cases

In relation to specific public service pensions, I would advise the Deputy to contact the relevant Minister responsible for the administration of such schemes.

### Departmental Customer Charters

195. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and-or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35649/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department is very conscious of the need to provide the highest level of service to our customers. All staff in my Department are committed to ensuring that the twelve principles of Quality Customer Service are embedded in everything we do.

The number of complaints received in the years in question is shown in the following table.

Year	Number of Complaints Received
2017	3
2018	2
2019	1

My Department is unaware of any issues with complaints being registered.

My Department has published our new Customer Service Charter for 2019-2022 which includes clear procedures for any individual who may wish to raise a complaint. Complaints against my Department are treated very seriously and if an individual is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Quality Customer Service Officer, details of appeal mechanisms are also available.

The Department's Customer Service Charter, Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Complaints Procedures are available on the my Department's website on Gov.ie.

## **Departmental Contracts**

196. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the way in which contracts are awarded to a company (details supplied) when previous school projects were found to have structural defects; the procedures which allow for previous work to be taken into account in awarding contracts for capital projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35673/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Public Procurement is governed by EU legislation and National rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money.

Public procurement procedures require applicants to meet certain standards when applying for public contracts. The criteria upon which contracting authorities may exclude applicants from the award procedure of public contracts are set out in Regulation 57 of S.I. No. 284 of 2016 – European Union (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2016 on public procurement.

The grounds for exclusion that apply are stated up front in the pre-qualification documents. Certain exclusion grounds apply to all procurements; these include criminal convictions for specified offences and non-compliance with tax and social welfare obligations. There are other exclusion grounds which can be deployed at the discretion of the contracting authority. The choice will depend on the particular procurement – poor past performance of a public contract is one such ground for exclusion.

The circumstances that would lead to exclusion on the grounds of poor past performance are significant or persistent deficiencies in a prior public contract. These deficiencies must be material and have led to termination, damages or other comparable sanctions. It is not sufficient for a contracting authority to merely be dissatisfied – they must have taken steps to deal with the poor performance at the point at which it became evident by applying the provisions of the contract up to and including termination where necessary.

Where a contract has been terminated or damages successfully applied, a contractor may be excluded from subsequent tender competitions for up to three years from the date of the termination or the application of damages unless the contractor can demonstrate that they have taken the steps necessary to remedy their performance.

When making a submission a tenderer must consider whether any of the exclusion grounds listed in the procurement documents apply to them. Should any of the grounds apply, they must advise the contracting authority accordingly and, they are excluded in relation to certain breaches, they may make a case and provide supporting evidence as to why they should not be excluded. The contracting authority must arrive at a decision based on evidence rather than hearsay or dissatisfaction and must consider the principle of proportionality in its deliberations.

## **Office of Public Works Projects**

197. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the strategic review of the Phoenix Park undertaken by the Office of Public Works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35709/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin**

**Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works is engaged in an ongoing analysis and review of the submissions received in respect of the Draft Phoenix Park Visitor Experience Strategic Review. A report on the findings of these submissions is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

### **Garda Stations**

198. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works, OPW, plans to sell the unused Garda station in Glenfarne, County Leitrim; if so, when it will be sold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35747/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** As part of the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Office of Public Works (OPW) was requested not to dispose of any further closed Garda stations pending the outcome of two reviews of closed Garda stations.

The first review identified six closed Garda stations for reopening and the second review, published on the 21st December 2018, did not identify any further closed Garda stations for reopening.

The Commissioners of Public Works are proceeding to review the remaining closed Garda stations in State ownership in line with the OPW's policy on surplus vacant property, including the former Garda station at Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim.

The OPW policy with regard to non-operational (vacant) State property is to:

- Identify if the property is required/suitable for alternative State use by either Government Departments or the wider public sector.

- If there is no other State use identified for a property, the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate revenue for the Exchequer.

- If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property, the OPW may consider community involvement (subject to a detailed written submission, which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property and that there are no ongoing costs for the Exchequer).

The future use of the former Garda Station at Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim is currently being examined in line with the above policy.

### **Flooding Data**

199. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 224 of 12 February 2019, when the second more detailed report in respect of flooding in an area (details supplied) in County Kerry will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35774/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** Kerry County Council carried out a pre-feasibility study for the Sneem area, the recommendation of which was to carry out further more detailed river modelling to assess the feasibility of the measures identified in the pre-feasibility study. Working in co-operation with Kerry County Council, the Office of Public Works (OPW) agreed to undertake this study

and assessment, which was due to be completed in the summer of 2019.

The study and assessment of the measures identified in the pre-feasibility study is ongoing and is almost at completion stage. When completed the feasibility report will be reviewed by the O.P.W. in advance of issuing to Kerry County Council.

Should a suitable scheme be identified, it will be open to Kerry County Council to apply for funding under the OPW-operated Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme subject to the scheme's criteria being satisfied, including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial. Full details are available on the OPW's website: [www.opw.ie](http://www.opw.ie)

### **Garda Stations**

200. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding a closed Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35776/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the property allocated to An Garda Síochána. I understand the Minister for Justice and Equality will write to the Garda Commissioner asking for information on the matter raised by the Deputy and will write directly to the Deputy on receipt of same.

### **National Parks and Wildlife Service**

201. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 112 of 3 April 2019, if permission will be sought from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to remove the silt build-up outside the sluice gates at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35777/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works is responsible for the maintenance of Arterial Drainage Schemes and catchment drainage schemes designated under the Arterial Drainage Acts of 1945 and 1995.

The sluice gate in question, a double sluice, is part of the River Maine Catchment Drainage Scheme. The sluice was inspected on 29 August 2019 by OPW staff. The inspection corresponded with low tide, at which time the sluice structure was operating effectively, with free flow clearly evident through the sluice.

As part of the 2019 Maintenance Works programme, maintenance work which is scheduled in the area in the coming weeks, will improve conveyance and efficiency of flow to the sluice.

### **Vacant Sites Levy**

202. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount paid per unit (details supplied) in vacant site levies since the levy was introduced by year and amount per vacant unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35823/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Commissioners of Public Works have advised me that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has not been liable for any levies since the introduction of the vacant site levy system a number of years ago. Most recently, Kilkenny County Council has placed the former Garda station at Barrack Street, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny on their vacant sites register. A levy of €4,500 will be payable in 2019 on this property. This property however is currently in the process of being transferred to Kilkenny County Council for its own use under the agreed protocols for transfer of State property. This is the only site currently notified to the Commissioners as liable for the vacant site levy.

Two sites (which are in effect one site) identified by Dublin City Council at St. John's Road/Military Road, were placed on the Council's 2017 vacant sites register. The site is the location for the proposed new Garda Security and Crime Operations Centre and the notice was successfully appealed to An Bord Pleanála as being not appropriate to the vacant site register and no longer appears on that register.

The OPW actively manages a portfolio of some 2,500 properties throughout the country. At any given time it is normal that a number of properties are vacant. In the case of the OPW portfolio, the majority of properties vacant are former Garda stations closed under the 2012/13 closure programme. As these stations were subject to examination under the recent policing review, OPW was specifically requested not to dispose of them. As this review has now completed, the future of the remaining stations will now be determined. Of the original 139 stations closed only 51 remain within the portfolio.

When a property is deemed suitable for disposal, the OPW will, in the first instance, offer it for use to other public bodies (e.g. local authorities, LDA, HSE etc.) prior to it being placed on the open market.

### **Flood Relief Schemes Status**

203. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the Glanmire flood relief works will commence. [35860/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works, through the Arterial Drainage Acts, has submitted the proposal for the Glashaboy Flood Relief Scheme to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for formal Confirmation. The Minister will, over the coming months, undertake an environmental assessment of the proposed scheme. This assessment will be in line with required legislative requirements and will involve a public consultation. The appointment of a Contractor will be progressed for this scheme following formal Ministerial Confirmation.

The flood relief scheme will be funded from within the allocated €1 billion for flood risk management over the period 2018-2027.

### **State Properties**

204. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in relation to the vacant properties at a location (details supplied) in County Cork; the plans of the OPW for the properties; if the OPW has plans to carry out essential maintenance works at the location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35971/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW actively manages a portfolio of some 2,500 properties throughout the country, that ranges from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitors centres, Garda stations, among others. At any given time it is normal that a number of properties are vacant. In the case of the OPW portfolio, there are 98 properties currently vacant, reduced from over 200 that were vacant in 2014.

The majority of these are former Garda stations closed under the 2012/13 closure programme. As these stations were subject to examination under the recent policing review, the OPW was specifically requested not to dispose of them. Now that this review is completed, the future of the remaining 51 stations will be determined.

When a property is deemed suitable for disposal, the OPW will, in the first instance, offer it for use to other public bodies (e.g. local authorities, LDA, HSE etc.) prior to it being placed on the open market.

Of the 98 properties currently vacant, there are nine former coastguard cottages in Crosshaven, Co. Cork in State ownership, seven of which have been identified as surplus to requirement and suitable for disposal.

In addition to the cottages, there is a one acre site to the rear of the cottages. This site was the subject of a Licence Agreement, which expired in October 2017 but remains occupied by the licensee and is subject to legal proceedings. This site is also surplus to State requirements and suitable for disposal when the legal issues have been resolved.

The cottages and site were considered for use by Cork County Council but the Council, following due consideration, decided not to proceed with acquiring the properties and site. As there is no alternative State use for the cottages and site the OPW has prepared contracts for sale and plan to dispose of them following resolution of the outstanding legal issue.

The OPW recently carried out repairs to the roof of one of the properties.

### **Coastal Protection**

205. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans in relation to future coastal works required at Mornigton, Bettystown and Laytown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35983/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** I am advised that, in the first instance, the management of problems of coastal protection in the areas indicated are a matter for Meath County Council. They may carry out coastal protection works using their own resources, but where necessary, they may also put forward proposals to the relevant central Government Departments, including the OPW, for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat.

It is also open to Meath County Council to apply for funding under the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications for funding from Local Authorities are considered for measures costing not more than €750,000 in each instance. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects that meet the eligibility criteria, including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial. Full details are available on the OPW's website: [www.opw.ie](http://www.opw.ie)

In 2018, Meath County Council completed coastal protection works in Laytown, approxi-

mately 350 meters north of the Nanny Estuary at a cost of €483,500 which included €126,000 funding from the OPW. These works were in response to damage done to existing coastal defences in 2013/2014.

There is an existing Flood Relief Scheme in place providing protection to 162 properties in Mornington. The Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme identified potentially viable flood relief works for Mornington that may be implemented after project level assessment and planning that would augment the existing scheme and would provide protection to an additional 52 properties. The OPW and Meath County Council are in discussions about how best to proceed in progressing this scheme.

### **Departmental Budgets**

206. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the expected cost overrun in the health budget for 2019; his plans to address the cost overrun in Budget 2020 or via Supplementary Estimates by year end; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36031/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Managing the delivery of public services within budgetary allocations is a key responsibility of every Department and Minister and this includes the Department of Health. The Minister of Health has indicated that there are cost pressures emerging this year but it is too early to predict the extent of any cost overrun that may emerge on the Health budget.

I and my Department are in regular contact at Ministerial and official level to ensure that expenditure is being managed in line with the overall fiscal parameters and to ensure that cost pressures are appropriately addressed.

### **Departmental Budgets**

207. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the cost overruns in respect of the senior care centres programme; if he has met with his counterpart in the Department of Health to discuss the matter; his plans to ensure senior care centres will not be closed due to budgetary issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36032/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The HSE Capital Plan, published recently, provides for €220m capital funding to the CNU programme over the period 2019 to 2021 and also sets out the current status of all projects within the programme. Managing the delivery of this programme within budgetary allocations is the responsibility of the Department and Minister for Health.

This Department is in regular contact with all other Departments and Offices to ensure that expenditure is being managed within the overall fiscal parameters

### **Telecommunications Infrastructure**

208. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual amount of income derived from all third-party installations of telecommunications equipment on masts at Garda stations or former Garda stations in the past three years to date by

station and/or mast location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36070/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland (CPW) have issued licences to install telecommunications equipment on masts at Garda Stations and Office of Public Works (OPW) owned buildings (including rooftops of Government Departments) to the following companies, all of which are licensed by ComReg to provide services in Ireland.

- Three Ireland (Hutchison) Limited

- Three Ireland Services (Hutchison) Limited

- Vodafone Ireland Limited

- Meteor Mobile Communications Limited

- Lighthouse Networks Limited

- Tetra Ireland Ltd - These licences are for the provision of digital radio services to An Garda Síochána and other emergency services and as a result of this a licence fee is not payable.

Officials in my Department are currently collating the information on the income, by station, received in the past three years from these licences and I will forward the information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

#### Office of Public Works Data

209. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the rent paid by the Office of Public Works, OPW, to a company (details supplied) for the rental of a location since the lease began or since it was acquired by the company, by year and average annual and monthly rent. [36086/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The OPW has paid rent to Green Reit in respect of a property at 85-93 Mount Street since 2013. The annual rents paid from 2013 to date are summarised in the below table. The annual rent is €1,743,000 and it is payable on a quarterly basis. It should be noted that the first payment on this property was for the final quarter of 2013 but the payment was not processed until 2014 which means there were 5 payments in that year.

Year	Total Rent paid
2019 (to date)	€1,307, 250
2018	€1,743, 000
2017	€1,743, 000
2016	€1,743, 000
2015	€1,743, 000
2014	€2,178, 750

#### Office of Public Works Data

210. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the rent paid by the Office of Public Works, OPW, to a company (details supplied) for the rental of a location since the lease began or since it was acquired by the company, by year and average

annual and monthly rent. [36087/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The rent paid by O.P.W. to a company (details supplied) for the rental of a location since it was acquired by the company in 2014 is as follows:

Year	Amount
2014	€ 505,000
2015	€1,010,000
2016	€1,010,000
2017	€1,010,000
2018	€1,010,000
2019	€ 505,000

The annual rent is €1,010,000 and is paid on a quarterly basis.

### Departmental Internships

211. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of unpaid internships issued or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36153/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that no unpaid internships have been issued or granted to persons to work in my Department from 28 August 2014 to date.

### Office of Public Works Projects

212. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the evaluation of submissions to the public consultation on the Phoenix Park visitor experience strategic review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36199/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works is engaged in an ongoing analysis and review of the submissions received in respect of the Draft Phoenix Park Visitor Experience Strategic Review. A report on the findings of these submissions is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

### Cyber Security Data

213. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36233/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department has specialist resources, with the appropriate skills and expertise, tasked with managing

cyber security. My Department implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of People, Processes, and Technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions, including monitoring and analysing logs.

### **Departmental Operations**

214. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and/or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36249/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department builds resilience into its ICT solutions as a matter of course and has disaster recovery plans and sites. Disaster recovery forms part of the overarching Business Continuity framework for my Department.

### **Flood Relief Schemes Status**

215. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when funding will be provided under the flood relief schemes to strengthen the banks of the River Shannon in the Corbally area of Limerick city to protect residents in the Mill Road and the Corbally Road from flooding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36270/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme was launched on the 3rd May, 2018 wherein 29 Flood Risk Management Plans were unveiled. These Plans proposed 118 new outline flood relief projects on top of the 42 major projects already completed and the 33 major schemes within the existing capital works programme of the Office of Public Works (OPW). They included a recommendation to progress the project-level development and planning of a Flood Relief Scheme for Limerick City & Environs, which includes the Corbally area.

There is a project steering group in place for the Limerick City and Environs Flood Relief Scheme, comprising of OPW personnel and representatives from Limerick City and County Council. This group is currently progressing the preparation of a Project Brief for the procurement of Engineering and Environmental Consultants. It is scheduled to go to the Office of Public Works’ Engineering and Environmental Consultants framework in Q4 of 2019.

Once consultants are appointed to progress this Flood Relief Scheme, consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies, as well as the public, will take place at the appropriate stages to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to input into the development of these schemes. The preferred option identified under the CFRAM programme for Limerick City and Environs (including King’s Island) has a preliminary project cost estimate of €56m. Full information on the proposed scheme can be found at [floodinfo.ie](http://floodinfo.ie).

### **Departmental Data**

216. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the basis of assuming a significant fall in the projected demographic costs associated with social projection arising from the change in pension age, further to the paper Budgetary Impact of

Changing Demographics 2017-2027; the extent to which increases in jobseeker payments from persons in their mid-sixties have been factored into this calculation; and if a revised paper will be provided with projected jobseeker increases included in the final costing. [36396/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The purpose of the paper is to examine expected changes in the age structure of the Irish population and how these specific changes impact areas of public expenditure in the short, medium and long term. The demographic projections in the paper are based on the assumption that the only variables changing over the period are the size and age distribution of the population. Pension projections take account of legislation which increases the eligible age to 67 from 2021 onwards.

These estimates focus exclusively on the cost of demographic pressures across Health, Social Protection and Education. These annual demographic estimates inform budgetary allocations along with a variety of other factors which influence overall allocations.

Going forward, IGEES intends to build on the 2016 work and an update of the paper is due to be published as part of the 2019 Spending Review. This update will again examine the cost of demographic pressures over a ten year period, 2020 to 2030, focusing on Health, Social Protection and Education, as these are three primary areas of current expenditure which are particularly impacted by demographic changes.

*Question No. 217 answered with Question No. 178.*

### **Public Sector Staff**

218. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on introducing a public accountability act providing for individual public servants to be held accountable for their actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36440/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Public Service Management Act 1997 sets out in law the duties for which civil servants are responsible and accountable in their Departments and Offices. The Act empowers Ministers to assign specific responsibilities to Secretary Generals and Heads of Offices. These responsibilities include: advising the relevant Minister; implementing government policy; monitoring these policies and delivering on agreed outputs with the relevant Minister; developing statements of strategy; managing risk; discharging their statutory role as Accounting Officer for their Vote; and managing the performance of staff at all levels. Individual civil and public servants are held accountable to their management under the performance management system and civil servants are also subject to the Civil Service Code of Conduct.

I would refer the deputy also to the Consultation Paper on ‘Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance’ which was published by the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform in January 2014. This stemmed from the commitments in the Programme for Government to strengthen accountability obligations that applied to all senior civil service personnel. An extensive public consultation process was managed by an Independent Panel which recommended establishing an Accountability Board for the Civil Service with external oversight. This Board would review and challenge senior management performance as well as monitoring progress in the delivery of strategic priorities.

The Panel also recommended

- designing a performance management system for Secretaries General

- the publication of 'who does what and to whom they are answerable' at the level of Assistant Secretary and Principal Officer and

- the reintroduction of Organisational Capability Reviews to provide an objective assessment of the capacity and capability of Departments.

The Civil Service Renewal Plan, launched in September 2014, committed to a significant programme of reform across the Civil Service. Equally, successive Public Service Reform plans have been introduced and are being implemented across the public service to build capability and to deliver high performance. The Civil Service renewal plan included 25 headline actions, the first of which was to establish a Civil Service Accountability Board to strengthen accountability and performance across the Civil Service by introducing greater oversight of delivery. The Civil Service Accountability Board is chaired by the Taoiseach and has met four times to date. The Board's terms of reference are:

- to have an overall governance role across the Civil Service and
- to advise on and support the development of the Civil Service's capabilities
- to review proposals for a new performance management system for Secretaries General
- to implement this performance management system across the Civil Service
- to review the new programme of Organisational Capability Reviews. This includes implementing recommendations arising out of these reviews
- to oversee the Civil Service's capability to implement priorities, or other system-wide issues, set by Government. This may involve considering individual case studies to promote the learning of best practices

Other actions included in the Civil Service Renewal Plan in response to the Independent Panel's recommendations are

- the design and implementation of a robust performance review process for Secretaries General and Assistant Secretaries (delivered);
- the publication of an assignment framework that describes who does what and to whom they are answerable for senior managers [www.whodoeswhat.gov.ie](http://www.whodoeswhat.gov.ie) (delivered)
- the implementation of a programme of Organisational Capability Reviews (in progress).

All of these measures are designed to ensure that there are robust systems in place to ensure that civil and public servants deliver high performance and are held accountable for their actions.

At present there are no plans in place for changes in legislation in this regard.

### **National Lottery Regulator**

219. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of investigations and successful prosecutions by the lottery regulator regarding instances of underage gambling and/or the selling of lottery games and/or products since 1 January 2019 to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36456/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Regu-

lator of the National Lottery has confirmed that under section 42 of the National Lottery Act 2013, it is a criminal offence to sell or offer for sale a National Lottery ticket to a minor. However, the Regulator does not have the mandate to initiate criminal investigations or to prosecute criminal offences.

The remit of the Regulator with regard to potential sales to minors is to monitor and enforce the obligations on the Operator of the National Lottery contained in the Act and the Licence.

In 2018 the Regulator conducted a mystery shopping exercise to assess retailer compliance with measures in the Sales Code of Practice designed to prevent sales to minors (such as the requirement to ask anyone who is not clearly 18 years or over for ID).

The Operator is required by the Licence to use its “best endeavours” to secure retailer compliance with the Code. Since the findings of this exercise were published, in January 2019, the Regulator has been engaging with the Operator and monitoring their endeavours to swiftly and substantially ameliorate retailer compliance with the provisions of the Code relating to underage purchases.

### **Public Spending Code**

220. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the issuing of a cost effectiveness analysis guidance document; when the document will be issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36474/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As part of the ongoing reform of Ireland’s capital management systems, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is updating the Public Spending Code. The purpose of this update is to strengthen the existing guidance to better align with the realities of project delivery and with a particular focus on improved appraisal, cost estimation and management. The Office of Government Procurement is conducting a review of construction procurement which will align with the updated Public Spending Code.

The updated Public Spending Code will include the following reforms:

- Strengthened and harmonised capital appraisal guidance;
- Greater clarity on governance and roles and responsibilities;
- New mechanisms to improve the accuracy of cost estimates;
- Improved project life cycle to better reflect the realities of project delivery; and
- Increased transparency through publication of business cases and evaluation reports.

The Public Spending Code requirements will still include the need for a financial analysis to assess affordability and an economic appraisal to assess the economic and social value of the project for public investment projects. The Public Spending Code recommends the use of cost benefit analysis or CBA as the economic appraisal methodology for major projects but where CBA is less useful, in sectors such as housing or culture, cost effectiveness analysis or multi-criteria analysis may be more appropriate.

The Public Spending Code requires Departments to draw up their own sector-specific appraisal guidance as appropriate. These are developed by the Department with lead responsibility for the sector and set out additional requirements and parameters specific to the sector, while

remaining in the line with the Public Spending Code. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform engages with Departments to ensure that the sector-specific guidance complies with principles and guidance set out in the Public Spending Code.

The revised central elements of the Public Spending Code relating to the appraisal and management of public capital projects will be published this autumn. Further technical guidance building upon these central elements will follow later in 2019 and in 2020.

### **Public Procurement Regulations**

221. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to review the changes made to the public procurement process in view of the fact that they have been in place for a number of years; if the changes that have resulted in large contractors winning tenders for services and in turn sub-contracting out much of the work to sub-contractors will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36479/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Government recognises the importance of the SME sector and continues to enhance the already substantial measures to support SMEs in accessing the public procurement market. Significant work has been undertaken by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) to ensure that public procurement is accessible by all businesses, including SMEs. My colleague, Minister of State Patrick O’Donovan, in accordance with the Programme for Government, chairs quarterly meetings of the SME Advisory Group so that the voice of industry is heard at first hand by Government.

The OGP have developed a suite of measures aimed at assisting SMEs to access public procurement opportunities (circular 10/14). These include:

- employing proportionate turnover requirements with turnover limited to twice the contract value,
- the division of public contracts into lots,
- the provision for “consortia bidding” to assist SMEs to participate in procurement procedures where they would not have the relevant capability or scale, and
- requiring public bodies to advertise contracts for goods and services valued above €25,000 (ex. VAT) on the national eTenders portal

Other measures include undertaking market analysis prior to tendering to understand the competitive landscape and encouraging businesses to register on eTenders, the Government’s national tendering platform. Specific supports are also provided by InterTrade Ireland (ITI) and Enterprise Ireland (EI) to assist SMEs in preparing for public tenders.

There is a commitment in the Programme for Government to “Refine the new procurement structures in place, such as the OGP, as they bed down and make adjustments according to best international practice and in conjunction with Irish businesses”. This review of the Procurement Reform Programme is currently underway and the views of SMEs have been sought from industry representatives which sit on the SME Advisory Group including IBEC, ISME, Small Firms Association (SFA), Construction Industry Federation (CIF) and Chambers Ireland. Their contributions, as well as those received from Government Departments (including bodies under their aegis) are now being considered. The views of the Health, Education, Local Government and Defence Sectors and opposition spokespeople on public procurement have also been sought

in this process. The feedback from this engagement will inform the future direction and shape of public procurement.

### **Flood Relief Schemes**

222. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on a matter concerning a flood relief scheme for County Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36524/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** In May, 2018, I launched the Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme, wherein 29 Flood Risk Management Plans were unveiled. These Plans proposed 118 new outline flood relief projects on top of the 42 major projects already completed and the 33 major schemes within the existing capital works programme of the Office of Public Works (OPW). These plans included a recommendation to progress a project-level development and planning of a Flood Relief Scheme for Tralee, which is included in the first tranche of schemes at an estimated cost of €31.27m.

The Office of Public Works recently approved funding to Kerry County Council to appoint a Senior Executive Engineer, Executive Engineer and a Senior Administrator to work solely on all Flood Risk Management Plans for County Kerry.

A project steering group comprising OPW personnel and representatives from Kerry County Council is now in place to progress those schemes in County Kerry identified in tranche one. The role of this group is to advance the preparation of a Project Brief for the procurement of Engineering and Environmental Consultants for Tralee and Kenmare. In relation to Tralee it is proposed to go to the Office of Public Works' Engineering and Environmental Consultants framework in Q1 of 2020.

Once consultants are appointed to progress the Flood Relief Scheme for Tralee, consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies, as well as the public, will take place at the appropriate stages to ensure that all parties have the opportunity to input into the development of this scheme.

### **Homeowners Voluntary Relocation Scheme**

223. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36548/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Office of Public Works received a notification from Kerry County Council that is considering this property under the Voluntary Homeowners Relocation Scheme.

In line with the Scheme, Kerry County Council identified that the flooding issues at the property could, in the first instance, benefit from a remedial works solution and requested that a flood risk assessment of the property be carried out. A flood risk assessment of the property has been completed.

The Office of Public Works is currently considering the flood risk assessment and will be corresponding with Kerry County Council on this matter shortly.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Statutory Retirement Age**

224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a person (details supplied) is likely to be allowed to continue their employment after retirement age which is their choice and in view of previous indications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36605/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to his PQ 32729/19 on 23 July 2019, which is copied below for the Deputy's convenience. There has been no change to this policy matter since July.

As the Deputy is aware, on 5 December 2017, the Government made the decision to increase the compulsory retirement age to 70, for public servants recruited prior to 1 April 2004. Primary legislation was necessary in order to bring that change into effect. It was made clear at the time that until such legislation was enacted, the compulsory retirement age of 65, which applied to the vast majority of this cohort, remained in effect and pre-2004 public servants reaching that age would be required to retire.

Interim arrangements were provided for the cohort of public servants who reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 between the date of the Government Decision and the enactment of the legislation because, while they would be aware of the Government's decision, they would be unable to avail of it. The interim arrangements permitted these individuals to be re-hired post-retirement for a period of 1 year until they reached the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory). Without those specific arrangements, they would have been required to cease working on reaching the age of 65.

The Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018 was enacted on 26 December 2018. Under the Act, any relevant public servant who had not already reached their compulsory retirement age of 65 before that date has a new compulsory retirement age of 70. Enactment of the legislation had no effect on those public servants who retired at 65 prior to the 26 December 2018 and who availed of a one year contract under the interim arrangements. Their contract terms continue to apply and they cease working when they reach the age of 66, as previously provided for.

Section 3 of the 2018 Act also provides that I, as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, within three months of the passing of the Act, would prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the public servants who were forced to retire between 6 December 2017 and the commencement of the Act, due to reaching the age of 65 years, and on potential remedies to assist this cohort of worker. This Report was laid before the Oireachtas on 26 March 2019 and is publicly available on the [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) website and in the Oireachtas Library online catalogue.

Having considered all of the issues outlined in the Report, I am satisfied that the interim arrangements were an appropriate temporary policy response at the time of the Government Decision, pending enactment of the legislation. The terms of those arrangements were clear, unambiguous and made known to those who availed of them. Accordingly, for the reasons set out in the report, I decided not to make any changes to those terms.

Individual public servants who wish to clarify issues regarding their retirement age are advised to contact their employer's HR office who are best placed to assist them.

**Garda Station Refurbishment**

225. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a carpark will be constructed at a Garda station (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36615/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** I can confirm that the Office of Public Works (OPW) received an enquiry from local Gardaí about developing the parking facilities at the Garda Station in question. A quotation for the work was provided to Garda Estate Management (GEM), which must approve funding before the work can be scheduled by OPW for delivery. GEM has confirmed that the proposed car park works remain under consideration.

### **Public Sector Pay**

226. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated cost of addressing pay equalisation in the public sector. [36684/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Question No. 307 of 23 July 2019.

Under the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018 – 2020, it was agreed to examine the remaining salary scale issues in respect of post January 2011 entry grades. The attached report, laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in March 2018, estimates the point in time cost of pay equalisation of new entrants to the public service.

The report estimated a cost of €199.8m for pay equalisation for 60,513 new entrants, an average cost of €3,300 per FTE.

Following this report, an agreement on new entrant salary scales was reached in September 2018.

The main components of the agreement are:

- where two additional scale points were applied to pay scales under the Haddington Road Agreement, it was agreed that there will be two separate interventions in the pay scales as they apply to new entrant public servants recruited since January 2011.

- the two separate interventions will take place at point 4 and point 8 of the pay scales. The practical effect of this is that for new entrants the relevant points on the scale will be bypassed, thereby reducing the time spent on the scale for progression to the maximum point.

- this measure will apply from 1 March 2019 and will be applied to each new entrant as they reach the relevant scale points (point 4 and point 8) on their current increment date.

The cost of this measure during the remaining term of the PSSA is €75 million, with the full cost of the measure based on current data and public service numbers (2017) accruing over the period out to 2026. It is estimated that some 58% (35,750) of new entrants will benefit from this measure in year 1, rising to 78% (47,750) by year 2.

### **Flood Relief Schemes Expenditure**

227. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of funding allocated to improving flood defences in each of the past five years.

[36685/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** Capital investment/expenditure by the Office of Public Works (OPW) on flood risk management measures, primarily on flood defence schemes, amounted to €254million in total between 2014 and 2018. This is broken down as follows:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Expenditure	€43.54m	€48.37m	€51.86m	€45.37m	€64.64m

Nine major flood relief schemes were completed or substantially completed during this period bringing flood protection to over 2,500 properties. This is in addition to the 35 major flood relief schemes that were completed up to end 2013 protecting some 7,000 properties. Seven major schemes commenced construction in the 2014 - 2018 period and will be completed over the next couple of years. In addition, many other schemes have been advanced through the design process and will commence construction in the next year or so, subject to approval under the appropriate planning processes.

The above capital expenditure figures include expenditure under the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation and Coastal Protection Works Scheme during the period in question, where funding is provided to Local Authorities to carry out minor works up to a limit of €0.75m for individual projects. 203 projects were completed under the Minor Works Scheme over the five year period bringing flood protection to over 2,000 properties.

In addition to the above capital spending in this period, over €78 million of current expenditure was incurred on the OPW's arterial drainage maintenance programme under which programmed maintenance is carried out of completed arterial drainage schemes throughout the country and their associated flood defence structures.

*Question No. 228 answered with Question No. 176.*

### Departmental Budgets

229. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the increase in 2019 in the expenditure ceiling earmarked for each Department in 2020, by capital funding and current funding; the measures the additional funding is already committed to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36741/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Gross voted current and capital expenditure ceilings for the 2020 to 2022 period were published in July of this year in the Mid-Year Expenditure Report (MYER). Table 1.3 on page 8 of the MYER sets out gross voted current expenditure ceilings and table 1.4 on page 9 of the report sets out gross voted capital expenditure ceilings. These tables are also provided in appendix 1.

In terms of current expenditure, pre-committed expenditure for 2020 amounts to €1.2 billion. This is made up of:

- €0.5 billion for demographic pressures in the areas of Health, Social Protection and Education;

- €0.3 billion in carryover costs relating to current expenditure measures introduced in Budget 2019; and

- €0.4 billion for the Public Service Stability Agreement.

Demographic allocations have been included in the published Departmental ceilings for Health, Education and Social Protection. Other pre-committed expenditure, along with the remaining unallocated resources, will be allocated to Departments through the Estimates process, as is usual, with Table 1.3 of the MYER including an amount for unallocated resources of €0.3 billion.

In terms of capital expenditure, the ceilings published in the MYER are in line with the National Development Plan allocations. In addition, €0.2 billion has been set aside for an 'Expenditure Reserve' for 2020, to meet additional costs arising from the National Children's Hospital and the National Broadband Plan.

## PQ36741/19 - Appendix 1

Table 1: Pre-Budget Ministerial Gross Current Expenditure Ceilings 2020 - 2022

	€ million	€ million	€ million
Agriculture, Food and the Marine Group	1,341	1,341	1,341
Business, Enterprise & Innovation Group	330	330	330
Children and Youth Affairs Group	1,478	1,478	1,478
Communications, Climate Action & Environment Group	392	392	392
Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht Group	265	265	265
Defence Group	901	901	901
Education & Skills Group	9,880	9,927	9,974
Employment Affairs & Social Protection Group	20,744	21,004	21,264
Finance Group	481	481	481
Foreign Affairs Group	781	781	781
Health Group	16,502	16,650	16,798
Housing, Planning & Local Government Group	1,919	1,919	1,919
Justice Group	2,574	2,574	2,574
Public Expenditure and Reform Group	1,053	1,053	1,053
Rural & Community Development	153	153	153
Taoiseach's Group	192	192	192
Transport, Tourism & Sport Group	756	756	756
Public Service Stability Agreement (Cumulative)	390	651	651
Carryover of Budget 2019 Measures (Cumulative)	311	311	311
Resources to be Allocated 2020	300	300	300
Resources to be Allocated 2021	-	724	724
Resources to be Allocated 2022	-	-	1,100
Total Gross Current Expenditure	60,743	62,183	63,738

Table 2: Ministerial Gross Capital Expenditure Ceilings 2020 – 2022

-	€ million	€ million	€ million
Agriculture, Food and the Marine Group	258	265	275
Business, Enterprise & Innovation Group	630	640	715
Children and Youth Affairs Group	31	32	33
Communications, Climate Action & Environment Group	297	317	400
Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht Group	76	80	110
Defence Group	113	120	125
Education & Skills Group	942	1,006	1,100
Employment Affairs & Social Protection Group	15	16	17
Finance Group	22	18	19
Foreign Affairs Group	13	13	14
Health Group	774	780	825
Housing, Planning & Local Government Group	2,205	2,269	2,280
Justice Group	265	208	216
Public Expenditure and Reform Group	214	223	232
Rural & Community Development	150	152	175
Transport, Tourism & Sport Group	2,058	2,526	2,405
Total	8,063	8,665	8,941

### Flood Risk Management

230. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding flooding defence plans for Ballybofey and Stranorlar, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36807/19]

231. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding flooding defence plans for Castlennish, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36808/19]

232. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding flooding defence plans in Glenties, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36809/19]

233. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding flooding defence plans in Downings, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36810/19]

234. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding flooding defence plans in Lifford, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36811/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 230 to 234, 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. These are:

#### **Lifford, County Donegal**

The proposed Lifford Flood Relief Scheme consists of a series of flood embankments and walls with an early stage estimated cost of €5.9m.

The tender process for the appointment of both Engineering and Environmental consultants is underway with an expectation that the appointments will be made in October, 2019 .

#### **Castlefinn, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Castlefinn consists of about 800m of flood defence walls and embankments and has an estimated early stage cost of €1.75m. Tendering for the required design consultants is expected to commence in the coming weeks.

#### **Glenties, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Glenties, Co. Donegal has an estimated early stage cost of €0.55m and the proposed measures consists of a series of flood embankments and walls and land use management. Tendering for the required design consultants is expected to commence in the coming weeks.

#### **Downings, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Downings, Co. Donegal has an estimated cost of €0.87m and consists of a series of flood embankments and flood walls. Tendering for the required design consultants is expected to commence in the coming weeks.

Flood defence projects for **Burnfoot** and **Carrowkeel** are also included in the initial six projects in the first phase of implementation.

The proposed schemes for Castlefinn, Glenties, Downings, Burnfoot and Carrowkeel are being progressed by Donegal County Council. The OPW is leading the progression of the proposed scheme for Lifford.

#### **Ballybofey and Stranorlar, County Donegal**

The proposed flood relief scheme for Ballybofey and Stranorlar is not in the first phase of projects to be advanced. However, 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. The proposed scheme for

Ballybofey and Stranorlar has an estimated early stage cost of €1.92m and consists of hard defences and improvement of channel conveyance.

Funding of €157,500 was approved in 2018 under the OPW's Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme for a project at Ballybofey and Stranorlar. The works comprise the removal of vegetation and trees on the embankment and construction of pumps / pumping areas.

### **National Training Fund**

235. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the mandate of the national training fund and the way in which its expenditure profile can be reoriented towards more effective in-employment training and modern apprenticeships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34832/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The National Training Fund (NTF) was established by the National Training Fund Act, 2000, as a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment, and those seeking employment. The Act also provides for the funding of research to provide information on existing and likely future skills requirements of the economy.

One of the key features of the NTF is its flexibility and the way it responds to changing economic/labour market conditions. During the recession, the focus moved sharply from training those in employment to supporting unemployed people back into the workplace. However there has been a fundamental shift in the labour market over the last 6 years with unemployment falling from a 16% high in 2012 to 5.6% in February 2019. This has been reflected in a changed and rebalanced suite of NTF-funded programmes to support the larger working population, to address the higher demand for lifelong learning as the influence of technology increases and to seek to address emerging areas of skills and labour shortage.

The NTF levy was increased by 0.1% in 2018 to 0.8% and by a further 0.1% in both 2019 and 2020 in order to fund investment in education and training relevant to the skills needs of the economy. These increases were accompanied by a package of reforms to the Fund. An independent report of the NTF which was commissioned by my Department and undertaken by Indecon contained a number of key recommendations on the future direction of the Fund such as additional support for close to labour market skills requirements and increased focus on supporting in-company training. As part of Budget 2019 a number of steps have been taken to align with these specific recommendations set out in the Independent report so that training for those in employment has risen from 17% of total NTF expenditure in 2013 to 41% in 2019:

- There has been significant additional funding provided to continue the expansion of apprenticeships, including new apprenticeships.

- The number of places on Springboard has been increased with an emphasis on meeting the demand for those in employment.

- Additional funding has been provided to support Skillnet Ireland, who actively work with businesses to meet the skills gaps in the economy.

- There has been investment in a new ETB employee development programme to upskill lower skilled workers and support SMEs.

The trend in continued support from the NTF for those in employment is likely to continue

in 2020, complemented by targeted support in upskilling people to prepare them for entering the workforce.

Additional information on the fund can be sourced in the 2019 expenditure report for the fund which is available at the link:

*<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/national-training-fund-expenditure-report-2019.pdf>*

### **School Transport Data**

236. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of tickets issued by Bus Éireann for the Kildalkey to Trim school bus route for the 2019/2020 school year; the appeals process in place for students who have been declined a place on Bus Éireann school buses; and the means by which Bus Éireann accommodates a student who successfully appeals a decision to decline them a place on a school bus route in circumstances in which bus places are already full. [35381/19]

237. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of tickets issued by Bus Éireann for the Kildalkey to Trim school bus route for the 2019/2020 school year; the appeals process in place for students who are declined a place on Bus Éireann school buses; the means by which Bus Éireann accommodates a student who successfully appeals a decision to decline them a place on a school bus route in cases in which bus places are already full; the number of children availing of the B6180 and B6181 service; and if information (details supplied) in relation to the routes will be provided. [35386/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 236 and 237 together.

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann have confirmed that the service that operates from Kildalkey to Trim Post Primary Centre is operated by a 53 seat vehicle.

There were 6 mainstream eligible tickets issued and 47 mainstream concessionary tickets issued for this service.

As part of the temporary alleviation measures, 12 mainstream concessionary pupils were given the opportunity to avail of transport on a minibus.

Of these 12 mainstream concessionary pupils, 10 mainstream concessionary pupils have made a payment and are availing of transport.

### **Schools Building Projects**

238. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will be allowed to seek permission to go to tender with a building design to prove it will be delivered on budget; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the board of management is willing to bear the cost of a full redesign and tender competition if it fails to deliver on budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36137/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In April 2019, my Department approved the provision of a 2 Classroom SEN base at the school to which the Deputy refers.

The Stage 1/2a Design (Preliminary/Developed Design) which has recently been submitted shows a significant increase in the scope of works over and above that approved.

The school has been advised to revise the scope of the project in line with that which has been approved. Under the Additional Accommodation Scheme the grant approved for each project is calculated to cover the cost of the approved works. It is unreasonable to expect that an increased scope of works would still cost the same. Furthermore, the Department considers that the proposal referred to by the Deputy would give rise to a serious delay in the delivery of the project.

Therefore, and until the scope of works is brought back in line with that approved, the project cannot proceed to planning stage.

### **Student Assistance Fund**

239. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore the student assistance fund to pre-2012 rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36784/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In December 2012, an additional €3 million was approved to supplement the Student Assistance Fund following a survey conducted by the HEA in relation to the demand for the Fund.

This supplementary funding was a once-off exceptional measure which was taken in the context of long grant delays/issues encountered by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) in the initial year of operation.

In academic year 2011/12 €9 million was allocated to the SAF. The core allocation in 2019/2010 is €9.1 million. This includes an additional €1 million added in 2017 for part-time students who are lone parents or members of the access target groups.

A further once off €1 million was added to the fund in 2018/19 for students attending Profes-

sional Masters of Education courses who were experiencing financial difficulty. This additional funding will be continued for 2019/20. The total 2019/2020 allocation for the SAF therefore remains at €10.1 million.

### Brexit Supports

240. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of participants in the clear customs initiative by eligible customs agents, customs intermediaries and affected businesses up to 31 August 2019 by county in tabular form; and the amount expended on the initiative to date. [36854/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The Clear Customs Scheme is a new support measure launched on 7 August 2019 to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK's departure from the EU.

Clear Customs has been designed by industry for industry as they prepare for the new customs requirements post-Brexit. The initiative, which is being made available immediately to customs agents, intermediaries and eligible businesses free of charge, comprises of two elements:

- Firstly, a training programme delivered nationwide over a period of 6 weeks providing the essential skills needed to make a compliant customs declaration. Up to €2 Million has been allocated by my Department for the scheme in its first phase.

- Secondly, eligible businesses can apply for a Customs Financial Support payment to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles. Subject to terms and conditions for eligibility, this payment is up to €6,000 per employee that completes the training programme, up to maximum of 10 employees per company.

There has been a positive response from industry to the Clear Customs scheme which is being delivered by Skillnet Ireland in collaboration with industry bodies in the exporting, freight and logistics sectors. As of close of business on 31st August 2019, there were 654 expressions of interest from businesses for the scheme. Approximately 40% of expressions of interest received emanate from the customs agents/

customs intermediary sector. The expressions of interest per county are in the attached table.

#### Skillnet Ireland Clear Customs Scheme Expressions of Interest by County

County	Unique Number of Expressions of Interest
Carlow	9
Cavan	11
Clare	19
Cork	53
Derry	1
Donegal	31
Dublin	214
Galway	19
Kerry	5
Kildare	28

County	Unique Number of Expressions of Interest
Kilkenny	20
Laois	5
Leitrim	3
Limerick	13
Longford	4
Louth	63
Mayo	9
Meath	22
Monaghan	20
Offaly	6
Roscommon	6
Sligo	8
Tipperary	22
Waterford	16
Westmeath	13
Wexford	24
Wicklow	16
Grand Total	654

### Schools Facilities

241. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to install kitchen facilities to all State-run primary schools which do not have those facilities. [36947/19]

242. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to install kitchen facilities to all State run secondary schools which do not have those facilities. [36948/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 and 242 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not hold details of schools with kitchen facilities or those without such facilities.

My Department has in place detailed design guidelines for primary and post-primary schools. These guidelines, which are available on my Department's web-site, currently provide for a standard range of servery and eating facilities in the design of new and refurbished Primary and Post Primary schools. In Primary schools, a servery of 8.0m<sup>2</sup> in area is provided. At Post Primary level a kitchenette, 25m<sup>2</sup> in area, is provided off the General Purpose/Dining Area. These facilities are not intended to be full commercial type kitchens where food is prepared or cooked.

### Third Level Fees

243. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if asylum seekers are regarded as international students for the purposes of third level fees; if so, his plans to change this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34685/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The fee payable by a student can vary depending on a variety of factors including the type of course and the student's access route including previous education.

Under the Department's Free Fees Initiative, the Exchequer pays tuition fees on behalf of eligible students attending approved full-time undergraduate courses. In order to qualify for funding under the Department's Free Fees Initiative, students must meet the criteria of the scheme including the separate residency and nationality/citizenship requirements of the scheme.

Persons in the asylum application process are not eligible to access the Free Fees Initiative.

Where students do not qualify for free fees funding, they must pay the appropriate fee, either EU or Non-EU, as determined by each higher education institution. These institutions are autonomous bodies and the level of fee payable by students who do not meet the requirements of the free fees scheme is a matter for the relevant institution to determine in accordance with their own criteria; the Department therefore has no role in the decision.

### Schools Inspections

244. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that provide leaving certificate applied level that have had subject key assignments externally inspected since the introduction of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34688/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is one of a number of options made available by the Department of Education and Skills for senior cycle students. The LCA is a distinct, self-contained two-year programme aimed at preparing students for adult and working life.

It is the responsibility and choice of each individual school to decide to put in place the LCA programme, based on the educational needs and interests of their students.

The LCA inspection, carried out by the Inspectorate division in the Department of Education and Skills, evaluates all aspects of provision of the LCA programme in the school. This includes planning for teaching, observation of lessons and a review of samples of key assignments and key tasks, in addition to reviewing record keeping.

Key assignments form part of the assessment of module completion. In order to obtain credit for a module the student must satisfactorily complete all 4 key assignments and provide evidence of them. In addition to this the student must have at least 90 % attendance for that module. It is the class teacher and LCA coordinator in the school who assess key assignments in the first instance.

Evidence of Satisfactory Completion of Modules (student attendance record for the specific module & student evidence of each of the key assignments) must be available for inspection by Department of Education & Skills until the individual student has completed the two years of the programme and the final result for all sessions has been issued.

Please see below table of the number of LCA programme Inspections carried out by this Department for the last five years:

	Number of Programme Evaluations on LCA Programmes
2015	7
2016	4
2017	6
2018	7
2019 (YTD)	6

To note, a key theme of the Senior Cycle Review being carried out by the NCCA will be the future form and reform of the existing senior cycle programmes – which includes the LCA programme.

Alongside the overall review of Senior Cycle the NCCA has also developed updated LCA Module Descriptors in English and Communications, ICT (Introductory Module and Specialism), and Mathematical Applications. The revised module descriptors will be implemented in schools from September 2020.

### School Services Staff

245. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school secretaries paid through the ancillary grant; and the average wage of secretaries. [34697/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Boards of Management of schools are responsible for the employment of school secretaries and it is a matter for each school to determine the level of secretarial services required for the school. Funding to cater for these services is made available from my Department through the Ancillary Services and Capitation Grants.

Within the 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. Given that employment of school secretaries is dealt with at local school level, my Department does not have a central record of the number of school secretaries whose salaries are funded by these grants or their average wage.

### Capitation Grants

246. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing capitation for primary schools to 2011 rates per pupil. [34698/19]

248. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing capitation for primary schools by €20 per pupil. [34700/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 246 and 248 together.

I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

In addition to the 5% increase above the estimated cost of restoring capitation to pre-2011 levels in primary schools is circa €12.2 million. The estimated full year cost of increasing the capitation grant by €20 to schools at primary level is €11.7 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

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

### **School Textbooks Rental Scheme**

247. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of schoolbooks being provided by schools; and the estimated cost for schoolbook rental schemes to be provided by all schools. [34699/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department provides a book grant to all recognised primary and post primary schools within the Free Education Scheme in order to provide assistance for books including Book Rental Schemes. Under this scheme, the Department provided funding of €16.9 million in 2019 to all of these schools.

School book rental schemes have an important role to play in reducing the cost of school books for parents and in order to support the establishment of book rental schemes my Department provided €15.7 million seed capital in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to primary schools. Circa. 96% of primary schools and 68% of post-primary schools operate a book rental scheme

It is a matter for the Board of Management of each individual school to decide on its own policy in relation to the use of book grant funding in the school but they are expected to adopt a cost-conscious approach to the selection of books for use in their classes. The current arrangement relies on the local knowledge of the school in order to ensure a fair allocation of funds to those most in need. Therefore, my Department does not hold information in relation to these costs.

The arrangements in relation to the book grant scheme are set out in Circular 0046/2013 which is published on the Department's website at

*[http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0046\\_2013.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0046_2013.pdf)*

*Question No. 248 answered with Question No. 246.*

### **School Guidance Counsellors**

249. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reversing cuts to guidance counselling; and the estimated cost to ensure one counsellor for every 500 students. [34701/19]

293. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore guidance counsellors to one per 500 pupils ex-quota at post-primary level. [35213/19]

294. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore guidance counsellors to one per 500 pupils ex-quota for DEIS schools.

[35214/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 249, 293 and 294 together.

Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that were withdrawn in Budget 2012, were restored to schools from September 2018.

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

The cost of restoring the remaining 100 posts is in the region of €4.8m. This will be considered in the context of future Budgets, however there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each budget.

It is important to note that in previous changes to guidance counselling allocations in 2012, DEIS schools were effectively sheltered from the changes as a result of a more favourable staffing schedule which is more beneficial than an allocation of 1 per 500 pupils.

The provision of one guidance counsellor per 500 pupils in non DEIS schools would result in an estimated 200 additional posts at an annual cost of c. €9.6m.

The Department has committed considerable resources towards the restoration of guidance counselling hours to post-primary schools, to the provision of CPD for guidance counsellors and to the provision of a national guidance counselling supervision service for post-primary guidance counsellors.

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

250. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of an additional SENO or SNA. [34702/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's policy aims to ensure that all children with Special Educational Needs can have access to an education appropriate to their needs.

In 2019, in the region of €1.9 billion is being invested in Special Education, nearly one fifth of the overall Education budget.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for the provision of a range of educational services at local and national level for students with special educational needs.

SENO responsibility includes planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs. Each SENO works in an assigned local area with parents, schools, teachers, psychologists, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services in that area for children with special educational needs. The SENO is available to parents to discuss any issues they have about the present or future educational needs of their child and to offer support and expertise.

The cost of employing a new Special Educational Needs Organiser on the first point of the salary scale is €34,981 per annum.

The Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme is designed to provide schools with additional adult support staff who can assist children with special educational needs who also have additional and significant care needs. Such support is provided in order to facilitate the attendance of those pupils at school and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills.

The unit cost of employing a new entrant Special Needs Assistant is €27,674 per annum.

Both of the above figures are inclusive of Employers PRSI.

### School Enrolments Data

251. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expected number of children in primary and secondary schools in September 2019. [34703/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The projected enrolment figures for September 2019 are:

Primary Level - 566,220

Post-Primary Level - 369,673

Projections are published by the Department in the report titled ‘Projections of Full-Time Enrolment Primary and Second level, 2018-2036’.

These reports can be found on the Department of Education website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/projections>.

\* Figures at primary level figures include both mainstream and special schools.

### Autism Support Services

252. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expected number of ASD unit places to be available in primary and secondary schools by county in September 2019. [34704/19]

308. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of autistic children enrolled at primary level for 2019/2020. [35230/19]

309. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of autistic children enrolled at post-primary level for 2019/2020. [35231/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 252, 308 and 309 together.

My Department does not hold information in relation to the number of children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in school.

The National Council for Special education (NCSE), an independent agency of my Department, is responsible for planning, co-ordinating and advising on education provision for children with special educational needs in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The NCSE’s policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016)

noted a national ASD prevalence rate of 1.55% or 1 in every 65 students.

There were 567,772 students enrolled in Primary schools and 362,899 students enrolled in Post Primary schools in the 2018/19 school year. Enrolment data for the 2019/20 year will be available later in the year.

167 new special classes will be opened for the 2019-20 school year, which means there will be 1,622 special classes in place, compared to 548 in 2011. 1,355 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes, including 134 ASD early intervention classes, 849 primary ASD classes and 370 post-primary ASD classes in mainstream schools.

124 special schools also provide specialist education for those students with complex special educational needs.

### **School Transport Provision**

253. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason school transport has been withdrawn from a school (details supplied) with effect from September 2019 in view of the fact it is still available for existing students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34705/19]

254. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if school transport will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34706/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 253 and 254 together.

My Department's practice has been to respond to the needs of long term or repeat child patients in hospitals and HSE CAMHS facilities through the establishment of special schools or through the funding of part-time teaching hours.

The purpose of educational provision in HSE CAMHS Units is a short term intervention designed to provide for some continuity of education during the child/young person's stay as an in-patient. Not all children/young people attending CAMHS are medically fit to avail of education during all of their stay.

Since 2014, my Department's policy is to provide teaching staff in CAMHS facilities at a pupil teacher ratio of 6:1 on the basis of the number of inpatient beds in each CAMHS unit. The Special School referred to by the Deputy is one of a number of such special schools.

Current policy does not provide for an additional teaching allocation for CAMHS facilities for students attending such facilities as day or out-patients, as young people attending CAMHS as day patients can apply for Home Tuition support to provide for compensatory education in respect of time missed from school, due to medical reasons or attendance at a medical unit.

As not all inpatient beds in CAMHS Units may be filled at any given time, in such instances, subject to prior approval by my Department, CAMHS Units may utilise spare teaching capacity from their allocated 6:1 ratio to offer guidance or support for pupils attending CAMHS facilities as day patients, and to assist in maintaining some continuity of education from their base school or liaison with their base school on days that they attend the CAMHS Unit.

Students in the school referred to by the Deputy are attending the HSE CAMHS facility, in the first instance, as in-patients, day patients or out-patients for mental health issues rather than

special educational needs.

While the special school in question was originally designated as a special school for Severe Emotional Behaviour Disorder, since the school's re-location with the HSE's CAMHS unit, the teaching staff allocation has been provided on the basis of the policy outlined above for CAMHS facilities.

The CAMHS team may refer patients to the school for short term education intervention, designed to provide for some continuity of education, while a patient of the CAMHS Unit. All students remain enrolled in their base schools while attending the CAMHS unit. Special schools attached to CAMHS Units do not enrol students on a full time basis, as their main education placement. Therefore, their enrolment remains transient.

The purpose of the Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs is to support the transport to and from school of children with special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability. Children are eligible when they are attending the nearest recognised mainstream school, special class in mainstream or special school that is or can be resourced to meet their special educational needs. Eligibility is determined in consultation with the NCSE through its network of SENOs.

As students in a special school attached to a CAMHS facility, including the Special School referred to by the Deputy, are, in the first instance, attending CAMHS as in-patients, day patients or out-patients for mental health issues rather than special educational needs, transport to the HSE CAMHS unit does not come within the remit of my Department's Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs.

Special School Transport was provided in error to a number of students who attended this school while day patients of the CAMHS unit. This arrangement was allowed to continue for these students until they completed their time in CAMHS. No new applications will be considered.

### **Education Grants**

255. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the effect the housing crisis has on applicants that apply for SUSI grants but cannot apply as independent students in view of the fact they cannot provide an address of their own will be considered. [34708/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** 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.

For a dependent student, the reckonable income for grant purposes includes both his/her own income and that of his/her parents/legal guardians.

A student may be assessed as an independent mature student if he or she has attained the age of 23 on the 1st January of the year of first entry to an approved course, or of re-entry following a break in studies of at least three years, and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous October. Otherwise he or she would continue to be assessed on the basis of parental income.

An applicant's class is defined at his/her first point of entry to an approved higher or further education course and this will continue to apply for the duration of his/her studies.

While it is not possible to appeal an applicant's class during the course of his/her studies, an applicant may be assessed or re-assessed by the awarding authority in the event of a change of circumstances relating to the following:

- Permanent change in reckonable income;
- Number of dependent children residing in the household;
- Commencement of an approved course;
- Normal residence;
- Nationality or immigration status; and
- Change of course or institution.

Whilst there is no discretion to deviate from the particular provisions of the Student Grant Scheme and governing legislation, SUSI implements procedures for the timely, sensitive and confidential handling of exceptional circumstances applications.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant on the grounds of his/her initial classification as an independent or dependent student, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal, outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board at [www.studentgrantappeals.ie](http://www.studentgrantappeals.ie) within the required timeframe.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

### **School Staff**

256. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a class size has been increased in a school (details supplied). [34721/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30th September.

The school referred to by the Deputy is due to have a teaching post suppressed due to a fall in enrolments in September 2018.

The staffing process includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. The school referred to by the Deputy submitted a staffing appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. The appeal was refused on the basis that the grounds of the appeal did not warrant the allocation of an additional post under Circular 0019/2019.

The configuration of classes and the deployment of classroom teachers are done at local

school level. My Department's guidance to schools is that the number of pupils in any class is kept as low as possible taking all relevant contextual factors into account (e.g. classroom accommodation, fluctuating enrolment etc.). School authorities are also requested, where possible, to use their autonomy under the staffing schedule to implement smaller class sizes for junior classes.

### **Schools Refurbishment**

257. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding is guaranteed to modernise a school (details supplied) in County Waterford; if the agreed plan to reunite the school on one site in the interim will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34730/19]

**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.

Following tender submissions from prospective building contractors, my Department has recently authorised the school to issue the Letter of Acceptance to the successful tenderer. Construction should commence later this month and subject to no issues arising it is envisaged that the school will be ready for occupation in the 1st quarter of 2021.

The project will be delivered in two phases: Phase 1 involves the construction of a new building and associated site works. Phase 2 involves the refurbishment of existing buildings and associated site works.

### **Autism Support Services**

258. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the fact that children diagnosed with high functioning autism have no suitable facilities to attend after primary school (details supplied) [34743/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's policy is that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

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

Special class placements are provided in mainstream schools for students with ASD and more complex needs, where it has been demonstrated that he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Special school placements are provided for other students with ASD and very complex spe-

cial needs who wouldn't manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.

Special classes for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have a minimum of two SNAs for every class of 6 children.

The NCSE found, however, that there was confusion in the system about the purpose and role of special classes for students with ASD. Some schools appeared to believe such classes are resourced only to cater for the more able students with ASD. Some schools had restrictive enrolment practices or policies which effectively excluded students – even in special classes – unless they were able to follow academic programmes and be included in mainstream classes for at least part of the week.

The NCSE pointed out that special classes are resourced to cater for the needs of all students with special educational needs who require to spend most or all of their week in a special setting. They are not resourced exclusively to support either students who are more able or those with more complex needs. It would therefore not be appropriate to refer to these classes as 'low functioning units' or 'high functioning units'.

The NCSE advised that only those students with ASD with more complex needs and who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class should be supported in special classes in post-primary. More able students with ASD (i.e. those who can access the curriculum in a mainstream class for most all of the day/week) should be supported in post-primary schools through resourced mainstream provision, i.e. through the SET model and with access to SNA support as required. There can be exceptions as some students with ASD may find it difficult to manage full-time placement in mainstream classes although academically able to access the curriculum there and these students may require support through the special class model for some of their day/week.

Some students with ASD who are able to attend mainstream classes will experience associated symptoms such as anxiety. When planning educational support for these students, it is important to consider the role that mainstream and special education teachers can play in their education and in assisting them to be included in school.

Other resources which are provided to schools to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism include the following:

- The National Educational Psychological Service
- Assistive technology
- Access to the Special School transport scheme
- Access to special equipment and furniture where required
- Enhanced capitation grants at primary level
- Adapted school buildings
- ICT Grant for new classes
- Start Up grant for new classes
- Access to the extended school year scheme. (July Provision)

The NCSE has published guidelines for schools on setting up and organising Special Class-

es, which are available to download from *www.ncse.ie*. The guidelines include information on resources which may be provided to schools with special classes and links to information on the how funding is allocated.

In conclusion, a continuum of provision is provided in mainstream schools which should be operated in a flexible manner, to meet the wide range and diversity of student needs that present in these schools.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

259. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 360 of 8 May 2019, the status of the school building project; when it will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34762/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project for the school in question is included in my Department's Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

This project is one of the school building projects on my Department's ADAPT 2 (Accelerated Delivery of Architectural Planning & Tendering) Programme. My Department has completed the process of procuring a Project Manager for the ADAPT 2 Programme, which currently contains 16 school building projects.

The appointment of a Design Team for this school building project consisting of Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Civil & Structural Engineer, Mechanical & Electrical Engineer and Project Supervisor for the Design Process has recently been completed.

The next step is that the Project Manager and the Design Team will shortly hold a meeting with the school and then commence Stage 1 of Architectural Planning which includes Site Report, Site Suitability and producing Initial Sketch Schemes.

### **School Placement**

260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a second-level school place will be found to meet the requirements of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34797/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is the statutory body which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school placement for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01 7718633 / 01 7718500.

The selection and enrolment of pupils is the responsibility of the management authorities in each individual school. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places in an area. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As schools may not have a place for every applicant, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

Under section 15(2)(d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy the principles of equality and the

right of parents to send their children to a school of the parent's choice are respected.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 where a school board of management makes a decision to refuse enrolment, a parent or guardian can appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Where the appeal involves an Education and Training Board (ETB) school, the appeal must be made to the local ETB in the first instance. Further information on the Section 29 Appeals process is available on my Department's website at

[www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol](http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol).

### Summer Works Scheme Applications

261. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a summer works scheme application will be granted due to the circumstances to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34815/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of an application under Category 9 of the Summer Works Schemes (SWS) 2020 onwards, from the school in question, for window replacement.

Commensurate with the level of funding available for the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2020 onwards, all applications will be assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the governing Circular Letter for the Scheme. This Circular Letter (0027/2019) is available on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) for information.

### Special Educational Needs

262. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case and circumstances of a child (details supplied) will be addressed. [34816/19]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As this question relates to a particular child, I have referred the question to the NCSE for its direct reply.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

263. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of all school building projects for the Dublin 6W, 12, 14, 16 and 24 areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34826/19]

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

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department’s website, *www.education.ie*, and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department’s website, *www.education.ie*, and this information is also updated regularly.

### **School Patronage**

264. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the forthcoming patronage process for the new post-primary school for Citywest and Saggart; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34827/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Government announced plans in April 2018 for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022) including a new 1,000-pupil post-primary school to be established in September 2020 to serve the Tallaght & Newcastle-Rathcoole (Citywest/Saggart) school planning areas as a regional solution.

This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the

4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. The application process for patrons to run this school has been completed.

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 Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) has been developed by my Department to provide objective information to parents and guardians which will allow them to make an informed choice in expressing a preference for their preferred model of patronage for their child's education.

The OPPS for the new post-primary school in Citywest/Saggart will open for parental preferences shortly. Updates in relation to the patronage process will be announced on the OPPS website (<https://patronage.education.gov.ie/>) and my Department's website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)).

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

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

265. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the ETB-owned site at Fortunestown Lane, Dublin 24, on which temporary primary schools are located will facilitate the new primary school for Citywest and Saggart; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34828/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under the Department's Design and Build programme. Architectural planning has commenced for the delivery of a 16-classroom primary school and a 1,000-pupil post-primary school at a site at Fortunestown Lane, Citywest.

The two primary schools currently in temporary accommodation on this site will be moving into their permanent school buildings which are expected to be completed in Quarter 4 2019.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

266. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the progress of the plans to construct permanent buildings for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34829/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under the Department's Design and Build programme. Planning permission has been secured and Tender documentation is currently being prepared.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

267. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34844/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The following tabular statement contains the information requested by the Deputy. In accordance with the terms of the Ethics Act, a copy of the respective Special Advisers' contracts of employment have been laid before the Oireachtas.

Minister/ Minister of State	Special Adviser Name	Salary 1st Sept 2019
Joe McHugh T.D.	Mark O'Doherty	€99,177 pa
Joe McHugh T.D.	Ed Carty	€90,920 pa
Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D.	Roy Dooney	€101,114 pa
Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D.	Lynda McQuaid	€101,114 pa
John Halligan, T.D.	Anthony McFeely	€67,659 pa

### Home Tuition Scheme Staff

268. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 183 and 495 of 23 July 2019, the reason home tutors are not regarded as employees of his Department for the duration of their work as home tutors; his plans to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34888/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Under my Department's Home Tuition Grant Scheme, Home Tutors are engaged by the parents/guardian of the child who is to receive tuition.

Home tutors do not have a contractual relationship with the Department of Education and Skills.

The change in payment arrangements from September 2015 was on foot of instructions from the Revenue Commissioners that payments under the Home Tuition Scheme are subject to statutory deductions at source.

In order to facilitate parents, my Department agreed to act solely as payroll agents on their behalf. Payment of the home tuition grant now issues directly to the approved tutor via my Department's Non-Teaching Staff payroll.

Home tutors continue to be engaged by the parent/guardian to provide tuition.

Any further queries in relation to PAYE and USC should be directed to Revenue and queries in relation to PRSI Class should be directed to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

### Educational Organisations

269. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the bodies representing parents that are consulted by his Department on educational issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34894/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** There are two parents' bodies that are consulted by the Minister for Education and Skills in relation to educational issues. These are:

The **National Parents Council Post-Primary (NPCpp)** is the representative organisation for parent associations in the post-primary sector. At post-primary level the Council acts as the umbrella organisation for the parents' constituent bodies within the different sectors at post-primary, voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive, ETB and the fee-paying schools. The 4 constituent bodies are:

1. ETBsNPA - National Parents Association for ETB Schools,
2. PACCS - Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools,
3. FCSSPA-The Federation of Secondary Schools Parents Associations is the representative body for parents with children in Catholic Voluntary Secondary schools in Ireland,
4. COMPASS - The National Association of Compass representing all parents who choose to educate their children in schools or colleges which promote a Protestant or a minority ethos.

To ensure effective communications and consistency in approach the Department works with the National Council rather than the constituent bodies.

The **National Parents Council Primary (NPCp)** was set up in 1985 as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school and plays an important role as a channel of communication between parents and the Department of Education and Skills. The principle objective of the NPCp is to contribute to the advancement of the early education and primary education of all children in order to improve and enrich the education of each child and to support the involvement of parents in all aspects of the education of their children.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the education system continues to be developed on a partnership basis, involving a full role for parents.

### **School Management**

270. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide extra support for teaching principals in primary schools in view of the increase in responsibilities, reports and paperwork that must be handled by teaching principals to date and the long hours involved in dealing with this work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34910/19]

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

This builds on measures in previous budgets, including €0.4 million made available in Budget 2018 to fund almost 4600 additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools.

This funding provided an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

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

The Department has committed to revising the Posts of Responsibility table in the leadership and management circulars to take into account retirements during the school year. This ensures that the current level of Posts of Responsibilities are maintained in the school system.

Earlier in the year, I hosted a symposium on Small Schools which gave me an opportunity to restate the Government's commitment to small schools and to open a dialogue with all the key stakeholders. The purpose of this work by the Department is to develop a policy proposal to help support and strengthen small primary schools throughout the country.

Any additional increase in principal release days will have to be considered as part of the annual budgetary process, alongside the many other demands in the education sector.

## Education Grants

271. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) can change from independent status back to dependent status due to family circumstances immediately without a three-year wait; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34914/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Article 13 (2) of the Student Grant Scheme 2019 states that an applicant's class is defined at their first point of entry to an approved course or at their point of re-entry to such a course and this classification will continue to apply for the duration of his/her studies.

Article 13 (5) states that re-entry means a mature student entering an approved course following a break in studies of at least three years, having previously attended an approved course.

Neither the Appeals Officer or the Student Grants Appeals Board have discretion to deviate from the provisions of the Student Grant Scheme and governing legislation in making a determination on an individual appeal irrespective of the personal circumstances of the case.

Under the terms of the scheme the only eligible payments required to be held for 391 consecutive days is Jobseeker Allowance or Jobseeker's Benefit. In general terms Jobseekers Allowance is considered to be a short-term payment unless it is held for 391 consecutive days at the 31st December 2017. The Scheme makes provision for combining periods of Jobseeker's Allowance, Jobseeker's Benefit and other eligible payments for the purposes of meeting 391 days as determined by the Department of Social Protection.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant on the grounds of his/her initial classification as an independent or dependent student, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal, outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board at [www.studentgrantappeals.ie](http://www.studentgrantappeals.ie) within the required timeframe.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

### **Teacher Redeployment**

272. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position with regard to allowing teachers to transfer from one county to another (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34916/19]

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

The redeployment arrangements at primary and post-primary are the first method to fill vacancies in the school system. The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers to other schools where vacancies exist.

Once the redeployment processes have completed, schools with permanent vacancies may proceed to open competition to fill these vacancies. It is open to any teacher to apply for these vacancies as they arise.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

273. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the planned secondary school for west Blanchardstown, Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34964/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, a new post primary school for the Blanchardstown area is included in the 42 new schools announced in 2018.

In line with the policy on the use of State assets (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circulars 11/15 and 17/16), in the first instance my Department is seeking to maximize the use of sites already in its ownership and of available properties in the ownership of other State bodies, where these are considered suitable.

In that context, Department officials are currently considering identified potential site options.

### **School Enrolments**

274. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available to parents and children where demand for local secondary school places exceeds supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34972/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that in relation to schools admission, parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available, the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. The Deputy will note however that the selection process procedures and enrolment policy are the responsibility of the individual school authorities.

Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parent's choice are respected.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 where a board of management make a decision to refuse enrolment, a parent/guardian can appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Where the appeal involves an Education and Training Board (ETB) school, the appeal must be made to the local ETB in the first instance. Further information on the Section 29 Appeals process is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol/>

In addition, the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is the legal body which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school placement for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718815.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

275. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the impact on returning emigrants who cannot access student grant funding which excludes them for three years on their return; his plans to change the criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34978/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

With regard to residency, in order to be eligible for a grant, a "student", as defined in Section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011, must demonstrate that he/she has been resident in the State for at least 3 years out of the 5 year period ending on the day before the start of his/her approved course of study.

This requirement takes cognisance of students who wish to take time out to travel or work abroad. Such students can still meet the residency requirement if they have not been outside the State for more than two of the previous five years.

It is also possible for students, who did not meet the residency requirement at the commencement of their studies, to have their eligibility reviewed if they meet the residency requirement during the course of their studies.

276. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the costing of the pay claim made by a union (details supplied) on behalf of school secretaries and other non-teaching staff; when a decision will be made on the pay claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35000/19]

**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 9 April to discuss the status of non-teaching staff.

Officials from my Department had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives in May 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.

## Special Educational Needs Service Provision

277. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to ensure the July provision is available to all children with Down syndrome who require it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35008/19]

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

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

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

The review found that in general parents value July provision because it provides day-time respite for families and a structured day for students. However, the NCSE review found a number of problems with the scheme. These include concerns that the scheme may be inequitable because it is not provided to all students with complex special educational needs.

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

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

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

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

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

## Schools Building Projects Status

278. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date with the building timeline for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35054/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under the Department's Design and Build programme. Planning permission has been secured and Tender documentation is currently being prepared.

## School Funding

279. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of the funding and support package announced in summer 2019 for schools (details supplied); the criteria under which the funding is being given; and the way in which other schools in County Tipperary can avail of such funding and support packages as a matter of urgency. [35076/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** There has been a lengthy period of engagement between the schools in Tipperary town and my Department regarding the socio-economic circumstances of the town and the supports required to best meet the needs of their pupil cohort.

Following a meeting on 31 July this year, correspondence was issued to the schools involved. This drew their attention to the School Excellence Fund and the fact that it is open to applications until the 27th September. It also set out the procedures and provided the link for schools to appeal their allocation of supports to help support those pupils that require English as an Additional Language (EAL) assistance. This appeal mechanism requires schools to demonstrate that they have high concentrations of pupils requiring (EAL) support. This appeal mechanism and the School Excellence Fund application process are open to all schools.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) have developed actions research projects following their development of two web-based resources, A Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years and Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers - Revised 2018. Both of these web based resources are available to all teachers and schools and enable them to access information on evidence-based approaches to support literacy development in the early years and intervention programmes for pupils with specific literacy difficulties. NEPS have already conducted action research projects in clusters of schools to train and engage with these resources in Limerick, Kilkenny and Waterford. For the coming academic year, NEPS have included the schools in Tipperary town in this initiative.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department is currently undertaking data analysis in the context of resource allocation to match identified need. All schools at both Primary and Post Primary are being assessed using the new identification model. This analysis is being carried out by members of the DEIS Technical Group which contains representatives of the Department's Statistics and Social Inclusion Units, the Inspectorate and the Educational Research Centre. Work is ongoing by this group, including consultation with relevant experts. Until this analysis is complete, it is not intended to extend the DEIS programme to any further schools.

What is apparent from analysis is that Tipperary, relative to other towns of comparable size, has a high level of deprivation at Electoral Division level to the extent that it exceeds the level found in all other towns of a similar size. The level of deprivation is comparable with that seen in some inner city areas, whilst at the same time none of the primary schools in Tipperary town were in the DEIS programme.

I, therefore, considered it appropriate to assign a temporary additional teacher post for the 2019/2020 school year only, in line with existing terms and conditions. This post will be shared equitably across the 5 schools with the objective of improving educational outcomes for targeted students.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

280. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding SUSI's special rate of maintenance and the cutting of same upon the death of a person within the household in receipt of a qualifying long-term social welfare payment; the steps he

will take to ensure that students in such a situation do not suffer a significant reduction in their maintenance payment; if the issue will be addressed in a budgetary context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35089/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** SUSI implements procedures for the timely, sensitive and confidential handling of exceptional circumstances applications. These include allowing students to repeat periods of study in exceptional circumstances such as the death of a parent.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can also apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

### **Pension Provisions**

281. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a full pension will be granted to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35115/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The person referred to by the Deputy is currently in receipt of pension but is not satisfied with the amount of service with an ETB that has been deemed non-pensionable for the purpose of pension calculation. She met recently with the ETB to query the pensionable status of the service in question and she is not satisfied with the outcome.

The position regarding a review process was outlined to this person by my officials last month who remain available to advise on options in this regard.

### **Education and Training Provision**

282. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of investment (details supplied) in counties Longford and Westmeath since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35143/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The investment in education and training services in counties Longford and Westmeath under the headings requested by the Deputy are as follows.

#### **Special Education**

The Department estimates that the average total cost for school years 2016/17 to 2018/19 of special education teachers and special needs assistants is on the order of some €127 million. Given that these payroll costs usually account for approximately 88% of overall special education need expenditure, the notional total amount expended over the period in Longford and Westmeath could be reasonably estimated as being on the order of €144 million.

#### **School Transport**

Bus Éireann has confirmed that in 2018, the overall spend on contractors for the provision

of School Transport Services was €1.49 million in Longford and €3.49 million in Westmeath. Detailed information requested for 2016 and 2017 is not readily available. In this regard, Bus Éireann has been requested to collate this information and it will be forwarded to the Deputy when ready.

#### New build schools/Emergency Works/Summer Works scheme

Since 2016, expenditure on new building projects in Longford and Westmeath was €0.76 million and €22.47 million respectively. This figure does not include expenditure under the Additional Accommodation Scheme.

In relation to the Summer Works Scheme, the total expenditure was €1.48 million for projects in Longford and €1.67 million for projects in Westmeath.

Through the Emergency Works Scheme, from 2016 to date, there has been €0.21 million expenditure in Longford and €1.20 million expenditure in Westmeath.

In relation to the other costs requested by the Deputy, the Department of Education and Skills does not allocate or record these budgets on a county basis.

### **Pension Provisions**

283. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a mechanism or his plans to introduce a mechanism to enable teachers to revert to their original pension status later in their career in view of the fact that under circular 07-2013 the status of a second level teacher’s pension will change if the teacher ceases teaching for more than 26 weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35170/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that the Single Public Service Pension Scheme, as provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 came into effect from 1 January 2013.

There are no plans to introduce a mechanism to enable teachers to revert to their original pension status if they become members of the single pension scheme following a break of more than 26 weeks as the scheme is provided for by legislation.

The circular to which the Deputy refers outlines the broad terms and benefits of the Single Pension Scheme. It details how teachers and special needs assistants employed in a pensionable post on or after the 31st December 2012 will remain in their pre-existing pension schemes. However, if their employment ceases, then any subsequent rehiring would be on a Single Scheme membership basis, unless such rehiring takes place within 26 weeks of leaving the previous post. Approved absences such as maternity leave and career breaks are not regarded as a break in service for this purpose.

### **Education Policy**

284. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that have consulted with parents regarding religious instruction or worship in community or education and training board schools in line with section 4 of Circular 0013/2018; the number of schools that have changed their practice regarding religious instruction or worship following this consultation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35181/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Following publication of Circular 0013/2018, a further Circular 0062/2018 was published by my Department to remove any ambiguity about how religious education and religious instruction are delivered in those schools.

Circular 0062/2018 clarifies that in respect of arrangements for religious instruction that students should only be provided with a place in any religious instruction class where there has been a parental request or where appropriate the student, for admission to the class. That choice replaces mandatory placement by the school in religious instruction classes.

Where schools decide to provide for religious instruction classes, parental requests for a place in such classes are unlikely to occur only in a small number of cases. Schools are advised to read both circulars 0013/2018 and Circular 0062/2018 in conjunction with one another.

### Education Data

285. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that offer an alternative subject to religious instruction or worship in line with Circular 0013/2018. [35182/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Following publication of Circular 0013/2018, a further Circular 0062/2018 was published by my Department to remove any ambiguity about how religious education and religious instruction are delivered in those schools. Students should only be provided with a place in a religious instruction class where there has been a parental request for admission to that class. Where a parent has made a choice for their child, or where appropriate the student, to participate in a religious instruction class, this eliminates any necessity for subsequent withdrawal from that class and the provision of alternative subjects. Schools are advised to read both circulars 0013/2018 and Circular 0062/2018 in conjunction with one another.

### Chaplaincy Services Provision

286. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding allocated to chaplains in community and education and training board schools in 2018; and the number of chaplains appointed in 2018. [35183/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department allocates chaplain posts to Education and Training Boards (ETB) and Community and Comprehensive schools and colleges. There are currently 156 whole time equivalent chaplain posts allocated to these schools. The annual cost is approximately €9.8m.

The appointment of chaplains to these schools flows from the original agreements concluded when the schools concerned were established. The chaplains perform pastoral and counselling roles and play an important role in supporting student well-being.

Those chaplains who are registered as teachers with the Teaching Council can also teach a minimum number of hours per week.

### Teacher Training Provision

287. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the participation level in in-service training for the human and cultural diversity aspect of the social personal and health education curriculum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35184/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Teachers at primary and post primary level have access to a range of continuing professional development programmes and support (CPD) through the teacher support services funded by my Department. This support encompasses human and cultural diversity.

The overall remit of the Health and Wellbeing team within the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) is to support management, teachers and schools in the development and promotion of students' mental, emotional, social, sexual, personal and physical health and wellbeing in the context of a positive health-promoting school environment. This is enabled through the provision of a suite of CPD programmes and supports which are notified to schools annually.

Full details of participation levels in this programme of support during 2018/2019 are provided in the table.

### **Support provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers service (JCT)**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) have developed a short course in SPHE in the context of the new Framework for Junior Cycle (2015). Schools can implement this short course in the context of the development of their junior cycle programme. It is expected that more and more schools will introduce this short course as the new Framework embeds in schools. The short course (100 hours duration) adopts a learning outcomes approach which encompass the issues of human and cultural diversity.

Last year 206 teachers attended CPD workshops provided by JCT in relation to this new short course, while 205 teachers engaged in a dedicated online webinar provided by JCT on the short course. Currently, there are over 678 teachers registered with JCT to attend CPD on the new SPHE short course in 2019/2020 which represents a significant increase on 2018/2019 figures, indicating an increasing interest from schools in introducing the new short course.

All CPD programmes and supports provided by Department funded support services include provision for teaching and learning in the inclusive classroom through differentiated teaching methodologies. These programmes enable teachers to deal with the teaching and learning needs of all students from all cultural backgrounds and provide support for pedagogical practices that promote inclusion.

### **Primary Health and Wellbeing (Sept 2018 – June 2019)**

Focus of CPD	Term	No. of teacher CPD interactions	No of Events
Primary Child Protection seminars	Term 1 & 2	1646	108 events
Physical Literacy Fundamental Movement Skills Day 2 seminars	Term 1	726	49 events
Teaching Gymnastics Skills in PE workshops	Term 1	207	17 events
Primary RSE seminars	Term 1 & 3	1173	56 events
Stay Safe workshops	Term 1	214	21 events

Focus of CPD	Term	No. of teacher CPD interactions	No of Events
Teacher Wellbeing	Term 2	36	3 events
Primary PE Workshops-Folk Dance	Term 2	178	14 events
Primary PE Workshops-Gymnastics	Term 2	38	3 events
Primary SPHE & Visual Arts Seminars	Term 2	159	19 events
Internet Safety, Cyber-bullying & Bullying Seminar	Term 2	404	20 Events
Physical Literacy (FMS) seminar 3	Term 2	1060	55 events
Primary PE Workshop-An Introduction to Physical Literacy	Term 3	148	16 events
Primary Internet Safety, Cyberbullying & Bullying Seminars	Term 3	141	8 events
Physical Literacy (FMS) Seminar 3	Term 3	248	15 events

### Post-Primary Health and Well-Being(Sept 2018 – June 2019)

Focus of CPD	Term	No. of teacher CPD interactions	No of Events
Introduction to SPHE ( 2 day seminar)	Term 1 & 2	1117	64 events
Mental Health SPHE 1	Term 1 & 2	143	9 events
Mental Health SPHE 2	Term 2	72	7 events
Junior Cycle RSE ( 2 day seminar)	Term 1, 2 & 3	906	48 events
Child Protection Designated Liaison Person & Deputy Designated Liaison Person	Term 1, 2 & 3	157	12 events
Anti bullying :Cyber bullying and internet safety	Term 2	55	6 events
Gender & Sexual Orientation	Term 2	16	2 Events
Snr Cycle RSE ( 2 day Seminar)	Term 1 & 2	790	38 events
JNR Cycle Personal Safety	Term 3	23	2 events

Focus of CPD	Term	No. of teacher CPD interactions	No of Events
Post Primary PE Olympic Handball Workshop	Term 1	209	15 events
LCPE PLC Meetings	Term 1	62	8 events
SCPE PLC Meetings	Term 1	40	7 events
LCPE Seminars	Term 1	190	3 events
SCPE Seminars	Term 1	40	1 event
LCPE PLC Meetings	Term 2	67	10 events
SCPE PLC Meetings	Term 2	35	7 events
LCPE Seminar Day 6+7	Term 2	128	4 events
SCPE Seminar Day 4	Term 2	37	2 events
Using Digital Technologies in PE Workshops	Term 2	190	16 events
PE Workshop The TPSR Model-2hr Workshop	Term 3	19	3 events
LCPE Day 8	Term 3	59	2 events
LCPE PLC Meeting's	Term 3	13	2 events

The total number of health and wellbeing school support visits at primary level was 490 with 5384 teacher CPD interactions.

The total health and wellbeing school support visits at post primary level were 137 school visits, meeting 2221 teachers.

### School Accommodation Provision

288. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps being taken to ensure secondary school provision is matching expansion of housing in the Clonee and Ongar areas of Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35195/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in an area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential developments in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development.

With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such ad-

ditional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

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

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 post-primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Blanchardstown West\_D15 & BlanchardstownVge\_D15 school planning areas as a regional solution.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the impact of the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. My Department will also continue to monitor areas where the accommodation of existing schools may need to be expanded in order to meet the needs of the local population. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

289. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the need for additional accommodation in a school (details supplied) in County Wexford will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35200/19]

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

It is open to the school authority to make an application for additional accommodation through the 'Additional School Accommodation scheme (ASA)' which is available at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). I also wish to advise that since mid-2018 all schools approved for additional accommodation under my Department's Additional School Accommodation Scheme are also having necessary prefabs replaced as part of their additional accommodation project.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

290. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding funding to rebuild a secondary school (details supplied); the commencement date for works; the way in which the prioritisation of works has led to other schools being built ahead of this school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35207/19]

**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 major building project will deliver a new part single storey, part two storey and part three storey post-primary school of 6,786sqm to provide general classrooms, specialised classrooms, PE Hall, general purpose area, a unit for pupils with multiple disability visual impairment, ancillary teaching and staff accommodation.

The project is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning: Stage 2B – Detailed Design. On satisfactory completion of Stage 2B the project will be authorised to pre-qualification of contractors. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete. When pre-qualification is complete the project will then be progressed to Tender Stage (Stage 3). A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

### **Capitation Grants**

291. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point increase in the capitation grant for primary schools. [35211/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 1% in Primary schools is circa €1 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

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

### **Capitation Grants**

292. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point increase in the capitation grant for post-primary schools. [35212/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools.

I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year costs of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation by 1% in Post Primary schools is circa €1 million.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments.

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

*Questions Nos. 293 and 294 answered with Question No. 249.*

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

295. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the es-

estimated cost of each one point reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level. [35215/19]

296. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one point reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio for junior, senior, first and second class. [35216/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 295 and 296 together.

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.

The allocation of teachers to schools is on the basis of the whole school population. 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.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €14.4m per annum.

### School Staff

297. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to reverse staffing cuts to small schools with less than 86 pupils to 2011/2012 levels. [35217/19]

300. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of additional teaching positions which would be required in primary schools to restore the appointment figures for the third and fourth mainstream teacher to the level they were at in 2010, that is, 49 and 81. [35220/19]

301. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools which had a teaching staff of one, two or three teachers in 2010 and which have since closed following the increase in the appointment figures. [35221/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 297, 300 and 301 together.

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

Small schools have also benefitted from the 1 point improvement to the primary staffing schedule for all schools implemented in 2016 and again in 2018. The staffing schedule at primary level currently operates on a general average of 26 pupils to every 1 teacher which is historically the lowest ever allocation ratio at primary level.

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

The decision making authority for a school closure belongs to the Patron of a school, and this is subject to the agreement of my Department. Any proposal to close a school must involve consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders, parents, teachers, students and local communities and follow decisions taken at local level. The Programme for Partnership Government contains a commitment that no small school will close without the consent of parents. The information is not available in the manner requested by the Deputy.

The estimated cost of restoring the staffing schedule for small schools to pre-2012 levels would be €3.6 million per annum, approximately 75 posts..

### **School Accommodation Provision**

298. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to provide additional classroom accommodation in order to reduce primary school class sizes per each point reduction. [35218/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in 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.

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.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule creates an approximate 300 additional mainstream posts. It should be noted that such an adjustment may not warrant provision of additional accommodation across all primary schools as some schools may have capacity within their existing buildings to cater for staff increases. However, where additional accommodation is needed the costs associated with providing permanent accommodation will vary depending on a range of factors including the extent of the accommodation to be provided, linking new permanent accommodation with existing facilities, site topography, geographical location of schools and costs associated with complying with statutory requirements.

### **Teachers' Remuneration**

299. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year net saving of using newly qualified teachers for substitution duties rather than retired teachers. [35219/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I understand that there is no net saving involved in using newly qualified teachers for substitution work rather than retired teachers. Both newly qualified teachers and retired teachers who return to work in a substitute capacity are paid the same rate of pay for substitute work.

The salary scales and the substitution payment rates applicable to qualified and unqualified teachers are set out in Departmental Circular 51/2018. This Circular is available on my Department's website at

[https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0022\\_2019.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0022_2019.pdf)

Circular 31/2011 issued by my Department requires school management authorities to give priority to qualified registered teachers rather than retired teachers in relation to substitution work.

*Questions Nos. 300 and 301 answered with Question No. 297.*

### School Staff

302. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools which have teacher numbers (details supplied). [35222/19]

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

The data given refers to class teachers only.

No. of Teachers	Sum of Totals
1-7	1932
8-11	553
12-13	137
14-16	242
17-19	108
20-23	57
24-26	49
27-30	15
31-35	10
36	1
37+	2
Grand Total	3106

### Special Educational Needs Staff Data

303. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of SNAs employed for the 2018/2019 school year; and the projected number of SNAs to be employed for the 2019/2020 school year. [35225/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** At the end of the 2018/19 school year there were approximately 15,030 SNA posts allocated to schools. I announced on 27th May that 792 additional SNA posts will be allocated to schools for the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, with almost 130 additional posts expected to be allocated by December 2019.

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

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

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

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

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 publish statistics on SNA allocations for each school year and this information is available on their website, [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

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

304. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of the approximately 950 increased additional special needs assistants, SNAs, announced in budget 2019 that were employed for the period of 2018/2019. [35226/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Approximately 30 posts were allocated from the Budget 2019 provision for January to June of the 2018/19 school year. I announced on 27th May that 792 additional SNA posts will be allocated to schools for the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, with almost 130 additional posts expected to be allocated by December 2019.

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

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

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

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

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 publish statistics on SNA allocations for each school year and this information is available on their website, [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### Special Educational Needs Data

305. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that have appealed their SNA allocation for 2019/2020 by county in tabular form. [35227/19]

307. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that have appealed their SNA allocation for 2019/2020 by county in tabular form. [35229/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 305 and 307 together.

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 is also responsible for managing the appeals process.

As the matter to which the Deputy refers is a matter for the NCSE, I have referred the question to the agency for their direct reply.

### Special Educational Needs Data

306. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of SNA hours applied for and or sought by each county for the 2019/2020 school term in tabular form. [35228/19]

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

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

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

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

*Question No. 307 answered with Question No. 305.*

*Questions Nos. 308 and 309 answered with Question No. 252.*

## **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

310. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has used the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 to force a school to open an autism spectrum disorder, ASD, class in an area in which need has been identified; if not, the reason for not using the powers contained in the Act; his plans to commence using the Act in the immediate future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35232/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them is a key priority for me and the Government.

I am deeply conscious of the stress and anxiety facing parents and their children where difficulties are encountered in securing a school place.

As Minister I have a power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed.

The legislation provides for a very transparent series of steps which can ultimately lead to the issuing of a legally binding direction to a board of management.

The initial step in the process is for the NCSE to inform the Minister there is a shortage of places in a particular area.

The legislation was formally activated for the first time on April 18th following a report from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15.

The specific provision required was 8 additional primary ASD primary special classes and 40 special school places for students with complex needs.

There has been very intensive engagement between the NCSE, the Department and patron bodies and schools to address this issue.

To date, this has resulted in the establishing of the new Danu Community Special School in Dublin 15, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB catering for up to 40 students.

In addition, 4 ASD special classes have also been approved in mainstream primary schools the Dublin 15 area leaving a total of 4 classes still required

On 23 August, my Department issued a second statutory notice to six schools and their patron in the Dublin 15 area setting out the need to make more places available for children with special educational needs.

The notice confirms my opinion that the schools should make additional education provision available and outlines the steps to be taken, together with information on the supports available.

The schools and the patron have 14 days in which to make representations on foot of this notice.

The notice follows a series of steps that have been followed under strict rules set down under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 (as inserted by Section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018).

- April 18th - The legislation was formally activated following a report from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class

capacity in Dublin 15.

- April 30th - I appealed to schools and patrons to make more provision for children with special education for September 2019.

- May 27th - I wrote to the principals and chairpersons of boards of management in 22 schools in Dublin 15 requesting that they give serious consideration to the need for more special education provision.

- May 28th - The establishment of the new Danu Community Special School, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, was confirmed, with places for 40 children with special needs for the 2019/20 school year.

- June 27th - The Department served statutory notices under Section 37A (5) on 18 schools and 2 patrons in Dublin 15. These notices communicated my opinion that they should make additional provision for children with special educational needs.

- 30 July & 1 August – Consultations on the need for additional special education provision took place with two patron bodies.

- August 7th - Technical teams began site visits, with 10 schools initially, to carry out first-hand assessments of the accommodation available and consider its suitability for additional provision of special classes.

- August 23rd – Second legal notice served under Section 37A on 6 schools in Dublin 15, one of which has since agreed to establish a special class.

I would of course prefer to see children welcomed into a school without the need for legal compulsion.

However I am determined to do my utmost to ensure every child is allocated a school place, including using the provisions of the Education Act to direct schools to make additional provision.

### **Teacher Training Provision**

311. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to work collaboratively with the Teaching Council to review the national third-level teacher training curriculum to improve the level of training for teachers at third-level in order that all qualified teachers feel competent and are sufficiently supported in teaching children with additional needs in mainstream settings in view of the acute rise in the number of school age children being diagnosed as autistic; and his plans to create new pathways for special needs assistants that would like to upskill to the level of special education teachers. [35233/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Teaching Council is the body with statutory responsibility for the regulation of the teaching profession including the registration of teachers in Ireland.

The Teaching Council's (Registration) Regulations 2016 set out the requirements to be registered as a teacher in Ireland. Under these regulations there are four defined routes to registration, namely Route 1 Primary; Route 2 Post-Primary; Route 3 Further Education; Route 4 Other.

My Department has no plans to amend the Teaching Council's (Registration) Regulations

2016 to include a special education teacher category.

Inclusive education is mandatory in all initial teacher education programmes in Ireland. Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, all initial teacher education programmes are subject to review and accreditation by the Teaching Council, in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (published in 2011 and revised in March 2017). In accordance with these Criteria and Guidelines, inclusive education is a mandatory component for all students in ITE. Inclusive education encompasses education of children with special educational needs, including autism.

The learning outcomes of ITE programmes also reflect the need for the teacher to be able to conduct a systematic, holistic assessment of learner needs; to apply knowledge of the individual potential of students, their disposition towards learning and their backgrounds, identities and learning styles to their teaching; to set clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils; to evaluate learner progress; to act as an advocate for students, referring students for educational support as required and participating in the provision of that support, amongst other relevant outcomes.

The Teaching Council is currently carrying out a review of the impact of the current programmes, with a view to amending the Criteria and Guidelines before the next round of accreditation commences in 2020.

The National Council for Special Education report published on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion: Phase 1 and 2 (NCSE Research Report No. 26), found that there is in general much good practice related to inclusive education in ITE, particularly in relation to the fostering of positive attitudes to inclusion, while also noting scope for further alignment between theory and practice, in particular as between student placement and the university experience. These findings are being considered by the Teaching Council in the course of its review, outlined above.

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

312. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore the 15% cut in resource hours teaching; and the estimated cost to increase the national educational psychological service, NEPS, by 25%. [35234/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** From September 2017, a new model for allocating special education teachers was introduced. This model allocates special education teachers to schools based on the profiled needs of schools, as opposed to the assessed needs of individual children.

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

The previous system which provides allocations of resource teaching support for individual pupils in particular disability categories, guided by the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC Report), therefore no longer applies.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational

profile.

1,000 additional special education teachers have been provided for schools since 2017, while the total number of special education teachers has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011, to over 13,400 at present.

Adding an additional 15% to the current level of provision of 13,400 posts, would require the addition of some 2000 extra special education teachers, at an approximate cost of €120 Million per year.

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

Following on from an increase allowed in the 2018 Budget that the sanctioned number for NEPS psychologist stands at 194 whole-time equivalents of which some 187 w.t.e. posts are currently filled with 7 posts vacant due to on-going retirements and resignations, etc. within the Service. Even at this current level this represents the highest number of psychologists to be employed within NEPS since the inception of the service in 2000.

Additionally the Deputy may be aware that under the provisions of Budget 2019 I was pleased to announce that NEPS psychologist numbers will expand by a further 10 posts from the start of the new academic year bringing the overall approved psychologist numbers to 204 w.t.e .

I can inform the Deputy that a national recruitment competition is currently in operation by the Public Appointments Service in conjunction with my Department to replenish NEPS Regional Recruitment Panels to allow for both the filling of the above-mentioned vacancies and the expansion of NEPS number by a further 10 posts from September.

In answer to the Deputies specific question I can inform that NEPS 2019 budget stands at €20.756m and therefore a straight 25% increase would amount to an additional €5.2m. An increase of 25% on the existing NEPS psychologist staff complement would add approximately 50 posts. The average direct pay and non-pay cost per annum of engaging an individual Educational Psychologist is €75,000 per annum. The estimated annual additional cost, therefore, of employing the following numbers would be **€3.75m**

### **National Educational Psychological Service Administration**

313. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to provide administrative support for each national educational psychological service, NEPS, psychologist. [35235/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments. (SCPA).

NEPS is organised on a regional basis with 23 offices and currently with some 187 w.t.e. psychologist staff. It has a Head Office administrative Unit sited within my Department in Dublin. Direct administrative support is afforded to psychologists within NEPS at a local and national level, within this structure, by some 29 w.t.e. administrative staff.

Ancillary administrative support is provided to NEPS staff by services units within my Department, along with the generality of other departmental staff from, for example, the HR Unit, Finance Unit, etc..

I can inform the Deputy that the NEPS administrative staff budget currently amounts to approximately €1.3m per annum. The unit cost per psychologist of this direct administrative support is therefore some €6,952 per annum.

### **Home School Community Liaison Scheme**

314. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to restore rural co-ordinator service under the home school liaison service. [35237/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The DEIS Rural Coordination Service was discontinued with effect from 31 August 2011. At that time there were 46 Rural Coordinator Posts at a cost of €2,714,000.

Currently, all DEIS Urban Primary and DEIS Post Primary schools are included in the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme, which serves 533 schools. The scheme is delivered by 415 full-time HSCL Coordinators who are teachers in these schools and assigned to HSCL duties either in individual schools or clusters of schools, catering for approximately 156,000 pupils.

In addition, and responding to specific actions in the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion

Strategy (NTRIS) and DEIS Plan 2017, my Department has committed to the assignment of 4 HSCLs, as part of a 2 Year Pilot Programme commencing in the 2019/20 school year in 4 areas to target attendance, participation and retention/school completion for Traveller and Roma pupils.

The impact of socioeconomic factors on educational outcomes can be different between urban and rural settings and the HSCL scheme takes account of that. While urban and rural disadvantage share many characteristics, such as poverty, unemployment and poor housing conditions, the evidence suggests that disadvantage in a rural context does not have the same impact on educational performance compared to urban schools.

My Department's objective in implementing DEIS Plan 2017 is to have the maximum possible impact on providing opportunities for students most at risk of disadvantage. To achieve this, additional resources must be targeted as closely as possible at those students with the greatest need in terms of concentrated levels of disadvantage.

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

## School Equipment

315. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the school books grant by 30%. [35239/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department provides a book grant to all recognised primary and post primary schools within the Free Education Scheme in order to provide assistance for books including Book Rental Schemes.

Under this scheme, the Department provided funding of €16.9 million in 2019 to all of these schools.

It is a matter for the Board of Management of each individual school to decide on its own policy in relation to the use of this funding in the school but they are expected to adopt a cost-conscious approach to the selection of books for use in their classes. The current arrangement relies on the local knowledge of the school in order to ensure a fair allocation of funds to those most in need. The arrangements in relation to this scheme are set out in Circular 0046/2013 which is published on the Department's website at

*[http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0046\\_2013.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0046_2013.pdf)*

The estimated cost of a 30% increase in the book grant for primary and post-primary schools is circa €5.1m.

## Schools Building Projects Status

316. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools which are waiting on capital funding for future school build works or the completion of ongoing school build works by county; and the length of time each school has been waiting for the full amount of capital funding granted in tabular form. [35241/19]

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

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is also updated regularly.

## School Enrolments Data

317. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students at primary and post primary level enrolled for the school year 2019/2020. [35242/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Enrolments for 2019/20 are not yet available, below are projected enrolments for 2019/20.

Actual enrolment figures will be available in January 2020.

The projected enrolment figures for September 2019 are:

Primary Level - 566,220

Post-Primary Level - 369,673

Projections are published by the Department in the report titled 'Projections of Full-Time Enrolment Primary and Second level, 2018-2036'.

These reports can be found on the Department of Education website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/projections/>

\* Figures at primary level figures include both mainstream and special schools.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

318. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year net saving of replacing all rented prefabs with permanent accommodation assuming the cost of providing same is already accounted for. [35243/19]

319. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of replacing 100 prefab units with permanent accommodation. [35244/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 318 and 319 together.

My Department is taking an integrated approach with the Prefab Replacement Programme through the replacement of prefabs as part of large-scale and devolved projects or as part of new projects approved under the Additional Accommodation Scheme. This integrated approach helps to streamline the delivery of projects for schools.

In terms of progress being made on replacing temporary accommodation, since mid-2018 all schools approved for additional accommodation under my Department's Additional School Accommodation Scheme are also having necessary prefabs replaced as part of their additional accommodation project. To date approval has been granted to replace in excess of 200 prefabs with permanent accommodation and this number will continue to increase as further additional accommodation projects are approved.

I wish to advise the Deputy that Devolved projects, including those with prefab replacement approvals, are subject to procurement. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the cost of replacing prefabs in isolation as each individual projects will vary according to site issues, size of project etc.

### **Third Level Data**

320. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of third-level students registered in universities for 2018/2019. [35245/19]

321. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of third-level students registered with institutes of technology for 2018/2019. [35246/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 320 and 321 together.

Data relating to the number of third-level students registered for 2018/2019 is currently being collated by the HEA and will be transmitted to the Deputy in due course.

### Student Grant Scheme

322. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to reverse changes to the non-adjacent grant levels. [35247/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The cost of reversing the change to the distance criteria for the student grant is estimated to be in the region of €25.9m.

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

### Post-Leaving Certificate Courses Fees

323. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to remove apprenticeship and PLC course fees. [35248/19]

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

The amount charged to apprentices is calculated on a pro rata basis of the time which they spend in IOTs during the academic year. For craft apprenticeships, this cost would typically be one third of the €3,000 ASC paid by students attending for the full academic year and so amounts to approximately €1,000 per apprentice per period spent in the IoT. In the case of the new consortia led apprenticeships the contribution varies for each programme as their off-the-job training has a more flexible structure. In cases where training is delivered in an Education and Training Board there is no contribution made by the apprentice.

Based on projected apprenticeship provision in higher education institutions, apprentices or their employers will make up to €6.6 million in ASCs in 2019. If the arrangement in place prior to Budget 2014 arrangement were to be reinstated, where the apprentices paid the proportion of the ASC deemed to relate to examination fees, the total cost of not charging the ASC to the State would be €4.8 million in a full year.

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

**Third Level Fees**

324. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reducing the student contribution by €250 for students with family income by amounts (details supplied). [35249/19]

325. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reducing the student contribution by €500 for students with family income by amounts (details supplied). [35250/19]

337. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated amount a reduction of €500 to the student contribution charge would cost based on the most recent figures available. [35262/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 324, 325 and 337 together.

The Student Contribution, which currently stands at €3,000, was introduced with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. It is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the contribution since 2014/15.

The Deputy may wish to note that family income does not influence eligibility for the free fees scheme and accordingly my Department does not hold information on family incomes for students who are in receipt of free fees and paying the student contribution.

Therefore based on the overall number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2018/19 (and were therefore liable to pay the Student Contribution), and taking into account expected increases in student numbers, the estimated net cost to my Department of reducing the contribution by €250 or €500 is outlined in the following table. These figures are based on the student projections for 2019/20.

Reduce by (per student)	Estimated net cost to Department
€250	€19.6m
€500	€39.3m

It should be noted that the above estimates incorporate the resulting reduction to my Department's Student Grant Scheme budget as the exchequer pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance.

**Third Level Staff Data**

326. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one-point reduction in the academic staff to student ratio for universities. [35251/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that in accordance with the methodology used in the published institutional profiles, the current academic staff:student ratio in Universities is recorded at 20:1.

This is calculated based on the 2017/18 enrolment figures for full time equivalent (FTE) students (full and part time) to all academic staff as at 31 Dec 2017.

A one point reduction would require an estimated additional 288 academic staff and an estimated cost €17m per annum. It should be noted that this figure includes Department fund-

ed staff and externally funded staff. The estimated annual cost for a one point reduction in core academic staff is calculated at 200 staff at an annual cost of €12m.

### **Third Level Staff Data**

327. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of each one-point reduction in the academic staff to student ratio for institutes of technology. [35252/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that in accordance with the methodology used in the published institutional profiles, the current academic staff:student ratio in Institutes of Technology is recorded at 15:1.

This is calculated based on the 2017/18 enrolment figures for full time equivalent (FTE) students (full and part time) to all academic staff as at 31 Dec 2017.

A one point reduction would require an estimated additional 345 academic staff and an estimated cost €20m per annum. It should be noted that this figure includes Department funded staff and externally funded staff.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

328. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of extending grant support to part-time students at third level. [35253/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Based on the Higher Education Authority (HEA) statistical data of part-time undergraduate and part-time enrolments in all HEA funded institutions for the 2017/18 academic year, there were 23,794 part-time undergraduate students and 16,307 part-time postgraduate students.

If maintenance and fee grants were introduced for part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students along similar lines to those for full-time students, and similar numbers qualify for support, then the estimated cost would be in the region of €56m.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

329. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of extending grant support to postgraduate students. [35254/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** If the maintenance grants and eligibility for full fees were reintroduced for postgraduate students, along similar lines to those for undergraduate students, the total estimated cost would be approximately €44m.

This costing assumes that the actual number of postgraduate grant holders (2,194 in 2018/19) will increase to the level prior to the introduction of the 2012 Budget measure (6,027 students). It also assumes that students will qualify for the higher fee and maintenance grants.

### **Student Grant Scheme**

330. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing all rates of the student grant by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% respectively. [35255/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Every 5% increase in the student maintenance grant would cost circa €8.5m. Therefore, the estimated cost of increasing the student maintenance grant rates by 5%, 10%, 15%, or 20% would cost in the region of €8.5m, €17m, €25.5m, or €34m respectively.

### **Student Grant Scheme**

331. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the special rate of the student grant by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% respectively. [35256/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In 2018/19, there were 21,870 students in receipt of the special rate of maintenance grant. Based on these statistics, the estimated cost of increasing the special rate of maintenance grant by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% would be circa €4.5m, €9m, €13.5m and €18m respectively.

### **Student Grant Scheme**

332. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of increasing the special rate of the student grant by €30 per week for term time. [35257/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In 2018/19 there were 21,870 students in receipt of the special rate. Therefore, the cost of paying these students an additional €30 per week based on a 36 week period, would cost approximately €23.6m.

### **Student Assistance Fund**

333. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to increase the student assistance fund and support scheme for students with disabilities by 20% each. [35258/19]

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

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

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) provides financial support to higher education institutions to ensure that they are adequately resourced to cater for the needs of students with disabilities.

The Fund provides grants towards the individual needs assessment, provision of services,

purchase of equipment and provision of academic supports for students with disabilities. The scheme applies to students who have serious sensory, physical and/or communicative disabilities, including dyslexia.

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

### Capitation Grants

334. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of a 5% increase in capitation to PLCs, Youthreach and VTOS. [35259/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** Capitation amounting to €1.4 million was paid in 2019 in respect students attending PLC courses. In addition to this, SOLAS, the further education authority provided enhanced capitation of €2.5 million.

To increase the total paid by 5% would cost €195,000.

The Department provides funding to SOLAS to provide for further education programmes such as Youthreach and VTOS. The funding is disbursed by SOLAS by way of grants to the ETBs to cover all pay and non-pay elements of the programmes. There is no capitation element paid in respect of these programmes, although funding is based on the number of class groups. In 2019 SOLAS provided €67 million funding for the Youthreach programme and €70 million in respect of the VTOS Programme.

### Third Level Admissions Data

335. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of non-EU students who enrolled in higher education over the past five years. [35260/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The numbers of non-EU students enrolled in HEA funded higher education institutions over the five year period 2013/2014 to 2017/2018 is outlined in the following table -

Domicile Group	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Total Non-EU	13,153	14,558	16,315	16,839	18,468
Full-time students	12,555	13,741	15,581	16,196	17,719
Part-time students	598	817	734	643	749

The data for the academic year 2018/19 is not yet available. Full information on enrolments in Irish Higher Education institutions is available on [www.heai.ie/statistics](http://www.heai.ie/statistics)

### Third Level Fees

336. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the

number of students that qualify for the free fees initiative based on the latest student numbers available. [35261/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Under my Department's free fees schemes, the Exchequer provides funding towards tuition fee costs in respect of eligible students who are pursuing an approved full-time undergraduate courses of study in an approved institution in the State. The main conditions of the scheme are that students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the number of students who received funding under the free fees schemes in the academic year 2018/19 was 138,748.

*Question No. 337 answered with Question No. 324.*

### **Third Level Fees**

338. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which Ireland compares to other OECD countries in relation to student fees. [35263/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Student costs vary considerably across the OECD, from countries such as the United States and England where tuition fees are at the highest levels to a number of EU countries where no tuition fees are payable by students. The OECD Report, "Education at a Glance 2018" provides data on the structure, finances and performance of education systems in the 35 OECD countries, and a number of partner countries, and provides data on tuition fees and public supports across the OECD. Higher education is structured and funded in a wide variety of ways and arrangements are highly dependent on the context and circumstances of each individual country.

As the Deputy will be aware, in Ireland students who are eligible for assistance under the free fees schemes, receive funding towards their tuition fees with the student paying a Student Contribution which currently stands at €3,000. The contribution was introduced with effect from the 2011/12 academic year and has remained at €3,000 since 2014/15.

It is important to note that the exchequer pays the contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance. In addition, tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost.

I am committed to a schedule which is progressing key reviews and reforms of Higher Education Funding which includes an economic examination of the three policy options proposed by the report on future funding of higher education (Cassells report). My Department engaged with the European Commission and successfully secured their assistance to undertake this work through the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). The SRSP provides tailor-made support to all EU countries for their institutional, administrative and growth-enhancing reforms. In Q3 2019 the Commission sought the submission for proposals to undertake the review as outlined in the detailed Terms of Reference. It is expected that the evaluation of applications will be completed in September 2020. The review is envisaged to commence following this process. This review will inform future policy decisions on higher education funding.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

339. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if new apprenticeship programmes developed since 2017 will receive the same allowances for apprentices attending college as apprenticeships developed prior to 2017. [35264/19]

340. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of new apprenticeships developed since 2017. [35265/19]

341. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of apprentices enrolled per apprenticeship programme developed since 2017. [35266/19]

342. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if equality of allowances will be sought for apprenticeships in budget 2020; and if so, the estimated cost. [35267/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 339 to 342, inclusive, together.

This Government is committed to the ongoing expansion and development of our national apprenticeship system, as is evident by a year on year increase in the budget allocation. This year's allocation for apprenticeship training is €142m which represents an increase of over 16% on the 2018 allocation of €122m. Since 2015 new apprenticeship registrations have increased by 80% with 5,648 new registrations by the end of 2018. In addition, following two calls for proposals in 2015 and 2017 by the Apprenticeship Council, to date twenty new apprenticeship programmes have been developed and are now operational to complement the existing 25 craft apprenticeships.

It is important to note that the structure of these new consortia led apprenticeship programmes are different to those in the craft trades. Our new consortia-led apprenticeships offer more flexibility to employers in meeting their skill needs both in the duration of the programme and in terms of the delivery of the off-the-job training. These new apprenticeship programmes vary in length from 2 to 4 years and have different methods of off-the-job training such as one day per week, and on-line blended learning rather than the traditional block release of up to 22 weeks in an education setting, as is the case in the craft trades. While there is no training allowance paid to apprentices undertaking one of our new apprenticeships, I am aware that some employers engaged in the system have raised this as an issue. However, any change in this regard, would have to form part of the normal budgetary process and be considered in the broader context of competing demands and the overall availability of resources.

Details of apprentice population per new apprenticeship programme introduced since 2016 as requested by the deputy are set out in the attached tabular statement.

### **Apprentice Population**

20 New Apprenticeships developed Since 2016	2016	2017	2018	2019*
AUCTIONEERING				
Auctioneering & property services	n/a	n/a	52	58

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20 New Apprenticeships developed Since 2016	2016	2017	2018	2019*
Total			52	87
BIOPHARM-ACHEM				
Laboratory Analyst	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Laboratory Technician	n/a	n/a	14	17
Total	n/a	n/a	14	17
Electrical				
Industrial Electrical Engineering	12	31	54	57
Total	12	31	54	57
ENGINEERING				
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 6)	n/a	39	73	82
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 7)	n/a	36	55	57
Polymer Processing Technology	n/a	23	38	46
Original Equipment and Manufacture (OEM)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	n/a	98	166	185
FINANCE				
Accounting Technician	n/a	71	146	182
Insurance Practice	67	138	197	198
International Financial Services Associate	n/a	14	25	27
International Financial Services Specialist	n/a	14	24	25
Total	67	237	392	432
FOOD MANUFACTURING				
Butcher	n/a	n/a	7	22
Total	n/a	n/a	7	14

20 New Apprenticeships developed Since 2016	2016	2017	2018	2019*
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>				
Chef de Partie	n/a	n/a	27	32
Commis Chef	n/a	25	105	90
Sous Chef	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	n/a	25	132	122
<b>ICT</b>				
ICT Associate Professional Network Technician	n/a	n/a	22	54
ICT Associate Professional Software Developer	n/a	n/a	38	68
Cybersecurity Associate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	n/a	n/a	60	122
<b>LOGISTICS</b>				
Logistics Associate	n/a	n/a	27	30
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>1,045</b>

\*Latest figures as of 31st July 2019

### Apprenticeship Data

343. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost to create 1,000 additional apprenticeship places. [35268/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The average annual cost to train an apprentice in one of our craft apprenticeships is €7,159 per annum. Consequently, the estimated cost of providing an additional one thousand apprenticeship places is approximately €7.16 million in a full year.

### Private Schools

344. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year net saving of withdrawing the annual State subsidy to private schools. [35269/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Gross expenditure on the order of €95 million was incurred in 2018 on salaries for teachers and special needs assistants (including employer's PRSI). The total amount spent on Capital Expenditure (including ICT grants) in 2018 was on the order €0.958 million.

If the parents of children in the fee charging sector chose to send their children to the non-fee-paying sector, the State would have to fund those school places. In this respect, the figures quoted relate to the gross cost of fee charging schools and not the net cost. Since it is not possible to predict these patterns of behaviour it is not possible to calculate the net saving.

### **National Educational Psychological Service Data**

345. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year net saving of reducing the scheme for private psychological assessment by 10%. [35270/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools. This involves direct support in the event of a critical incident, access to national and regional support and development work to build school capacity to support students, access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, and access to individual pupil casework via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments. (SCPA).

Under the Scheme, schools that do not currently have access to an assigned NEPS psychologist for individual casework may commission psychological assessments from an approved panel of private practitioners maintained and paid for by NEPS for this purpose. NEPS pays an all-in fee of €304 (€243 net withholding tax) per assessment.

In its last full year of operation, 2018, NEPS expended some €0.52m on some 1,715 SCPA assessments countrywide - a reduction of 10% at this level would therefore produce a saving of €0.05m per annum.

### **Teachers' Occupational Health**

346. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is committed to the free counselling service provided by his Department for teachers and other civil servants previously known as care call but which is now provided by an organisation (details supplied); his views on whether demand for this service is increasing but that the budget for it has not been increased; his plans to ensure that clients of the service can automatically obtain six sessions; if he will allow clients of the service obtain more than six sessions with the same counsellor if necessary; if the same counsellor can deal with the client on an ongoing basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35275/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for teachers. The aim of this strategy is to promote the health of teachers in the workplace, with a focus primarily on prevention rather than cure. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises of the Employee Assistance & Wellbeing Programme (EAWP) and the Occupational Health Service.

EAP Consultants (branded as Inspire Workplaces) are the current providers of the EAWP which includes a free confidential service available to teachers and their family members. It is assessable by means of a Freephone dedicated helpline which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing counselling on a range of personal health and wellbeing issues given by qualified clinicians. Referral to the service is on a self-referral basis.

Under the service up to 6 face-to-face counselling sessions are available for short-term solution focused counselling based on clinical need. The EAWP provider must ensure continuity of counsellor during the period of action on a referral unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. Demand for the EAWP service has been increasing in recent years.

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) provides an internal Employee Assistance Programme to Civil Service staff. The Service is a work-based professional service which is designed to assist employees manage/resolve work-related and personal difficulties which, if left unattended may adversely affect attendance, work performance and quality of life.

### **School Transport**

347. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied with the school transport scheme; if changes to preserve the right of a student to a concessionary school transport ticket will be brought forward; if his attention has been drawn to the way in which the current scheme has affected as many as 20 students in the Gorey district area of County Wexford (details supplied) who are deemed concessionary in spite of their eligibility to enrol in the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35308/19]

**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. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who completed the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Minister McHugh has sanctioned an additional €1m on the school transport budget to allow for temporary alleviation measures to address a shortage of school transport capacity on the post primary scheme in 2019. The cost of these measures is to be given to those areas where there is a significant concentration of post-primary children who have paid on time for the 2019/2020 school year and who are attending their second closest school. A number of measures have been confirmed to alleviate some of the capacity issues in the areas of highest demand in some parts of the country.

Bus Éireann continues to work with the Department of Education and Skills to process applications and design routes to ensure that all eligible pupils who paid on time are facilitated with school transport. In doing this they are endeavouring to facilitate as many concession-

ary pupils as possible where capacity exists. Work is also ongoing with Bus Éireann to assess where limited resources can be invested to ease pressures in other parts of the country.

### School Patronage

348. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will request a short review of an application made alongside certain proposals with a view to allowing a school (details supplied) to continue to operate under new patronage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35310/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy may be aware, this school was one of a number of schools for which a transfer to multi-denominational patronage was proposed this year. Arrangements regarding staffing have been made by the outgoing and incoming patrons and I can confirm that the transfer of patronage has been effected.

### Departmental Expenditure

349. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35339/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Expenditure by the Department of Education & Skills on Lotus Notes Licences from 2009 to 2019 is as per the following spreadsheet.

Expected expenditure on renewal of Lotus Notes Licences for the next five years is €115,000.

Department of Education and Skills - Expenditure on Lotus Notes Licences

Year	Total
2009	€30,345.67
2010	€25,039.96
2010	€32,103.73
2012	€29,716.09
2013	€35,018.81
2014	€36,469.30
2015	€35,982.42
2016	€27,852.02
2017	€37,034.19
2018	€26,600.60
2019	€22,088.34
Total	€338,251.13

### Schools Building Projects Status

350. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position in relation to a school project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35379/19]

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

Following a legal challenge, authorisation to re-commence the pre-qualification process issued to the Design Team and school. The re-commenced process of compiling a shortlist of contractors for tender stage is currently nearing completion.

When the pre-qualification process for the main contract and reserved specialists contracts is complete, the project will then be progressed to tender stage. A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete.

In regard to the site acquisition, good progress is being made and it is anticipated that conveyancing will conclude in the near future. There is good ongoing engagement between both legal teams on finalising matters. It is not possible to elaborate on specific details due to commercial sensitivities. However, the Department will continue in its commitment to keep all parties generally apprised of progress in the transaction.

### **Professional Qualifications**

351. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a matter (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35391/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The regulatory requirement in order to become a registered electrical contractor in Ireland is to hold an Advanced Craft Certificate following completion of a statutory apprenticeship. The registration of electrical contractors is undertaken by Safe Electric and any recognition of foreign qualifications for that purpose is a matter for that body.

Foreign qualifications may be considered for exemptions within an apprenticeship by SOLAS under the Recognition of Prior Learning process if a person holding such a qualification is registered as an apprentice with a SOLAS approved employer but SOLAS is not responsible for offering a wider recognition process.

Further advice on Recognition of Foreign Qualifications can be found on the NARIC Ireland website [www.naric.ie](http://www.naric.ie).

### **Schools Facilities**

352. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding proposed extensions, upgrading and-or replacement of school facilities and buildings at both primary and post-primary level in Clane, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35438/19]

353. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding proposed extensions, upgrading and-or replacement of school facilities and buildings at both primary and post-primary level in Prosperous, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35439/19]

354. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding proposed extensions, upgrading and-or replacement of school facilities and buildings

at both primary and post-primary level in Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35440/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 352, 353 and 354 together.

Under project Ireland 2040, my Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), and this information is also updated regularly.

### **Gaelscoil Issues**

355. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of permanent status for a Gaelscoil (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35444/19]

356. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding acquiring a permanent site and discussions with his Department in respect of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35445/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 355 and 356 together.

My Department is currently considering a request from the school referred to by the Deputy for permanent recognition status. Upon completion of the process, an official from my Department will contact the school authority directly. It is not possible at this point to indicate when a site will be acquired.

### **Autism Support Services**

357. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of autism spectrum disorder, ASD, special classes in secondary schools, by county, in tabular form; the number of new classes that will be established in the 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35452/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has a statutory function to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs. This includes taking account of the flow of students from primary into post primary.

The NCSE works with families and schools to ensure that advance planning is in place so that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as

needing special class placements.

It is open to any school to apply to the NCSE to open a special class for children with special educational needs. There is a package of teaching, special needs assistant, training and funding supports available to assist schools. When the NCSE sanctions a special class in a school, the school can apply to the Department for capital funding to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class and/or to construct additional accommodation.

In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

Special classes for students with ASD provide 6 placements and are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1.5 at post primary level.

167 new special classes will be opened for the 2019/20 school year, which means there will be 1,622 special classes in place, compared to 548 in 2011. Of these, 370 are Post Primary ASD special classes, compared to 72 in 2011.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available, in tabular form by county with new classes identified, on the NCSE website at <https://ncse.ie/special-classes>.

As the Deputy's question also relates to future projected need I have forwarded it to the NCSE for direct reply.

### **Autism Support Services**

358. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his legislative powers have been used to date to ensure ASD classes are established throughout second-level education; if not, if a directive has been issued to the sector to establish such classes and ensure that no child is denied appropriate education at second-level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35453/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As Minister I have a power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed.

The legislation provides for a very transparent series of steps which can ultimately lead to the issuing of a legally binding direction to a board of management.

The initial step in the process is for the NCSE to inform the Minister there is a shortage of places in a particular area.

The NCSE has informed my Department that in general it is satisfied that there are placements available to meet identified need.

167 new special classes will be opened for the 2019/20 school year, which means there will be 1,622 special classes in place, compared to 548 in 2011. Of these, 370 are Post Primary ASD special classes, compared to 72 in 2011.

Where Parents have been experiencing difficulty securing a Post Primary special class placement, they should contact their local SENO to help resolve the issue.

In such circumstances the NCSE SENO will actively engage at local level with schools, Patron Bodies and the families to ensure that a suitable placement is provided as soon as possible.

Funding towards home tuition is available as a short term measure if no suitable place is available.

If, following completion of that work, the NCSE has not been able to establish the required school placements it can activate the provisions contained in section 37A of the Education Act 1998.

It should be noted that the continued growth in post primary special class numbers is a natural consequence of the earlier growth in primary special class numbers. However, it should not be assumed that the same levels of growth in post primary class numbers should apply. This is because, for children with Autism, transferring from a special class in a primary school to a special class in a post primary school may not always be the optimal choice. Many children can progress to mainstream post primary with support of SNA and Resource Teaching hours, while more may transfer from primary to a special school depending on their presentation and needs.

It should also be noted that there is a proportionally larger enrolment at Primary level due to the higher number of standard years.

I will continue to support the establishment of ASD Special Classes in all areas where the NCSE have identified the need to do so.

### **Autism Support Services**

359. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding per student in ASD special classes in primary schools; the amount of funding provided per student in secondary schools; his plans to remedy the disparity in funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35454/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Capitation funding is intended to contribute towards the cost of heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep etc. Capitation funding provided to schools, including enhanced capitation grants for special classes, may be regarded as a common grant which the Board of Management can allocate according to its own priorities.

My Department recognises the need to improve capitation funding for schools. Capitation grants are the main funding mechanism for schools to enable them meet their day to day running costs.

Budget 2019 provided for a 5% increase in Capitation funding for primary and post primary schools which 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.

It is my intention to seek additional funding for capitation in forthcoming Budgets.

The full range of capitation grants, including post primary special class grants, are among the many grants being considered as part of the Budget 2020 process.

It should be noted that it is extremely difficult to make valid comparisons between the levels of grants paid and the actual costs of running schools at primary and post primary levels. Primary ASD special classes receive an enhanced capitation grant of €849 per student enrolled

inclusive of the mainstream capitation rate (currently €179 per student). Post Primary ASD special classes do not receive enhanced capitation. However, the Post Primary mainstream capitation rate is €309 per student.

### Autism Support Services

360. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of inspections of ASD special classes in primary schools and secondary schools; the number of inspections that have taken place by county in tabular form; if specialist inspectors are employed for such inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35455/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** To date, in 2019, inspectors have conducted Evaluations of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN evaluations) in 41 schools, located throughout the country. This involved visits to 85 ASD special classes across these 41 schools. The Inspectorate's findings on the quality of education in these special classes were incorporated into the inspection reports on these schools, subsequently prepared for publication on the Department's website.

Almost all of the inspection reports arising from these SEN evaluations have completed the stages of the publication process. These reports have been issued to the schools inspected and they can also be accessed on the Department's website.

SEN evaluations are carried out by a small team of inspectors with specific expertise and experience in SEN and all team members have been fully briefed on the operation of the SEN evaluation model.

The number of SEN inspections conducted in 2019 is included in tabular format below by school sector and county.

#### SEN Primary Inspections (2019)

County	SEN-P inspections
Westmeath	1
Dublin	5
Galway	2
Limerick	1
Leitrim	1
Mayo	2
Clare	1
Roscommon	1
Wicklow	2
Kilkenny	1
Wexford	2
Cork	3
Waterford	1
Kerry	1
Tipperary	1
Kildare	1
Offaly	1

County	SEN-P inspections
Longford	1
Monaghan	1
Louth	1
Cavan	1
Total SEN Primary	31

### SEN Post-Primary Inspections (2019)

County	SEN-PP inspections
Cork	2
Dublin	5
Carlow	1
Kilkenny	1
Galway	1
Total SEN Post-primary	10

### Schools Building Projects

361. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the immediate safety of the building users of a school (details supplied) will be guaranteed in view of the requirement for further construction works. [35504/19]

362. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the nature of the construction works at a school (details supplied); and the reason the work is being carried out. [35505/19]

363. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the alternative provisions being made for the crèche to operate fully in view of the requirement for further construction works at a school (details supplied) during the summer periods of 2020 and 2021. [35506/19]

364. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the engineers report relevant to the construction works carried out and required at a school (details supplied) will be provided. [35507/19]

366. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the temporary engineering solutions and other precautionary measures referenced in the press release on 14 August 2019 will be fully complete before 26 August 2019 when the crèche returns and before the beginning of the new school term. [35509/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 361 to 364, inclusive, and Question No. 366 together.

The works required to implement precautionary measures at the school to which the Deputy refers have been completed. The school opened as planned on the 28th of August last. I understand that the crèche returned on the 26th of August.

The work completed entails some internal engineering solutions and external precautionary measures such as protective decking. These works were carried out pending the implementation of permanent remediation solutions to address structural issues with the building.

My Department intends to pursue the contractor for the costs of the precautionary measures and the subsequent permanent remediation works. For legal reasons, therefore, engineering reports are not being released at this time. My Department has provided the school with written confirmation that the building is safe to occupy on the basis of the engineering advice.

The arrangement for the crèche to use part of the school building is a local private arrangement between the school authority and the crèche. The crèche itself is a private company. On that basis, it will be a matter for the company to make alternative accommodation arrangements when permanent remediation works are being carried out at the school. My Department will be giving the school authority as much notice as possible of the timetable for those works.

### **Crèche Facilities Provision**

**365. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the value placed on the crèche facilities which operate in school buildings. [35508/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not have any remit for the provision of crèche facilities in schools.

In some cases, school authorities have facilitated a pre-school service on school property which involves the use of spare capacity within an existing building. The priority for schools is mainstream educational provision for pupils and should schools require the space for school purposes, the space must be returned to full-time school use. This is very important in every instance but is of particular relevance where there is a growing school population and a school has not yet reached capacity and space is available which may be required in the future.

A set of guidelines in relation to the use of school buildings outside of school hours was published by my Department in October 2017. These guidelines can be viewed on the Department's website at this link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/guidelines-on-the-use-of-school-buildings-outside-of-school-hours.pdf>. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance for schools in relation to the use of school buildings outside of school hours. The document also provides guidance to schools who wish to facilitate pre-school arrangements.

*Question No. 366 answered with Question No. 361.*

### **Consultancy Contracts Expenditure**

**367. Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35574/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with both European Union and Irish data protection legislation. As part of this commitment my Department has proactively supported training and awareness of both key staff and the wider Department.

Beginning prior to the implementation date of 25th May 2018, my Department undertook a "GDPR Readiness" project involving officials from key Business Units working together to ensure the appropriate steps were taken and training was undertaken at that time. My Department

paid Mr Dylan West, Law Library, a total of €2,880 in 2018 for advice in relation to that project.

Following the introduction of GDPR and the Data Protection Act, 2018, officials working in the data protection function of my Department have attended relevant conferences and undertook training to upskill and stay abreast of issues in what is an ever-developing area of law. Details of training undertaken and conferences attended are set out in the tables below.

### Training

Company	Attendees	Total Cost
CMG	11	4526.7
IPA	1	405
Government DPO Framework Training (IACT)	7	6771
Mason Hayes & Curran	1	295
Irish Centre for European Law	1	300
Privacy Laws & Business	2	800
European IPA	1	2070
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 places</b>	<b>€15,167.70</b>

### Conferences

Company	Attendees	Total Cost
Legal Island	1	155
Data Forum	1	192.19
Iquest Ltd	5	1451.40
CMG	3	1420.65
Irish Computer Society	1	520
PDP	2	1940.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 places</b>	<b>€5,679.49</b>

Officials in the Data Protection function work with Business Units in supporting compliance and pass on the relevant knowledge through briefing and direct engagement. The Department has also established a Data Stewards Network with representatives from each Business Unit who will act as a local resource and point of knowledge of Department policies and procedures. Data Protection has also been the topic at a number of internal networking events and other engagements since 2017 with presentations and discussion led by relevant officials.

In addition to the ongoing development of the data protection function, the Department has sought to raise awareness amongst the wider Department through the procurement of a “GDPR and Data Protection E-learning module” for all staff (circa 1,500) at a cost of €13,750 from Legal Island ltd. This is being rolled out to staff on a phased basis at present.

Seven officials also attended a training course by Philip Lee Solicitors on “Data Protection Impact Assessment” in April 2018 at a cost of €1537.50.

On a related note, the Internal Audit function of my Department has entered into a three year contract with Deloitte to deliver IT technical internal audit services. A multi-year IT technical audit plan has been agreed, of which an IT GDPR technical systems assessment is included. This audit report was completed at a cost was €13,737 (VAT inclusive) and approved by the

Audit Committee in May 2019.

### **Student Grant Scheme Administration**

368. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason under the SUSI grant system parents are deemed legal guardians until persons reach 21 years of age; and the reason the rest of the State system recognises persons as independent adults from the age of 18 years of age. [35587/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Different State support schemes have different objectives. The Department's statutory based student grant scheme has its own particular objectives which is to provide additional assistance where parental income is below a certain threshold or, in the case of independent mature students, where the level of income of the student and his or her spouse warrants additional assistance by way of a grant.

For student grants 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 may be assessed as an independent mature student if he or she has attained the age of 23 on the 1st of January of the year of first entry to an approved course or of re-entry following a break in studies of at least three years and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous October. Otherwise he or she would continue to be assessed on the basis of parental income.

Only in exceptional cases, where compelling evidence of estrangement from parents/guardians is provided, can candidates who are under 23 be assessed without reference to their parents/guardians income or address, Article 21(3) (b) of the Scheme refers.

### **Schools Building Projects**

369. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for a site (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35601/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** A building project at the schools referred to by the Deputy is in my Department's Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

The Department has completed the process for the appointment of a Design Team including an Architect, Civil/Structural Engineer, Building Services Engineer, Quantity Surveyor, and Project Supervisor Design Process for the Navan Road Schools Project, which includes St John Bosco Senior Boys National School, St John Bosco Junior Boys National School and Our Lady Help of Christians Girls National School.

The brief for the project is to provide the additional permanent accommodation, including 17 classrooms, 6 Special Education Tuition Rooms, 3 Multi-Purpose Rooms, 1 Shared General Purpose Room plus circulation space and lift; once the building project is complete all the existing prefabs currently on the site will be removed.

Due to the very confined nature of the site, and the likely restrictions to providing all the Residual Accommodation, priority will be given to the classroom accommodation in the first instance.

The Design Team is currently working on producing a Stage 1 – Site Suitability, Site Report & Initial Sketch Scheme Submission. A number of surveys have been approved by my Department and carried out at the school site including site Survey & geotechnical investigation.

### **Schools Establishment**

370. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to establish a new primary school in Carrigaline, County Cork; when the school will be established; the position regarding the patronage of the school; the location of the school; when the recruitment process for the position of principal and teaching posts at the school will be advertised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35602/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022) including a new 16-classroom primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Carrigaline school planning area. This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies 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.

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 will be collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department's assessment reports, the NSEG will submit a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision.

The patronage process for schools due to be established in 2020, including the school referred to by the Deputy, will be run later this year. Updates in relation to further patronage processes will be announced on the OPPS website and the Department's website ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)).

The school will be established in September 2020 in suitable interim accommodation. My Department is currently identifying site options and a determination regarding the permanent location for the school will be made as soon as possible.

### **Schools Building Projects Applications**

371. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a funding application by a school (details supplied); when the application will progress to the next stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35605/19]

**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 Stage 2(b) submission for this project has been reviewed and the Design Team has 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.

The Department’s capital programme continues to address the challenge posed by significant increases in the school population particularly in developing areas. To help meet this demographic challenge, during the course of 2019 over 80 large scale projects and 140 projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme are under construction.

There are currently 375 large-scale projects for delivery under the school building programme as part of the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027. The current status of each of these projects is listed on the Department’s website and is updated on a monthly basis.

To manage this volume of projects within the overall budget the Department must continuously profile projects to progress towards commencing construction and draw down of funding on a scheduled basis.

In this context, the Department will revert to the school in early September with prospective timelines for the further progression of this major building project, including pre-qualification of contractors and progression to tender stage.

### **Departmental Data**

372. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35642/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department aims to provide quality services to our customers and this is underpinned in our Customer Charter. If a customer is unhappy with the service they have received, there is a complaints procedure in place to address these instances. Details of this procedure is available on the Department’s website.

The complaints procedure advises customers on making a complaint, and the steps that will be taken by Department officials to handle the complaint once it is received.

While a complaint can be made to any member of staff, a formal complaint can be made to my Department’s Customer Service Office, if it cannot be resolved at the initial point of service. Formal complaints can be made to a dedicated e-mail address, [complaints@education.gov.ie](mailto:complaints@education.gov.ie), and are logged by that Office. The complaints process is clear and transparent and there have been no issues in having complaints registered under the Customer Charter.

The number of formal complaints received by my Department in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 are as follows:

2017: 4 formal complaints received

2018: 3 formal complaints received

To date 2019: 5 formal complaints received.

### **School Staff**

373. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school secretaries employed to date in 2019, by county, including secretaries directly employed by his Department and those paid using the ancillary services grant, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35660/19]

374. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of school secretaries employed directly by the State to date in 2019; the number of school secretaries paid using the ancillary services grant, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35661/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 373 and 374 together.

The Boards of Management of schools are responsible for the employment of school secretaries and it is a matter for each school to determine the level of secretarial services required for the school. Funding to cater for these services is made available from my Department under two separate schemes.

One is the 1978/79 scheme 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 153 primary and 110 post-primary whole time equivalent school secretaries employed by schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and paid through my Department's payroll. This information is not maintained on a county basis.

The 1978/79 scheme has been superseded by a more extensive capitation grant scheme towards the funding of ancillary services in schools. Within the 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.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

375. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools will be reduced; his plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35677/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

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

get 2018 measure which provided a one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

It is the annual staffing schedule which determines the allocation of teachers to schools. For the current school year, it 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 latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratio show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.2:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2018/19 school year.

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

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

376. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a new sports hall for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35679/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department is in receipt of an application for capital funding which includes funding for a new sports hall from the school referred to by the Deputy.

Under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in post-primary schools.

Under the Ireland Project 2040, we will invest €8.4 billion (compared to €4.9 billion in the previous decade) in primary and post primary school buildings.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The government will focus in the medium term on the provision of PE facilities in post primary schools.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

377. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps being taken to reduce teacher to pupil ratios in schools in the Dublin 15 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35698/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

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

schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

It is the annual staffing schedule which determines the allocation of teachers to schools. For the current school year, it 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 latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratio show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.2:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2018/19 school year.

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

### **School Transport**

378. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to allow the medical card waiver to apply for school transport for pupils who may not be attending their nearest school for a variety of reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35701/19]

**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. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who completed the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who hold valid medical cards (GMS Scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

In addition, there is no charge for children who are eligible for school transport under the terms of the Department's School Transport Scheme for children with Special Educational Needs.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only which is subject to a number of terms and conditions including the availability of spare seats and payment of the annual charge.

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

### **School Transport Eligibility**

379. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a

child (details supplied) has been denied school transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35722/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

Under the terms of the Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for school transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that the child referred to by the Deputy is not attending their nearest school - the child resides 10.8km from his nearest post-primary centre and 11.4km from the post-primary centre where he attends school. The child is therefore not eligible for school transport under the terms of the scheme. My officials have asked Bus Éireann to conduct a calibrated in this instance.

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

### Teacher Data

380. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount paid to teachers on part-time and full-time contracts, respectively, in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to the end of June 2019, in tabular form. [35724/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The total expenditure on part time and full time teachers salaries and substitution for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 to the end of June is set out in the tables below. These figures do not include expenditure in schools operated by Education and Training Boards.

Total Expenditure on Teachers' Salaries and Substitution in Primary, Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools.

Year	Primary School teachers	Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools Teachers
2016	€2,103,672,061	€1,111,028,320
2017	€2,256,756,193	€1,183,387,477
2018	€2,397,580,171	€1,286,534,301
Up to June 2019	€1,235,520,819	€625,882,305

Total Expenditure on Teachers' Salaries in Primary, Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools.

Year	Primary School teachers	Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools Teachers
2016	€1,980,209,656	€1,062,078,780
2017	€2,116,963,410	€1,131,267,730
2018	€2,241,936,806	€1,228,927,838
Up to June 2019	€1,131,905,925	€580,547,330

Total Expenditure on Teachers' Substitution in Primary, Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive Schools.

Year	Primary School teachers	Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools Teachers
2016	€123,462,405	€48,949,540
2017	€139,792,783	€52,119,747
2018	€155,643,365	€57,606,463
Up to June 2019	€103,614,895	€45,334,975

### Teacher Data

381. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching posts filled by teachers working on full-time, part-time and temporary contracts, respectively, in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to the end of June 2019. [35725/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in the level of detail requested. The information is being collated and I will arrange for it to be forwarded direct to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### Teachers' Remuneration

382. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the date, number of teachers impacted and value of payment due not issued for each event in which 30 or more teachers were not paid on an agreed date from January 2019 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35726/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Teachers are paid fortnightly by my Department. The process for payment is that where a contract is being awarded by a school to a teacher, application forms are submitted to my Department to enable payment to be set up. Application forms must confirm that a teacher is qualified for the appropriate sector and confirm their registration details with the Teaching Council. Details of bank accounts and other requested information must also be submitted. Once a completed application form is received, the payment will be processed as soon as possible. Normally, payroll closing dates are 10 days ahead of payment date. Where an application form is not complete or where there are queries on some aspect of the application, the forms will be returned to the schools which can result in a delay to payment being set up for a teacher.

Where a teacher is working on a casual/non-casual basis, schools enter details of the employee and the claim for payment into the online claims system and this will transfer to the Department's payroll and be paid according to the payroll schedules. Schools have details of

payroll closing dates. These payments cannot be processed until they are signed off by the school authorities.

During July and August, there are usually up to 20,000 changes to the payrolls operated by my Department. This consists of retirements, resignations, career breaks, job-sharing, new appointments, increases/decreases in teaching hours, temporary contracts, secondments, award of CID contracts, re-deployments, new schools and school closures. All appointments and changes are dealt with in chronological order. It is my Department's policy to set up as many teachers as possible for the first payroll of the new school year but not all payments can be guaranteed as details may not be received in time to enable payment to be made or applications received may be incomplete, and may have to be returned to the managerial authority for completion.

Once a contracted teachers is set up on payroll, their payment will continue until the end of the contract. Teachers' working on a casual/non-casual basis will be paid on the next scheduled payroll after the details have been submitted by the school.

### Teaching Contracts

383. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to an increased use of part-time contracts for teachers; if so, when his attention was drawn to the practice; the actions he will take to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35727/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** It is a matter for school management to issue contracts in accordance with the approved teacher allocation and curricular needs of the school, guided by Department of Education & Skills Circulars.

My Department has improved the position of part-time teachers through the implementation of the Ward Report and a revised sequence for allocating available hours in a school which gives preference to part-time teachers employed in that school.

### Schools Establishment

384. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if children living in Hollystown, Dublin 15 are in the catchment area for the new post-primary school in Dublin 15 due to open in 2020; the steps being taken to cater for the educational needs of children in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35729/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in an area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential developments in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development.

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

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

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 post-primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Blanchardstown\_West\_Dublin15 and BlanchardstownVge\_Dublin15 school planning areas as a regional solution.

New schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required, in the first instance, to prioritise pupil applications from within the designated school planning area(s) which the school was established to serve. This does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the designated school planning area where they have sufficient places.

For school planning purposes, Hollystown is located in the adjacent Mulhuddart\_Tyrrelstown\_D15 school planning area. As the Deputy may be aware, a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school was established in 2014 to serve the Mulhuddart\_Tyrrelstown\_D15 and had just over 600 pupils enrolled in the 2018/19 school year.

While the recent announcement did not include a new post-primary school for the Mulhuddart\_Tyrrelstown\_D15 school planning area, the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. My Department will also continue to monitor areas where the accommodation of existing schools may need to be expanded in order to meet the needs of the local population.

### **School Transport**

385. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the areas in which extra funding will be made available for additional school buses for the 2019-2020 school term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35744/19]

**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. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who completed the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in

operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Minister McHugh has sanctioned an additional €1m on the school transport budget to allow for temporary alleviation measures to address a shortage of school transport capacity on the post primary scheme in 2019. The cost of these measures is to be given to those areas where there is a significant concentration of post-primary children who have paid on time for the 2019/2020 school year and who are attending their second closest school. A number of measures have been confirmed to alleviate some of the capacity issues in the areas of highest demand in some parts of the country.

Bus Éireann continues to work with the Department of Education and Skills to process applications and design routes to ensure that all eligible pupils who paid on time are facilitated with school transport. In doing this they are endeavouring to facilitate as many concessionary pupils as possible where capacity exists. Work is also ongoing with Bus Éireann to assess where limited resources can be invested to ease pressures in other parts of the country.

### **School Accommodation**

386. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department is to carry out a review of its building inspection processes further to the recent revelation that 17 school buildings which were built by a company (details supplied) are in need of remedial work; if details of the inspections will be shared with school management and parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35751/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department is in the process of commissioning an independent review of current practices in the Design and Build model for the delivery of school buildings (or other similar public buildings) internationally. I expect to be in a position to announce the organisation carrying out this work shortly. The intention is that a Report will be available in the last quarter of 2019.

The Independent Review of the Design and Build Construction Model for School Buildings Internationally will be an important precursor for and input into a planned wider independent review once this is commenced.

The nature of international element of the independent review is designed to ensure that it does not prejudice the on-going legal process with respect to the School Remediation Programme. The planned wider independent review of the Department's Design & Build Programme will not commence until the legal process has concluded. Similarly, for legal reasons, the assessment outcomes on the buildings involved are not being released at this time. However, based on engineering advice, my Department has issued written confirmation to the schools concerned that their buildings are safe to occupy.

### **Schools Refurbishment**

387. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the supports for,

and consultation made with, the management, staff and parents of schools (details supplied) in relation to the remedial works that are being carried out due to structural problems found in the school building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35752/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The schools to which the Deputy refers are included in my Department's School Remediation Programme. Schools, Patrons and Education Partners are issued with regular updates on the progression of this on-going programme. Apart from keeping the school authorities involved directly informed, the purpose of these communications is to assist them with updating parents and staff. My Department has also made a dedicated e-mail address available for schools to raise any specific queries they might have and a dedicated team is available to discuss any issues arising for the schools.

The schools in question are among 17 schools informed earlier this year that detailed structural investigations would be carried out in them when they closed for the summer holidays. This approach was designed to prevent disruption to the schools. Direct contact was made with the schools to make the necessary arrangements for these detailed investigations. Subsequent on the ground communication took place with the school authorities when necessary works were subsequently implemented and written confirmation was given to them that the buildings are safe to occupy.

This level of communication and support will continue with the schools to address any concerns they might have and until permanent remediation works are carried out on the buildings.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

388. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will request the National Council for Special Education to provide a specialised class for children on the autism spectrum in the proposed new post-primary school in an area (details supplied) under the patronage of Educate Together; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35753/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The National Council for Special education (NCSE), an independent agency of my Department, is responsible for planning, coordinating and advising on education provision for children with special educational needs in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

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

Individual school boards of management are responsible for the establishment of special classes. It is open to any school to make application to the NCSE to establish a class. In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

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

Special Education Needs Organisers (SENOs) who are locally based are available to assist and advice parents whose children have special needs. Where parents have been unsuccessful in enrolling their child in a school, they should update their local SENO to inform the planning process.

SENOs are also available to assist and advise schools on special education supports and planning.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of such classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,621 across the country now, of which 1,355 are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special classes. This network includes 134 ASD early intervention classes, 849 primary ASD classes and 370 post-primary ASD classes in mainstream schools.

Special classes for students with ASD provide 6 placements and are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have a minimum of two SNAs for every class of 6 children.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available in tabular form by county on the NCSE website at <https://ncse.ie/special-classes>.

### Student Grant Scheme

389. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is planned to reduce the distance for a third-level student to qualify for the non-adjacent SUSI grant from 45 km to 24 km as it was up to 2011; the annual saving estimated in 2011 that would accrue from this change of rule on which the decision was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35757/19]

**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 costs of attending college. The student grant scheme does however, provide for different levels of maintenance support, depending on means. Grants are also provided at adjacent and non-adjacent rates. The higher non-adjacent rates are intended to provide additional support to those students who may be living away from home.

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

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

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.

In 2018/19 academic year, 51.8% of maintenance grant holders qualified for the non-adjacent rate and 48.2% for the adjacent rate. The percentage split before the change was 77.9% (non-adjacent rate) and 22.1% (adjacent rate). Assuming that a change to the distance criterion would result in a similar percentage of students qualifying for the higher non-adjacent grant support as existed pre Budget 2011, then the estimated cost would be in the region of €26m.

### Liúntais do Mhúinteoirí

390. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige an fóirdheontas a bhíodh ar fáil d'ábhair oidí chun freastal ar chúrsaí Gaeltachta

a thabhairt ar ais ar an mbunús céanna a raibh fáil air suas go dtí an bhliain 2011; cén costas a bhainfeadh leis seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [35758/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Rinneadh an cinneadh le stop a chur le deontais socrúcháin Gaeltachta i rith na géarchéime eacnamaíochta nuair a rinneadh cinntí an-deacair, ar an drochuair, le cúrsaí airgid an náisiúin a chobhsú. Ag an am, tugadh tús áite leis na hacmhainní le haghaidh seirbhísí oideachais tosaigh a chosaint chomh fada agus ab fhéidir.

Meastar gurb é €1.8m in aghaidh na bliana an costas bliantúil atá ann le maoiniú iomlán a thabhairt don Socrúchán Gaeltachta athchumraithe ar na cláir oiliúna tosaigh múinteoirí (OTM) Bunscoileanna le haghaidh 1,200 múinteoir faoi oiliúint sna ceithre sholáthraí státmhaoinithe.

Cé nach bhfuil aon soláthar ann faoi láthair i mbuiséad mo Roinne don deontas seo nó cuid de in 2019, mar gheall ar bhrú leanúnach sa bhuiséad atá fós géarchúiseach, tá an t-ábhar á mheas go fóill i mo Roinn.

Chun cuidiú leis na costais den socrúchán Gaeltachta, is féidir le mic léinn a fhaigheann deontas mic léinn agus 100% den deontas táille san áireamh ann, nó mic léinn a cháileodh do dheontas táille iomlán ach go bhfuil an Scéim Táillí Saora á fáil acu, iarratas a dhéanamh ar mhaoiniú i dtreo costas taistil agus lóistín faoin ngné turais allamuigh de dheontas táille, faoi réir ghnáth-théarmaí agus ghnáthchoinníollacha na scéime deontais do mhic léinn. Seachas é seo, i gcásanna ina bhfuil riachtanas áirithe i gceist, is féidir le mic léinn iarratas a dhéanamh ar thacaíocht a fháil faoin gCiste Cúnaimh do Mhic Léinn. Tá eolas maidir leis an gciste seo ar fáil ach teagmháil a dhéanamh leis an Oifigeach Rochtana san institiúid tríú leibhéal a bhfuiltear ag freastal uirthi.

## **Education Policy**

391. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if parents can remove their children from classes in school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35764/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Access to relationship and sexuality education is an important right for students. Schools have a responsibility to provide for this, importantly, in consultation with parents and having regard to the ethos of the school. Curricular provision for Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) across primary and post-primary level is aimed at ensuring that topics are covered in an age appropriate manner.

In April 2018, a review of Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) in schools was announced by Mr. Richard Bruton TD, the then Minister for Education and Skills. The Minister asked the NCCA to undertake a review not just of the content of the curriculum but of how it is taught.

The NCCA were asked to look at a number of specific issues in respect of the curriculum, in particular the importance of consent and what it means. The NCCA will also look at developments in contraception and at healthy, positive, sexual expression and relationships. Other areas for examination are safe use of the Internet and social media and its effects on relationships and self-esteem, and on LGBTQ+ matters.

A consultative event was held in November 2018 at Collins Barracks, Dublin and involved approximately 60 groups and organisation who have expressed an interest in or who are

known to have an interest in contributing to the review. A further round of public consultation is planned by the NCCA, to run up to approximately October 2019, after which the NCCA Council will agree a final report to be sent to my Department.

The NCCA's draft review of its findings is currently open to consultation to ensure the findings and related draft advice is reflective of the needs of students, schools and parents. The draft report is available and anyone who wishes to contribute to this consultation, you may do so at:

*<https://www.ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/consultations/review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse>*

Section 30(2)(e) of the Education Act 1998 states that the Minister shall not require any student to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent of the student or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student.

### Schools Facilities

392. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in the provision of replacement facilities and-or a new school at a school (details supplied); the degree to which agreement has been reached in respect of the scale of replacement works; if the project will be expedited in view of the condition of the facility there and the need to maintain health and safety standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35790/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department's school building programme to be delivered as part of the National Development Plan. As part of the preparatory work for the project, a site visit has been made to the school. My Department will continue to liaise directly with the school authority relating to the progression of the project.

### Soláthar Iompar Scoile

393. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige a chinntiú go mbeidh dóthain spáis ar an mbus scoile a théann go scoil (sonraí tugtha) le freastal ar na scoláirí ar fad atá ag iarraidh ticéid lamháltais le dul go dtí an scoil seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [35795/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** Oibríocht shuntasach is ea Iompar Scoile, a bhainistíonn Bus Éireann thar ceann na Roinne. I scoilbhliain 2018/19 iompraíodh breis is 117,500 páiste - 13,000 páiste le riachtanais speisialta oideachais ina measc - in os cionn 5,000 feithicil gach lá chuig bunscoileanna agus iar-bhunscoileanna ar fud na tíre, thar 100 milliún ciliméadar, rud a chosain breis is €200m in 2018.

Is é cuspóir na Scéime Iompar Scoile tacú le hiompar páistí a chónaíonn i bhfad ón scoil is gaire dóibh a iompar chun na scoile agus abhaile, ag féachaint do na hacmhainní atá ar fáil. De ghnáth, cáilíonn páistí d'iompar scoil má shásaíonn siad critéir maidir le fad ón scoil agus má fhreastalaíonn siad ar an scoil is gaire dóibh, de réir chinneadh na Roinne/Bhus Éireann, ag féachaint do chúrsaí éitís agus teanga.

Tá slí ag gach páiste a cháilíonn d'iompar scoile agus a chuir iarratas isteach in am, i gcás ina bhfuil an tseirbhís i dtrácht á cur ar fáil i scoilbhliain 2019/20.

Páistí nach gcáilíonn d'iompar scoile, féadfaidh siad iarratas a dhéanamh ar iompar ar bhonn lamháltais amháin agus gheobhaidh siad áit má tá suíochán le spáráil tar éis áiteanna a thabhairt do na páistí cáilithe. I gcás inar mó líon na bpáistí neamhcháilithe ná líon na suíochán atá le spáráil, leithdháilfidh Bus Éireann ticéid do na suíocháin atá le spáráil ar mhodh aontaithe roghnúcháin.

Tá milliún euro breise ceadaithe ag an Aire McHugh don bhuiséad iompar scoile chun íoc as bearta maolaithe sa ghearrthéarma a leigheasfadh an ganntanas áiteanna ar an gcóras iompair scoil iar-bhunscoile in 2019. Bronnfar an t-airgead ar na ceantair sin is mó a bhfuil páistí iar-bhunscoile a d'íoc in am le haghaidh áit iompair scoile sa scoilbhliain 2019/2020 agus atá ag freastal ar an dara scoil is gaire dóibh. Tá bearta áirithe deimhnithe againn chun cuid de na fadhbanna acmhainne a leigheas sna ceantair is mó éileamh sa tír.

Tá Bus Éireann ag obair leis an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna i gcónaí, ag próiseáil na n-iarratas agus ag dearadh bealaí le cinntiú go bhfaigheann gach dalta cáilithe a d'íoc in am áit ar an scéim iompar scoile. Chuige sin, tá siad ag iarraidh a áit a thabhairt don líon is mó is féidir de dhaltaí lamháltais nuair a bhíonn suíocháin le spáráil. Tá obair leanúnach ar siúl le Bus Éireann féachaint cá háit is fearr na hacmhainní teoranta a infheistiú chun an brú i gcodanna eile den tír a mhaolú.

### **School Transport Appeals**

394. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the waiting time to have an appeal heard by the Student Transport Appeal Board for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35796/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

The School Transport Appeals Board, which is independent of my Department, determines appeals against decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Department of Education and Skills regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant-aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes.

An appeal was lodged with the School Transport Appeals Board on the 17th June 2019 in relation to the child referred to by the Deputy. The Board has requested the School Transport Section to provide a report in accordance with the terms of the Board's Operating Procedures. When received, the Board will liaise directly with the family regarding the appeal date and their subsequent deliberations.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

395. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the construction of a new school (details supplied); if the schedule of accommodation has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35809/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is in the process of being devolved to Waterford & Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) for delivery.

I can confirm that the schedule of accommodation for the proposed new school has been completed and a copy has been provided to the patron.

The next step in the process is to put in place a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between my Department and WWETB. The Department is currently carrying out the preparatory work necessary to issue the SLA to WWETB for its signature.

Thereafter, the ETB will procure a design team for the project to design the building, obtain the necessary statutory planning permission and move the project onward to construction in due course. As the project is at an early stage in the delivery process, it is not possible at this time to give a date for its completion.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

396. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the construction of a new school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35810/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) – 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 completing the Stage 2(b) report for submission to the Department for review. Upon receipt and review of the Stage 2(b) report the Department will revert to Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

397. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he plans to reduce class sizes here in view of the fact the average class size here is significantly higher than the average size across OECD countries; if he will engage with the Minister for Finance with regard to the financial resources needed to tackle class sizes comprehensively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35825/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

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

schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

It is the annual staffing schedule which determines the allocation of teachers to schools. For the current school year, it 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 latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratio show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.2:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2018/19 school year. Average class sizes at primary level improved from 24.9 to 24.3 in the same period.

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

### **Schools Building Projects Data**

398. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a schedule of inspections conducted at a site (details supplied) and its surrounds for quality assurance and building regulations compliance since the project commenced to date will be provided; his plans to carry out a full risk assessment at the location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35835/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under my Department's Design & Build programme. This delivery programme uses a professional external Project Manager to progress the project through the relevant stages of architectural planning, tendering and construction. There is also a full-time Clerk of Works present on site who represents the interests of the Department in regard to ensuring that the quality of both materials and workmanship are in accordance with architects/engineers drawings and specifications.

As required under the Building Control Regulations my Department has also appointed an Assigned Certifier for the project.

The role of the Assigned Certifier is to:

- (a) provide and sign the relevant statutory certificates - the form of undertaking at commencement and the Certificate of Compliance on Completion;
- (b) co-ordinate the ancillary certification by members of the design team and other relevant bodies for the Certificate of Compliance on Completion;
- (c) identify all design professionals and specialists, in conjunction with the Builder, from whom certificates are required;
- (d) identify all certificates required and obtain them;
- (e) co-ordinate and collate all certification of compliance for completion in conjunction with the Builder;
- (f) in consultation with the members of the design team, plan and oversee the implementation of the Inspection Plan during Construction;
- (g) prepare the Preliminary Inspection Plan and oversee adherence to this plan, and on completion provide the Inspection Plan as implemented;
- (h) on termination or relinquishment of their appointment make available to the Building

Owner all certification prepared and inspection reports carried out;

- (i) act as the single point of contact with the Building Control Authority during construction;
- (j) seek advice from the Building Control Authority, in respect of compliance matters relating to the building or works where disputes or differences of opinion arise between the parties to the project; and
- (k) maintain records of inspection.

The information provided by the Deputy has been referred to my Department's D&B Project Manager and the Assigned Certifier for investigation. If any problem is found the matter will be resolved under the terms of the Contract prior to the Assigned Certifier presenting the application for certification on the Building Control Management System (BCMS) and prior to handover and occupation of the school.

### **Research Funding**

399. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if grant aid is available to fund research (details supplied). [35838/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to their designated higher education institutions. The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to the institutions, covering such areas as teaching and learning and research. As autonomous bodies, the internal disbursement of this funding is a matter for the individual institution. The latest HERD survey (survey of research and development activities in the higher education sector) indicates that the portion of this block grant allocated to research was €230m in 2016.

My Department is also providing total funding of €47.6 million in 2019 to the Irish Research Council, HEAnet and the Irish Centre for High End Computing, as follows:

- €40.5m is being provided to the Irish Research Council to support excellence in frontier research across all disciplines and all career stages. Particular focus is placed on early career researchers and the promotion of diverse career opportunities for researchers by partnering with enterprise and employers. Awards are made on a competitive basis on the basis of excellence following assessment by expert independent panels. Information about calls, including opening and closing dates, may be found on the IRC website [www.research.ie](http://www.research.ie)

- €6m is being provided to HEAnet, Ireland's National Education and Research Network, to provide internet connectivity and associated ICT services to higher education and research organisations. Its e-Infrastructure services underpin the academic research and education activity for the higher education sector, as well as providing e-infrastructure for primary and post-primary schools. Further information is available on <https://www.heanet.ie>

- €1.1m is being provided to the Irish Centre for High End Computing for the provision of high-performance computing services, support, education and training for researchers in higher education institutions and Irish enterprise. Further information is available at <https://www.ichec.ie>

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

400. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 260 of 9 July 2019, if a review of the stage 2(b) has been completed; the status of the new building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35845/19]

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

The Design Team has confirmed that it is working on finalising the Stage 2(b) report ensuring 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. The Design Team Leader currently envisages that the Stage 2(b) report will be with the Department for review by end September.

Upon completion, receipt and review of the Stage 2(b) submission, the Department will be in contact with the school regarding the progression of the project at that time.

### **DEIS Eligibility**

401. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if measures will be put in place in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Cork. [35859/19]

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

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

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

### **School Transport Data**

402. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of quality assurance checks of vehicles operating the school transport scheme that took place in 2018; the number of checks and the pass rate by county, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35864/19]

403. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of unannounced inspections carried out by school transport supervisors in 2018; the number of times an inspection was not passed; the number of follow-up inspections carried out; the number of follow-up inspections failed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35865/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

I propose to take Questions Nos. 402 and 403 together.

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that in relation to vehicle testing standards, all large public service vehicles operating in the state must meet the minimum statutory requirements of the Road Safety Authority's Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness test and are subject to roadside inspection by the Authority to ensure that they have a current roadworthiness certificate at the time of roadside inspection. Each vehicle must also have a valid Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licence issued by a PSV Officer of An Garda Síochána following inspection. Both of these legal requirements are verified by Bus Éireann before any vehicle is permitted to be added to the nominated fleet of any contractor seeking to provide services under the School Transport Scheme. In addition to the statutory requirements, Bus Éireann arranges for additional examinations of vehicles operating under the School Transport Scheme – which are both targeted and random. These additional quality assurance checks are carried out by an independent agency on behalf of Bus Éireann.

All operators successfully awarded contracts to operate School Transport Scheme services by Bus Éireann must meet their contractual obligations set out in respect of vehicle safety, safety inspections and maintenance systems.

Bus Éireann has advised that the detailed information requested is not readily available and will involve an amount of administrative time to compile. In this regard, Bus Éireann has been requested to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

**404. Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of plans to build a new school building at a school (details supplied). [35948/19]

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

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

I can also inform the Deputy that approval was given by my Department to carry out a series of works, which included surveys of the existing main building to investigate issues with it, refurbishment works on the existing temporary accommodation on site, and works to address disabled access issues. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that these works were carried out over the summer months and, aside from a small number of surveys, are now completed.

It is my understanding that the school management are happy with the high standard of work carried out. The Department will continue to work closely with the school and the ETB to process the project.

### **State Examinations Commission**

405. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35951/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

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

### **Special Educational Needs Staff Remuneration**

406. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a pay increase for special needs assistants, SNAs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35961/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Remuneration is set by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. SNAs have benefitted from the increases in pay and changes to Additional Superannation Contribution (formerly PRD) as agreed through the Public Service Pay Agreements (PSSA) and enacted through the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017. The latest increase in basic pay of 1.75% is effective from the 1st of September 2019 and includes SNAs who are public servants covered by the PSSA and legislation.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

407. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a permanent school for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35964/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** This building project is currently at Stage 2B of the Architectural Planning process – Detailed Design Stage. The pre-qualification of contractors process has been carried out by the Design Team. The next stage of Architectural Planning for this project will be Stage 3 – tender stage which normally takes 7-8 months to complete. My Department will be in contact with the school regarding progression to tender stage.

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

### **Schools Amalgamation**

408. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a matter (details supplied) relating to a schools amalgamation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35973/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy

that additional information, requested from the Patron body, in relation to the proposed amalgamation of the two schools in question, has been received in my Department and is under review.

Upon completion of the review, an Official from my Department will contact the Patron directly.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

409. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a project (details supplied); the details of delays to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35976/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the delivery of this project has been devolved to Louth County Council (LCC). The project is currently advancing through the Stage 2B Detailed Design Process. Fire Safety Certificates and Disabled Access Certificates were received in late 2018, and a preliminary Health and Safety Plan was completed in late April. This is a challenging project to plan as significant archaeological finds have been recorded in and around the vicinity of the site. There is also a need to carefully plan and design the site's road access from the N52. This prolonged the planning process, but planning permission was granted in July 2018.

The project's Quantity Surveyor is currently working with the Design Team to ensure that the proposed building achieves maximum value-for-money. My Department is being appraised of developments by the Design Team in monthly Progress Reports. The Design Team recently confirmed that preparation of the Stage 2B tender documentation will be completed shortly. This will allow the project to proceed to tender.

### **Education and Training Boards**

410. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the proposed Louth and Meath Education and Training Board, LMETB, headquarters in Drogheda, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35980/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (LMETB).

A number of design issues have arisen with this project. These have included issues relating to the need for additional security features for the proposed building that became apparent at tender stage and which required a change in brief with consequent design alterations. Currently, the capacity of the building is being reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of LMETB into the future.

I can assure the Deputy that every effort to progress the project has been made in 2018 and 2019 and will continue to be made. A number of meetings between officials from my Department and LMETB and its design team, with a view to addressing the relevant issues, have taken place in the last year. However, it is still too early at this stage to give a commencement date for construction.

### **Student Grant Scheme Appeals**

411. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting a long time for the person's SUSI grant review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35990/19]

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

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

412. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the work being undertaken to expedite the new school project for a school (details supplied); the actions being taken with regard to same; and the timescale for construction work to commence. [35992/19]

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

Following a legal challenge, authorisation to re-commence the pre-qualification process issued to the Design Team and school. The re-commenced process of compiling a shortlist of contractors for tender stage is currently nearing completion. When the pre-qualification process for the main contract and reserved specialists contracts is complete, the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

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

### **School Funding**

413. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary and post-primary schools, respectively, that require parents to pay voluntary contributions. [36002/19]

414. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to end the practice of voluntary contributions in primary and post-primary schools; his plans to appropriately fund primary and post-primary schools to end the need to ask for money from parents to meet funding shortfalls; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36003/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 413 and 414 together.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. Ultimately it is a matter for each individual

school to determine if it should seek a Voluntary Contribution, considering its individual circumstances. My Department does not hold records regarding payments collected from parents including voluntary contributions received by schools.

It should be noted that the term 'require' used by the Deputy appears to imply that voluntary contributions may be compulsory in schools. This is not the case. It is permissible for schools to look for voluntary contributions provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition.

In relation to school costs in general, I strongly support any measures that can be put in place to reduce costs for parents. All schools must be sensitive to the financial pressures on parents in making decisions, not just about fees, but about any matter that has cost implications for parents including uniforms and books etc. Specific guidance issued to schools on this issue (Circular 32/2017) and referenced the need for schools to do everything possible to keep costs down for parents.

I do, however, fully recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools. I am pleased to have been able to provide for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post primary schools from the start of the 2019/20 school year. The first and full year cost of this increase is €4 million and €10 million respectively.

I must be prudent in the context of ongoing budgetary pressures. Where it is not possible to do everything that I would like to do in the education sector in any one year, I have to prioritise, especially in the context of increasing enrolments. It is my intention to seek funding for further capitation increases in future budgets. I also intend that, under the draft legislation on a Parent and Student Charter, schools will be required to consult students and parents regularly in relation to school costs and working to avoid costs acting as a barrier to participation. In addition it is intended that every school will be required to set out a financial statement, which will include information on how any voluntary contributions are used.

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

415. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools issued with a notice pursuant to section 37A(5)(a) of the Education Act 1998 in the Dublin 7 and 15 areas; his plans to provide additional resources to the schools that have agreed to provide additional ASD spaces; his plans to meet the schools in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36026/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I have a power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed. The legislation provides for a very transparent series of steps which can ultimately lead to the issuing of a legally binding direction to a board of management. The initial step in the process is for the NCSE to inform the Minister there is a shortage of places in a particular area.

The legislation was formally activated for the first time on April 18th following a report from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15. The specific provision required was 8 additional primary ASD primary special classes and 40 special school places for students with complex needs. There has been very intensive engagement between the NCSE, the Department and patron bodies and schools to address this issue. To date, this has resulted in the establishing of

the new Danu Community Special School in Dublin 15, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB catering for up to 40 students.

In addition, 4 ASD special classes have also been approved in mainstream primary schools in the Dublin 15 area leaving a total of 4 classes still required. On 23rd August, my Department issued a second statutory notice to six schools and their patron in the Dublin 15 area setting out the need to make more places available for children with special educational needs. The notice confirms my opinion that the schools should make additional education provision available and outlines the steps to be taken, together with information on the supports available. The schools and the patron have 14 days in which to make representations on foot of this notice. All of the notices that have been served and all the representations received from schools are published on the Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Supports-for-Pupils-with-Special-Needs/section-37a-notices/>

The notice follows a series of steps that have been followed under strict rules set down under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 (as inserted by Section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018)). Further to the Section 37A notice dated 22 August which issued to 6 schools, these schools had a consultation with Department officials on 30 August. Subject to the agreement of the schools to establish a special class, a package of support is available to each schools which includes the following:

1 teaching post and 2 SNAs for every ASD special class of 6 children;

Additional SNA resources if required for students in special classes through NCSE;

Training support;

Funding for accommodation adaptation that may be required;

Enhanced professional supports from NEPS and NCSE.

There is a legal process now in process with these schools. Schools have 14 days to make representations from the date of receipt of the S37A Notice. My officials had a consultation with boards of management and the principal under the Act. Accordingly, there are no plans to meet further with the schools concerned.

### **School Transport Provision**

416. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional funding provided for school transport for schools (details supplied) to date in 2019, in view of the fact that the school population will be larger and the catchment bigger; the process used to calculate transport needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36075/19]

476. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which the issue of students discommoded by the curtailment of a school bus (details supplied) has been resolved or is about to be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36650/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 416 and 476 together.

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Depart-

ment. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language. All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

The terms of the scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

### Gaelscoil Issues

417. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if sufficient Gaelscoileanna will be established in the north County Dublin area to meet the demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36102/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As part of the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030, my Department has committed to creating opportunities for expanding Irish-medium education outside the Gaeltacht in the context of the establishment of 42 new schools from 2019 to 2022, which will afford particular consideration to the establishment of Gaelscoileanna, Gaelcholáistí, and Aonaid Lán-Ghaeilge as part of the new patronage process.

I recently announced that five new primary schools being established from 2020-2022 are being designated for Irish-medium education. The five new schools will serve areas of growing populations where there is no existing Irish-medium primary school or where there is more than one new school to be established between 2019 and 2022. Included in these schools are the new primary schools to be established in Donabate in 2020 and in the Donaghmede-Howth-D13 school planning area in 2021.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that my Department has developed a new Online Patronage Process System, which provides objective information and allows parents to express their preferences in relation to the patronage and language of instruction, i.e. Irish or English, for new schools. As the Deputy may be aware, this has resulted in patronage of three of the 13 primary schools to be established in 2019 being awarded to An Foras Pátrúnachta as gaelscoileanna, including the school in Drumcondra-Marino-D1 school planning area. The patronage process for the remainder of the primary schools from 2020 to 2022 will be carried out in due course and may result in additional gaelscoileanna.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the impact of the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. My Department will also continue to monitor areas where the accommodation of

existing schools, including gaelscoileanna, may need to be expanded in order to meet the needs of the local population.

Details of schools that provide education through the medium of Irish are available on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **School Curriculum**

418. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider developing a comprehensive course for oral Irish and Irish comprehension for pupils with literacy difficulties; if such a course can be given a worthwhile status through public examinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36103/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Primary Language Curriculum, which is now available for all stages from junior infants to sixth class, is for teachers of children of all abilities in all school contexts. It seeks to support children in the development of their competence in the main language skills, including their competence in speaking and comprehension skills, at a level appropriate to their learning needs as they progress along their language learning journey. The Primary Language Curriculum promotes an integrated approach to language skills development and the transferability of those skills across languages.

Curricular provision for Irish at post-primary level is also underpinned by an integrated approach to the development of students' language skills in Irish. The learning outcomes set out in the specifications for Irish in Junior Cycle are broad allowing teachers scope and flexibility to differentiate learning to meet the needs of the students across the language skills. A dual approach is adopted to assessment in Junior Cycle - Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) and a Final Assessment. The Final Assessment component is marked by the State Examinations Commission. Students complete two CBAs and both take account of student' oral language skills. This places assessment in the learning context and supports its integration into every day teaching and learning practices which will in turn develop and enhance students' self-awareness and confidence as language users. CBA 1 requires that one piece of text included in the portfolio will be a sound/ video piece and, CBA 2 is based entirely on students' oral language competence, including spoken interaction. In addition, the Assessment Task, which will be assessed by the State Examinations Commission, will be related to the learning outcomes on which CBA 2 will be based.

In senior cycle, Irish is offered in the established Leaving Certificate and also in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The syllabuses in both cases support a differentiated approach to address students' learning needs and assessment by the State Examinations Commission includes the assessment of students' oral and comprehension skills.

The Primary Language Curriculum and the specifications for Irish in Junior Cycle are new and need time to embed in schools. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has already commenced the development of new specifications for Leaving Certificate (established) Irish.

I have no plans to develop a discrete course for oral Irish and Irish comprehension for examination through State examinations

### **Schools Building Projects**

419. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of a project (details supplied); the deadline for the scheme; the criteria for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36115/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** It is open to the school referred to by the Deputy to make an application for Major Capital Works to my Department. The application form (Form FLE) is available on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). There is no deadline for this scheme.

Under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in post-primary schools.

Under the Ireland Project 2040, we will invest €8.4 billion (compared to €4.9 billion in the previous decade) in primary and post primary school buildings.

The immediate priority of my Department is providing 20,000 new and replacement school places each year, to ensure that every child has a school place. The government will focus in the medium term on the provision of PE facilities in post primary schools.

### **Commencement of Legislation**

420. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he plans to commence section 7 of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018. [36118/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, which was signed into law by the President on the 18th July 2018, is an important piece of legislation which will introduce a more parent-friendly, equitable and consistent approach to how school admissions policy operates for the almost 4,000 primary and post-primary schools in this country and a fair and balanced school admission process for all pupils.

Following enactment, a number of sections of the Act were commenced in 2018 and are now operational. In February 2019, my Department began the process of consultation with the education partners on the regulations that will be put in place alongside the commencement of the remaining sections of the Act.

It is my intention to commence the remaining provisions of the Act, including Section 7, so that they will apply to applications for admission in respect of the 2021/22 school year.

### **Summer Works Scheme Applications**

421. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding will be approved for categories 7 to 10 under the minor works scheme to a school (details supplied); when the funding will be set aside; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36133/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that funding of more than €40 million was allocated for Summer Works projects in 2019. This €40 million investment secured money for schools to upgrade windows, meet curricular requirements and make structural improvements to buildings and related to applications submitted by schools in categories 7, 8 and 9 under the multi-annual scheme announced in 2015,

with works in these categories having been carried out over the summer months.

I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy has a Category 10 application under my Department's 2015/16 Summer Works Scheme. It is intended to undertake an analysis of these outstanding applications later this year. This analysis, together with funding availability and priorities for Summer Works Scheme 2020 onwards will determine the level of approval of such applications.

### **School Transport Appeals**

422. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if correspondence forwarded to the school transport appeals office by a person (details supplied) on 12 July 2019 will be acknowledged and replied to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36135/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

Decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Department of Education and Skills regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant-aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes may be appealed to the School Transport Appeals Board.

The School Transport Appeals Board has no record of the correspondence referred to by the Deputy.

Appeals should be made on-line to the School Transport Appeals Board at [www.school-transportappeals.ie](http://www.school-transportappeals.ie) or by downloading a School Transport Appeals Form on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

### **Departmental Internships**

423. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36146/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department tries to facilitate, where appropriate, internships where an individual, their college/university or an advocacy group/charity has requested a work placement.

The following are the unpaid internships/work placements facilitated over the last five years:

Myself and Minister Mitchell O'Connor have both facilitated interns through the Student Placement Programme in the Houses of the Oireachtas, my office in 2019 and Minister Mitchell O'Connor in 2018 and 2019.

Minister Mitchell O'Connor has also facilitated three EUSA placements (2017\*, 2018, 2019) taking one intern per year through this programme. EUSA is a not-for-profit international education organization that implements academically-directed internship programs on behalf of colleges and universities. She also facilitated an internship through Global Experiences, which is a part of the American Institute For Foreign Study's (AIFS) family of programs which results in academic credits for the intern as part of their studies, in 2018.

Since 2015, my IT Unit has facilitated six student work placements requested by TU Dublin Blanchardstown Campus (in association with Springboard) in order to provide students with the practical experience necessary to complete their IT studies.

My Department has also facilitated unpaid work placements in Dublin and Tullamore for five people from the National Learning Network (NLN) in this time period. This NLN provides a wide range of vocational training and education programmes, funded by SOLAS, as well as rehabilitative training, funded by the HSE, for people who need specialist support to gain employment (long term unemployed and people with an illness or disability).

\* One of these placements commenced when the Minister was in DJEI and moved across to my Department in 2017 when the Minister's role changed.

### **Schools Refurbishment**

424. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the refurbishment and extension of a school (details supplied); when work will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36164/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers is devolved to Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) for delivery.

My Department is fully aware of the need to urgently progress this project. However, it is of the utmost importance that the final outcome for this project will be the correct one for both the school authority and the pupils. In that regard, I would like to inform the Deputy that arising from its due diligence in respect of the preparation of the revised pre-qualification process for this project, DDLETB has carried out a review of the project which puts forward an alternative option for progressing it. In that respect, DDLETB recently met on-site with officials from my Department who have now sought further documentation from the ETB. This documentation, when received, will further inform my Department's active consideration of this proposal and will assist in determining the next steps to be taken in progressing the project.

In this respect, it is therefore not possible to give a date as to when work will commence at this time.

### **School Transport**

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

representatives of Bus Éireann or the RSA since September 2018 regarding the safety of the school transport fleet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36181/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The safety of children and those on board school transport vehicles is the number one priority for the Department and Bus Éireann. The Department holds regular meetings with Bus Éireann and the Road Safety Authority to discuss road safety issues of relevance to school transport. The Department has met with Bus Éireann and the RSA on a number of occasions since September 2018 and is in regular communication with both organisations in regard to school transport safety related issues.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

426. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide additional supports to students experiencing mental health difficulties at third-level institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36183/19]

497. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to invest in mental health services at third-level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36758/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 426 and 497 together.

My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to HEA designated higher education institutions (HEIs). The HEA allocates this funding as a block grant to the institutions. As autonomous bodies, the internal disbursement of this funding, including the funding of appropriate student services, is a matter for the individual institution.

All HEIs are required to put in place appropriate student services, which can fall under a number of headings, particularly 'Welfare and Guidance' which includes counselling services, health promotion, careers service, multi-faith, racial and ethnic cultural support. As such, the provision of appropriate services to students experiencing mental health issues would be included in this context. As part of their services to students, each HEI needs to consider what is most appropriate in the particular context of its own institution and students, while also considering best practice models such as peer-led support programmes and seeking to liaise with external services to the fullest extent possible. Students in HEIs can also access primary care and specialist mental health supports through their General Practitioner, and a number of institutions operate their own additional counselling service for students.

The Department of Health is currently advancing a number of e-mental health initiatives to augment this work such as the development of tele-counselling pilots with a view to national roll-out following successful evaluation. In addition, a 24-hour crisis texting service will be available to students and the general public in the near term. At present, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is also supporting mental health initiatives in the higher education sector, such

as the recently launched 'ReCharge' mental health campaign and '+Connections' mental health support. The Union of Students in Ireland also receives funding from the HSE to provide training courses in SafeTALK and ASIST. A working group has also been convened by the HEA to progress actions assigned to it under 'Connecting for Life', the national strategy to reduce suicide.

The National Youth Mental Health Task Force Report 2017 made a number of recommendations in this area and highlighted the good practice and innovative initiatives aimed at supporting students experiencing mental health difficulties in many institutions, as outlined in the AHEAD report *Mental Health Matters*. The Department of Health is developing a National Healthy Campus Framework which aims to support and recognise the work of institutions in improving the health and wellbeing of campus communities, and to generate and disseminate knowledge for promoting health and wellbeing on campus.

In relation to Budget 2020, I cannot comment, or pre-empt any decisions to be taken by Government at this stage, other than to state that funding for the higher education sector will continue to be a key focus for myself and the Department.

### **Schools Building Projects Data**

427. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the major school building projects scheduled to be completed in the next six and 12 months respectively; the number of projects scheduled to commence works in the next six and 12 months respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36185/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to major school building projects is currently being collated. I will arrange for the information to be forwarded directly to the Deputy shortly.

### **Departmental Communications**

428. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the communications he has undertaken to date with patrons and schools on the provision of school places for children with autism in Dublin 15; the date on which each communication took place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36186/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them is a key priority for me and the Government.

I am deeply conscious of the stress and anxiety facing parents and their children where difficulties are encountered in securing a school place.

As Minister I have a power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed.

The legislation provides for a very transparent series of steps which can ultimately lead to the issuing of a legally binding direction to a board of management.

The initial step in the process is for the NCSE to inform the Minister there is a shortage of places in a particular area.

The legislation was formally activated for the first time on April 18th following a report

from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15.

The specific provision required was 8 additional primary ASD primary special classes and 40 special school places for students with complex needs.

There has been very intensive engagement between the NCSE, the Department and patron bodies and schools to address this issue.

To date, this has resulted in the establishing of the new Danu Community Special School in Dublin 15, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB catering for up to 40 students.

In addition, 4 ASD special classes have also been approved in mainstream primary schools the Dublin 15 area leaving a total of 4 classes still required

On 23rd August, my Department issued a second statutory notice to six schools and their patron in the Dublin 15 area setting out the need to make more places available for children with special educational needs.

The notice confirms my opinion that the schools should make additional education provision available and outlines the steps to be taken, together with information on the supports available.

The schools and the patron have 14 days in which to make representations on foot of this notice.

The notice follows a series of steps that have been followed under strict rules set down under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 (as inserted by Section 8 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018).

- April 18th - The legislation was formally activated following a report from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15.

- April 30th - I appealed to schools and patrons to make more provision for children with special education for September 2019.

- May 27th - I wrote to the principals and chairpersons of boards of management in 22 schools in Dublin 15 requesting that they give serious consideration to the need for more special education provision.

- May 28th - The establishment of the new Danu Community Special School, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, was confirmed, with places for 40 children with special needs for the 2019/20 school year.

- June 27th - The Department served statutory notices under Section 37A (5) on 18 schools and 2 patrons in Dublin 15. These notices communicated my opinion that they should make additional provision for children with special educational needs.

- 30 July & 1 August – Consultations on the need for additional special education provision took place with two patron bodies.

- August 7th - Technical teams began site visits, with 10 schools initially, to carry out first-hand assessments of the accommodation available and consider its suitability for additional provision of special classes.

- August 23rd – Second legal notice served under Section 37A on 6 schools in Dublin 15, one of which has since agreed to establish a special class

I would of course prefer to see children welcomed into a school without the need for legal compulsion.

However I am determined to do my utmost to ensure every child is allocated a school place, including using the provisions of the Education Act to direct schools to make additional provision.

### **School Placement**

429. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the areas in which he has been advised to use his powers in the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 to increase school places by State bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36187/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Ensuring that every child has a suitable placement available to them is a key priority for me and the Government.

I am deeply conscious of the stress and anxiety facing parents and their children where difficulties are encountered in securing a school place.

As Minister I have a power under Section 37A of the Education Act 1998 to direct a school to provide additional provision where all reasonable efforts have failed.

The legislation provides for a very transparent series of steps which can ultimately lead to the issuing of a legally binding direction to a board of management.

The initial step in the process is for the NCSE to inform the Minister there is a shortage of places in a particular area.

The legislation was formally activated for the first time on April 18th following a report from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) outlining insufficient special school and special class capacity in Dublin 15.

The specific provision required was 8 additional primary ASD primary special classes and 40 special school places for students with complex needs.

There has been very intensive engagement between the NCSE, the Department and patron bodies and schools to address this issue.

To date, this has resulted in the establishing of the new Danu Community Special School in Dublin 15, under the patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB catering for up to 40 students.

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I would of course prefer to see children welcomed into a school without the need for legal compulsion.

However I am determined to do my utmost to ensure every child is allocated a school place, including using the provisions of the Education Act to direct schools to make additional provision.

### **Departmental Meetings**

430. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the engagements which have taken place between his Department and representatives of school secretaries since June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36188/19]

**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 had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives in May 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.

## **Education Policy**

431. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the work underway to examine the Cassels report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36189/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Following a request from the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for an economic examination of the three policy

options proposed by the report on future funding of higher education (Cassells report), my Department engaged with the European Commission Structural Support Service throughout 2018 to ascertain the scope for the economic evaluation to be carried out with support from the European Commission Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). The SRSP provides tailor-made support to all EU countries for their institutional, administrative and growth-enhancing reforms to carry out the analysis of the three policy options identified by the Expert Group.

A formal application for support under the SRSP was submitted in October 2018 and subsequently approved by the Commission. The Commission has sought the submission for proposals to undertake the work as outlined in the detailed Terms of Reference. It is currently expected that the evaluation will be completed in September 2020.

Having this evaluation undertaken through the Commission's SRSP will provide access to the type of independent international expertise and analysis that will be very beneficial to a major evaluation of this nature.

### **Student Universal Support Ireland Data**

432. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of SUSI grant applications made for the 2019-2020 term; the number granted and refused, respectively to date; the number of appeals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36190/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Up to the week ending 1st September 2019, the total number of SUSI applications for the 2019/20 academic year was 89,400. Of these, a total of 74,400 had received an initial assessment decision with 63,000 assessed as eligible for grant support, 9,500 refused grant support and 1,900 applications cancelled.

With regard to appeals, it is open to any applicant to appeal a decision. Some applicants appeal a decision not to award a grant, while others appeal the value of the grant awarded. Up to week ending 1st September 2019, a total of 2,486 decisions were appealed to an appeals officer in SUSI.

### **Departmental Circulars**

433. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the monitoring of the implementation of circular 0032/2017 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36191/19]

434. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the value of rewards paid to schools to date for the implementation of circular 0032/2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36192/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos 433 and 434 together

In circular 0032/2017 my Department published measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs.

While the circular provided, as resources permit, to reward schools that can provide evidence of having adopted the principles of cost-effective practice, my Department, having regard to the available budgetary resources, has focused on commencing the process of restoration by improving capitation funding for all schools. My Department has not issued a premium in

capitation grants under this circular letter.

In 2019, my Department has provided for a 5% increase in capitation funding for primary and post-primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2019/2020 school year. Over the course of the school year 2019/2020, an additional €10 million will be allocated to primary and post primary schools, of which €4 million will be allocated in 2019.

It is important that schools consult with parents and the school community, and the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 will require each school to implement a Student and Parent Charter in accordance with national guidelines to be published by the Minister after consultation with the education partners, including the recognised national associations of parents. One of the key concepts in the Bill is the need for schools to seek to reduce the costs to parents as far as is practicable.

### School Curriculum

435. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the work undertaken to date to update the sexual education curriculum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36193/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In April 2018, a review of Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE) in schools was announced by Mr. Richard Bruton TD, the then Minister for Education and Skills. The Minister asked the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to undertake a review not just of the content of the curriculum but of how it is taught, and in particular how young people can get factual information about sexual behaviour, orientation, consent and contraception.

Included in the areas for particular consideration during the review are:

- Consent, what it means and its importance
- Developments in contraception
- Healthy, positive sexual expression and relationships
- Safe use of the internet
- Social media and its effects on relationships and self-esteem
- LGBTQ+ matters

Given the scope of the request, the review is comprised of three inter-related dimensions:

- Desk-top review of recently published research/studies in this area.
- Consultations with key individuals and organisations who have responsibility for or who are working in this area.
- Working directly with schools to examine the experience of RSE in schools and in classrooms.

A review of research was commissioned by the NCCA in June 2018 and a report on this was published in November 2018.

A consultative event was held in November 2018 at Collins Barracks, Dublin and in-

volved approximately 60 groups and organisation who have expressed an interest in or who are known to have an interest in contributing to the review. A further round of public consultation is currently ongoing and due to run up to approximately October 2019, after which the NCCA Council will agree a final report to be sent to the Minister.

The NCCA's draft review of its findings is currently open to consultation to ensure the findings and related draft advice is reflective of the needs of students, schools and parents. This can be found at:

<https://www.ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/consultations/review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse>.

### **Teacher Supply**

436. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students who will commence training to qualify as secondary school teachers in schools in September 2019; and the number who will continue training in schools in September 2019. [36194/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department is not in a position to provide the actual figures for enrolment in post-primary initial teacher education (ITE) programmes requested by the Deputy, at this time, as the CAO offers and acceptance process for September 2019 entrants has not yet concluded and the verified returns of students currently on other years of study are not yet confirmed.

The following are indicative figures provided to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) by the HEA-designated higher education institutions (HEIs) providing initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. It is important to note that these figures are based on estimates and projections provided to the HEA and are not based on actual enrolment data.

The projected number of places available in Year 1 on undergraduate and postgraduate ITE (post-primary) programmes in State-funded higher education institutions as of September 2019 is circa 1,949 places.

It is projected that there will be in excess of 5,000 students enrolled across all post-primary ITE Programmes in State-funded HEIs in September 2019.

These estimated figures include projected available places in priority subject areas arising from measures identified in the Teacher Supply Action Plan.

### **Student Universal Support Ireland**

437. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) can receive a full recheck on their SUSI application; if so, if it will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36205/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Assessment of means under the Student Grant Scheme 2019 is based on gross income from all sources, of the applicant and his/her parents.

Under Article 32 of the Student Grant Scheme 2019 a student may apply to the awarding authority to have his/her eligibility assessed or reassessed in the event of a change in circum-

stances between 1 January 2019 and the end of the academic year, which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future or the duration of the course attended.

The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter, in the first instance, for the centralised student grant awarding authority SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) to determine.

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](http://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.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

438. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in the construction of a permanent school building for a school (details supplied). [36207/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under my Department's Design & Build Programme.

A planning application for the project was lodged in January 2019. Additional information sought by the Local Authority was provided and a notification of decision to grant planning permission was received on 24th May 2019. Tender documentation is currently being finalised and the project will proceed to tender shortly.

### **Special Educational Needs**

439. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase resources for children with additional needs in mainstream schools who have multiple diagnoses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36209/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that from September 2017, a new model for allocating special education teachers to mainstream schools was introduced. This model allocates special education teachers to schools based on the profiled needs of schools, as opposed to the assessed needs of individual children.

1,000 additional special education teachers have been provided for schools since 2017, while the total number of special education teachers has increased by 37% since 2011, from 9,740 in 2011, to over 13,450 at present.

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

The previous system which provided allocations of resource teaching support for individual pupils in particular disability categories, guided by the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC Report), therefore no longer applies.

The Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile.

This allocation allows schools to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who require such support in their schools and for schools to deploy resources based on each pupil's individual learning needs.

It gives greater flexibility to schools as to how they can deploy their resources, to take account of the actual learning needs pupils have, as opposed to being guided by a particular diagnosis of disability, and schools are guided as to how they should make such allocation decisions.

The school will take account of learning needs of children as evidenced by performance in schools but also supported where relevant by information provided regarding the nature of a condition that a pupil may have, including where a pupil may have multiple diagnoses.

The provision of support for small groups of pupils, or use of in class support teaching for a number of pupils, as opposed to primarily one to one teaching, also means that qualifying pupils will often be able to receive more support than they otherwise would have done.

The Department of Education and Skills has published guidelines for schools as to how they should utilise and deploy their resources under the new allocation model. These guidelines are available at:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf> and

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Post-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Students-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf>

The guidelines support schools in how they identify pupils for additional teaching support and decide how much support to provide for pupils who need it.

Where pupils who have multiple diagnoses of special educational needs have additional care needs, Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support may also be provided to schools to support such pupils, in accordance with the criteria set out in my Departments Circular 30/2014.

The total number of SNA posts available for allocation to schools by the end of this year is 15,950 SNAs, which represents an increase of 50% on the total number of SNAs available for allocation in 2011, which was 10,575.

Additional supports such as Assistive Technology Support or Special School Transport arrangements may also be provided, where required.

## Cyber Security Protocols

440. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36226/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Department's cybersecurity services are primarily provided by expert external service providers. In addition to this, personnel from the Department's ICT unit hold qualifications and attend relevant ICT training courses. A risk register is maintained of ICT risks and security breaches are handled as part of the Incident Management process and in accordance with data breach guidance from the Data Protection Unit within the Department. Risks are continuously logged in the risk register and the risks are analysed as part of the operation of the Information Security Governance Committee whose purpose is to oversee the implementation, ongoing operation and governance of effective measures to protect the Department's information held on ICT systems. The committee is chaired by a Management Board member and is comprised of Management Board members, Principal Officers and Assistant Principal Officers.

## Departmental Operations

441. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36242/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department has a Business Continuity Plan which is updated as necessary. The Plan aims to mitigate the key risks that impact significantly on critical business operations and to ensure that the maximum possible service levels are maintained in the event of a major incident.

In this context, Disaster Recovery Plans are tested regularly to ensure that critical I.T. systems can be recovered. The Department utilises its geographically dispersed nature to provide alternative systems at a safe distance from the primary location of its I.T. systems.

## School Playgrounds

442. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the financial supports available to a school board of management and parents association wishing to develop a playground on school grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36324/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the Summer Works Scheme (SWS) is designed to allow schools, on a devolved funding basis, to carry out necessary improvement and refurbishment works that will upgrade existing school facilities, including play areas.

As the Deputy will be aware, Summer Works Scheme 2020 onwards, was open for applications up until 30th June 2019.

It is also open to primary schools to use their minor works grant to carry out improvement works to the school's infrastructure.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

443. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction will commence and be completed in respect of a planned new school building (details supplied) in Cork City; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36325/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The permanent accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under my Department's Design & Build Programme. This delivery programme uses a professional external Project Manager to progress the project through the relevant stages of architectural planning, tendering and construction.

A planning application for the project was lodged in May 2018. The application was appealed to An Bord Pleanála. A notification of decision to grant planning permission was received from An Bord Pleanála on 25th April 2019. Tender documentation is currently being prepared and the project will proceed to tender shortly.

### **Schools Establishment**

444. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the pledge to open an educate together national school in Dungarvan, County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36329/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The patronage divesting process arises from the recommendations of the 2012 report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, following which the Department undertook surveys of parental preferences in 43 areas of stable population in 2012 and 2013 to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. Analysis of the parental preferences expressed in each area surveyed indicated that there was sufficient parental demand to support changes in school patronage in 28 areas, including in Dungarvan.

Under the patronage divesting process, a school can be opened where a school building became, or was due to become available as a result of an amalgamation/closure of an existing school. In some areas, including in the case of Dungarvan, in responding to demand for diversity where existing patrons were unable make school properties available, my Department also included an examination of properties held in public ownership.

To date, it has not been possible to secure a school property to facilitate a new school being established in Dungarvan. However, the Department is continuing its efforts in relation to identifying a suitable solution under the patronage divesting process, which would facilitate a new Educate Together school being established to serve the Dungarvan area. It is not possible at this stage, however, to give a timeframe for the establishment of such a school.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

445. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans in respect of an emergency situation which has arisen in a school (details supplied). [36348/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department is working closely with the school authority in question in relation to this

issue.

Alternative accommodation has been identified and works are being carried out to facilitate decanting the school to this accommodation.

I understand that the school authority is keeping parents and staff fully informed of the proposed contingency plan and its progress.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

446. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a UK course will be recognised for a student grant for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36355/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The definition of an approved institution is set out in Section 7 of the Student Support Act 2011 and Regulation 3 of the Student Support Regulations 2019.

The definition of an approved course is set out in Section 8 of the Student Support Act 2011 and Regulation 4 of the Student Support Regulations 2019

I have been advised that the institution in question is not an approved institution for student grant purposes. There are currently no plans to regulate to approve this institution for student grant purposes.

### **Higher Education Authority Funding**

447. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to the issues raised in a budget 2020 submission by an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36383/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I would like to thank USI for their detailed pre-budget 2020 submission on Higher Education. The recommendations outlined in the submission along with other relevant submissions received in advance of budget 2020 are being considered as part of the overall budgetary discussions on higher education provision for 2020.

To date significant progress has been made in increasing investment in Higher Education and putting in place a sustainable funding model for Higher Education. Following the announcements in Budget 2019 Higher Education spending has increased by 25% compared to 2015, an increase of almost €350 million.

I am always open to consider inputs from a wide range of stakeholders and I will be continuing to work for increased investment in Higher Education for 2020 and beyond.

### **School Patronage**

448. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide an Educate Together national school in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36397/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The patronage divesting process arises from the recommendations of the 2012 report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, following which the Department undertook surveys of parental preferences in 43 areas of stable population in 2012 and 2013 to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. Analysis of the parental preferences expressed in each area surveyed indicated that there was sufficient parental demand to support changes in school patronage in 28 areas, including in Palmerstown/Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Cherry Orchard.

Under the patronage divesting process, a school can be opened where a school building became, or was due to become available as a result of an amalgamation/closure of an existing school.

To date, it has not been possible to secure a school property to facilitate a new school being established in Palmerstown/Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Cherry Orchard. However, the Department is continuing its efforts in relation to identifying a suitable solution under the patronage divesting process, which would facilitate a new Educate Together school being established to serve the area. It is not possible at this stage, however, to give a timeframe for the establishment of such a school.

In addition, the requirement for new schools to meet emerging demographic demand is kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the impact of the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

### **Teaching Council of Ireland**

449. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a matter raised in correspondence by a person (details supplied) in County Cork regarding registering with the Teaching Council will be examined; if the issue will be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36410/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 the Teaching Council is the body with statutory authority and responsibility for the regulation of the teaching profession in Ireland including the registration of teachers in the State.

The Council has established standards for post-qualification professional practice, as set out in Droichead, the new model of induction and probation for newly qualified primary and post-primary teachers.

The person in question should continue to liaise with the Teaching Council in relation to their requirements for registration.

Where a person has obtained their teaching qualifications in another Member State of the EU, Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications applies. This Directive deals with the recognition of professional qualifications across Member States. Where a person has obtained their teaching qualifications and is eligible to practice the profession in another Member State, they may apply to the Teaching Council to seek recognition of their qualifications in accordance with the provisions of the Directive. Once recognition is granted, the person may proceed to complete the remaining requirements to register with the Teaching Council.

### School Transport Provision

450. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to providing additional transport for students travelling to nearby schools in County Donegal on a route that is oversubscribed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36411/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that there were a number of children in the area referred to by the Deputy who did not complete the application process within timelines and therefore were not allocated a ticket for the 2019/20 school year. Bus Éireann has also confirmed that the service in question is operating to capacity.

### School Transport Provision

451. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the additional financial allocation has been made in respect of school transport provision as he identified as being necessary to provide a comprehensive service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36431/19]

460. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve the conditions attaching to the award of concessionary tickets on school transport in view of the difficulties that arise for many families at the commencement of each school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36498/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 451 and 460 together.

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Minister McHugh has sanctioned an additional €1m on the school transport budget to allow for temporary alleviation measures to address a shortage of school transport capacity on the post primary scheme in 2019. The cost of these measures is to be given to those areas where there is a significant concentration of post-primary children who have paid on time for the 2019/2020 school year and who are attending their second closest school. A number of measures have been confirmed to alleviate some of the capacity issues in the areas of highest demand in some parts of the country.

Bus Éireann continues to work with the Department of Education and Skills to process applications and design routes to ensure that all eligible pupils who paid on time are facilitated with school transport. In doing this they are endeavouring to facilitate as many concessionary pupils as possible where capacity exists. Work is also ongoing with Bus Éireann to assess where limited resources can be invested to ease pressures in other parts of the country.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

452. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve class sizes and the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36433/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Budget 2019 marks the third year of a major reinvestment in the education. In 2019, the budget for the Department of Education and Skills will increase by €674 million, a 6.7% increase on last year. In total, the Education budget will have increased by €1.7 billion compared to 2016.

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

It is the annual staffing schedule which determines the allocation of teachers to schools. For the current school year, it 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 latest figures in relation to pupil teacher ratio show an improved ratio of teachers to students from 16:1 to 15.2:1 at primary level when comparing the 2015/16 school year to the 2018/19 school year. Average class sizes at primary level improved from 24.9 to 24.3 in the same period.

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

### **Weight of Schoolbags**

453. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the mechanism by which the weight of school bags is monitored by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36446/19]

454. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department consults with schools on the weight of school bags in the context of the setting of textbooks and timetables; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36447/19]

455. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the mechanism by which his Department ensures that surveys of the weight of school bags are undertaken by schools in accordance with circulars; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36448/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 453 to 455, inclusive, together.

Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school.

Circulars were issued to all primary and post-primary schools in 2005 to highlight the potential health hazard of overweight schoolbags and to outline a range of local measures that could be put in place to help alleviate the problem.

In managing a school, the Board is required to comply with the relevant provisions of the Education Act, 1998 and the terms of Circulars issued by my Department.

My Department is aware that positive action has been taken by many schools on these issues. Actions consist of a range of measures, including the provision of lockers and in the case of second level school the arrangement of the timetable into double class periods, active liaison with parents and the co-ordination of homework by subject teachers.

Ultimately it is a matter for each individual school to determine which particular measures are most suited to its individual circumstances and to how the school concerned organises teaching and learning.

Apart from a small number of prescribed texts at second level (mainly in the case of language subjects) school textbooks are not approved or prescribed by the Department at first or second level. Decisions on which books to use in schools are taken at school level.

I intend to publish the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill shortly. The aim of the legislation is to improve how schools engage with students and their parents.

Among the key concepts in the Bill include the need for a school to consult with, and encourage the participation and engagement of, students (to the extent appropriate to their age and experience) and their parents, and respond as appropriate, to comments and suggestions made by students and their parents, in respect of the development, review and updating of school plans and policies of the school (other than admission policies) and the activities of the school.

The charter guidelines will set out the procedures that school must develop for consulting with students and their parents and inviting and responding to comments and suggestions from students and their parents.

### **Parent and Student Charter**

456. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress of the education (parent and student charter) Bill. [36449/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The development of an Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill reflects the commitment contained in A Programme for a Partnership Government to introduce a stronger complaints procedures and charter for parents. I believe that the Bill constitutes an important step aimed at improving the experiences of both students and parents in their engagement with schools.

The Bill will require that every school must prepare, publish and implement a Student and Parent Charter. Every school's Charter must adhere to national guidelines published by the Minister after consultation partners.

I intend to publish the Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill later this month and I look forward to working with both Houses of the Oireachtas to ensure that the Bill is enacted.

### **School Transport Provision**

457. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if school transport will be provided for a student (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36465/19]

**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. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concession-

ary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann has advised that the information requested for the case in question is not readily available and in this regard, Bus Éireann has been requested to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Schools Amalgamation**

458. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he will meet with a deputation, as requested by local community groups (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36468/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for any amalgamation belongs to the Patron/Trustees of the schools, and this is then subject to the approval of my Department.

In this regard, consultations with the various stakeholders are held with the Patrons in question and I understand that this has taken place locally.

### **School Transport Provision**

459. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps that can be taken to assist a student (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36473/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Eireann have advised that the pupil referred to by the Deputy is concessionary. Their application had been registered as 6th year for the 2018/19 school year and therefore their ap-

plication did not roll forward to the 2019/20 school year.

Following a reorganisation of services, this pupil has been accommodated on a service and Bus Éireann have been in contact with the family to inform them of same.

*Question No. 460 answered with Question No. 451.*

### **School Staff**

461. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to improve the conditions of employment of school secretaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36507/19]

**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 had discussions with FÓRSA trade union representatives in

May 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.

### **School Patronage**

462. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for the provision of funding for an Educate Together school in Palmerstown, Dublin 20. [36509/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The patronage divesting process arises from the recommendations of the 2012 report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, following which the Department undertook surveys of parental preferences in 43 areas of stable population in 2012 and 2013 to establish the level of parental demand for a wider choice in the patronage of primary schools within these areas. Analysis of the parental preferences expressed in each area surveyed indicated that there was sufficient parental demand to support changes in school patronage in 28 areas, including in Palmerstown/Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Cherry Orchard.

Under the patronage divesting process, a school can be opened where a school building became or was due to become available as a result of an amalgamation/closure of an existing school.

To date, it has not been possible to secure a school property to facilitate a new school being established in Palmerstown/Ballyfermot/Chapelizod/Cherry Orchard. However, the Department is continuing its efforts in relation to identifying a suitable solution under the patronage divesting process, which would facilitate a new Educate Together school being established to serve the area. It is not possible at this stage, however, to give a timeframe for the establishment of such a school.

In addition, the requirement for new schools to meet emerging demographic demand is kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the impact of the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

### **School Placement**

463. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to review the Kilcock school planning area to include Johnstownbridge and Kilahanroe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36523/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

The school planning areas are used in the demographic exercise as a basis for the assessment of areas of growth and to inform recommendations on the establishment of any new schools required in that school planning area. There are no current plans to revise school planning areas.

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 500 pupil post-primary school for Enfield (Kilcock school planning area) to be established in 2020.

New schools established since 2011 to meet demographic demand are required, in the first instance, to prioritise pupil applications from within the designated school planning area(s) which the school was established to serve. This does not preclude schools from enrolling pupils from outside of the school planning area where they have sufficient places.

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

### **Apprenticeship Data**

464. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the new apprenticeship programmes available since 2017; the estimated cost for such allowances; the estimated additional costs that will be incurred in ensuring equality of allowances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36526/19]

465. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to introduce similar allowances for all apprenticeships; if so, the estimated cost for such allowances; the estimated additional costs that will be incurred in ensuring equality or allowances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36527/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 464 and 465 together.

This Government is committed to the ongoing expansion and development of our national apprenticeship system, as is evident by a year on year increase in the budget allocation. This year's allocation for apprenticeship training is €142m which represents an increase of over 16% on the 2018 allocation of €122m. Since 2015 new apprenticeship registrations have increased by 80% with 5,648 new registrations by the end of 2018. In addition, following two calls for proposals in 2015 and 2017 by the Apprenticeship Council, to date twenty new apprenticeship programmes have been developed and are now operational to complement the existing 25 craft apprenticeships.

It is important to note that the structure of these new consortia led apprenticeship programmes are different to those in the craft trades. Our new consortia-led apprenticeships offer more flexibility to employers in meeting their skill needs both in the duration of the programme and in terms of the delivery of the off-the-job training. These new apprenticeship programmes vary in length from 2 to 4 years and have different methods of off-the-job training such as one day per week, and on-line blended learning rather than the traditional block release of up to 22 weeks in an education setting, as is the case in the craft trades. While there is no training allowance paid to apprentices undertaking one of our new apprenticeships, I am aware that some employers engaged in the system have raised this as an issue. However, any change in this regard, which has not been fully costed by my Department, would have to form part of the normal budgetary process and be considered in the broader context of competing demands and the overall availability of resources.

## Schools Building Projects Status

466. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when authorisation will issue to commence the pre-qualification process in respect of a building project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36531/19]

**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 Stage 2(b) submission for this project has been reviewed and the Design Team has 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.

The Department’s capital programme continues to address the challenge posed by significant increases in the school population particularly in developing areas. To help meet this demographic challenge, during the course of 2019 over 80 large scale projects and 140 projects under the Additional Accommodation Scheme are under construction.

There are currently 375 large-scale projects for delivery under the school building programme as part of the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027. The current status of each of these projects is listed on the Department’s website and is updated on a monthly basis.

To manage this volume of projects within the overall budget the Department must continuously profile projects to progress towards commencing construction and draw down of funding on a scheduled basis.

In this context, the Department will revert to the school later this month with prospective timelines for the further progression of this major building project, including pre-qualification of contractors and progression to tender stage.

## Summer Works Scheme Applications

467. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a summer works scheme application will be approved in respect of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36536/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school referred to by the Deputy has submitted an application for external environment projects (Category 10) under my Department’s multi-annual Summer Works Scheme (SWS) 2020 onwards.

I wish to advise the Deputy that commensurate with the level of funding available for the SWS in 2020 onwards, applications will be assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the governing Circular Letter for the Scheme. This Circular Letter (0027/2019) is available on my Department’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

## School Transport Provision

468. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason

transport is not being provided in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36543/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann has advised that a payment was not submitted for the child referred to by the Deputy and that the service is now operating to capacity.

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

469. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of progress to provide a special needs base at a school (details supplied) in Dublin 13; the timeline for delivery of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36581/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is providing grant aid to facilitate the construction of a Special Needs Base, at the school in question, and will continue to liaise with the school authority in this regard.

### **Student Grant Scheme Applications**

470. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available in regard to a higher education grant in the case of a person (details supplied); if they can qualify for a course at level 6; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36587/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My officials have been advised by SUSI that a decision on her grant application issued on 12 August 2019.

Under the terms of the Student Grant Scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students at-

tending an approved course in an approved institution who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

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 an appeals officer in SUSI, not later than 30 days after receipt of the decision.

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*.

### School Transport Data

471. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria used to distribute the extra funding allocated for the school transport scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36617/19]

472. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the routes selected in County Cork for the extra funding allocated for the school transport scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36618/19]

473. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applications for the school transport scheme by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36619/19]

474. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding allocated by county out of the extra funding allocated to the school transport scheme, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36620/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 471 to 474, inclusive, together.

School Transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concession-

ary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Minister McHugh has sanctioned an additional €1m on the school transport budget to allow for temporary alleviation measures to address a shortage of school transport capacity on the post primary scheme in 2019. The cost of these measures is to be given to those areas where there is a significant concentration of post-primary children who have paid on time for the 2019/2020 school year and who are attending their second closest school. A number of measures have been confirmed to alleviate some of the capacity issues in the areas of highest demand in some parts of the country.

Bus Éireann continues to work with the Department of Education and Skills to process applications and design routes to ensure that all eligible pupils who paid on time are facilitated with school transport. In doing this they are endeavouring to facilitate as many concessionary pupils as possible where capacity exists. Work is also ongoing with Bus Éireann to assess where limited resources can be invested to ease pressures in other parts of the country.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

475. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress in regard to completion works at the Maynooth Educational Campus, Moyglare Road Maynooth, County Kildare; the extent to which current activity on the site is in line with expectations; when both new schools will be ready for occupation; the extent to which alternative accommodation remains available for students coming on stream; the extent to which the curriculum remains functional or can be extended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36649/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the tender process for the project to which he refers will be completed shortly. The work to complete the external fabric of both school buildings will be fully completed in time for the contractor appointed under the current tender process to begin its work on site. It remains the case that the buildings will be available for occupation prior to September 2020.

The pupils of the two schools that will be occupying the buildings in question are currently located in temporary accommodation. This accommodation is providing sufficient space to meet the needs of the schools for the 2019-2020 academic year. I can also confirm that the curricular needs of these pupils have not been impacted by these arrangements.

*Question No. 476 answered with Question No. 416.*

### **School Transport Eligibility**

477. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which free school transport can be offered to the children of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36651/19]

**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.

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

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

Under the terms of my Department's Post Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann has advised that the child in question is not attending her nearest post primary centre and is therefore not eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only. Concessionary transport is subject to a number of terms and conditions including the availability of spare seats on an existing service and payment of the annual charge.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that there are still seats available on an existing service and the family should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office if they wish to avail of transport on a concessionary basis.

The terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

### **Schools Building Projects**

478. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary, post-primary and special needs cases are being provided for in line with demographics in respect of Celbridge, County Kildare; the extent to which proposals are reaching fruition in line with projections and local management requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36652/19]

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

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is also updated regularly.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information

System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), an independent agency of my Department, is responsible for planning, coordinating and advising on education provision for children with special educational needs. The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

Individual school boards of management are responsible for the establishment of special classes. It is open to any school to make application to the NCSE to establish a class. In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

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

### **Schools Building Projects**

479. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which educational provision needs to be enhanced in respect of primary and second-level education places in the context of existing schools or alternatives in Kilcock, County Kildare; if cognisance is taken of population expansion, the requirement in respect of special needs places and the requirements as set out by local management; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36653/19]

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

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

A major building project for St. Joseph's NS, Kilcock 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 completing the prequalification process to select a shortlist of contractors for tender stage. The next stage of architectural planning for this project will be stage 3 – tender stage.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is also updated regularly.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

The National Council for Special education (NCSE), an independent agency of my Department, is responsible for planning, coordinating and advising on education provision for children with special educational needs. The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

Individual school boards of management are responsible for the establishment of special classes. It is open to any school to make application to the NCSE to establish a class. In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

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

### **Schools Building Projects**

480. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in the advancement of primary and post-primary school projects in Naas, County Kildare; the extent to which existing work in this regard is progressing satisfactorily; if new initiatives are proposed to meet the demands of local management and the expanding population; if the requirements of children with special needs continues to be met; if required enhancement proposals are in hand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36654/19]

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

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is also updated regularly.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary

and post-primary level. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), an independent agency of my Department, is responsible for planning, coordinating and advising on education provision for children with special educational needs. The Council ensures that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all children who have been identified as needing special class placements.

Individual school boards of management are responsible for the establishment of special classes. It is open to any school to make application to the NCSE to establish a class. In deciding where to establish a special class in an area, the NCSE take account of the current and projected demand and the available school accommodation both current and planned. In this regard, the SENO may approach individual schools to discuss the matter with a view to finding the optimal location in terms of convenience and sustainability.

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

### **School Placement**

481. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which adequate primary school places remain available at Kill, County Kildare, with particular reference to the placement required by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36655/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that in relation to schools admission, parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available, the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. The Deputy will note however that the selection process procedures and enrolment policy are the responsibility of the individual school authorities.

Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parent's choice are respected.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 where a board of management make a decision to refuse enrolment, a parent/guardian can appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Where the appeal involves an Education and Training Board (ETB) school, the appeal must be made to the local ETB in the first instance. Further information on the Section 29 Appeals process is available on my Department's website at the following link:

*<https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Appeal-against-Permanent-Exclusion-Suspension-or-Refusal-to-Enrol/>*

In addition, the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is the legal body which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school placement for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718815.

### Schools Building Projects

482. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which proposals for a school (details supplied) for north County Kildare continue to progress; when it is expected the final provisions are likely to be agreed and if in accordance with previous indications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36656/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has approved temporary accommodation for Gaelcoláiste Chill Dara and the installation of this accommodation has been devolved to the school authority for delivery. In addition, my Department has approved grant for remedial works to be undertaken to the school building. A consultant has been appointed and tender documents for these works are currently being prepared.

### Schools Building Projects

483. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which primary and secondary school requirement in Leixlip, County Kildare continues to be a priority with a view to meeting the challenge of population growth now and in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36657/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in an area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential developments in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development.

With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

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

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 8 classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Leixlip school planning area.

This announcement follows nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the

4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

The requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard to the impact of the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040. My Department will also continue to monitor areas where the accommodation of existing schools may need to be expanded in order to meet the needs of the local population.

### Schools Building Projects

484. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which provisions and proposals remain adequate in respect of primary and post-primary school places to accommodate children in Prosperous, County Kildare; the extent of outstanding proposals in this regard; if progress to date remains in line with projections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36658/19]

485. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which provisions and proposals remain adequate in respect of primary and post primary school places to accommodate children in Clane, County Kildare; the extent of outstanding proposals in this regard; if progress to date remains in line with projections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36659/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 484 and 485 together.

Under project Ireland 2040, my Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this information is also updated regularly.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

In April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure. A new 16 classroom primary school (established in September 2019) in Ashbourne and a new special school in Dublin 15 were also an-

nounced in 2019 bringing the overall total to 44. While the announcement did not include a new school for the Prosperous\_Clane school planning area, the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

### School Transport Data

486. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which provision has been made for the restoration of free or concessionary school bus transport for children in the Rathcoffey and Donadea areas of County Kildare; the extent to which those children that previously had school transport withdrawn in the recent review can be restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36726/19]

516. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in the Rathcoffey and Donadea areas of County Kildare whose access to free or concessionary school transport has been discontinued in the course of recent reviews; the number reinstated or pending in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36907/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 486 and 516 together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

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

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann advise that a total of 48 pupils who applied for school transport from the area referred to by the Deputy were not allocated tickets, 18 were concessionary children who were not successful in obtaining a seat following the selection process, 15 were concessionary children who did not make a payment by the payment date and were therefore not included in the selection process, and 15 eligible children did not make a payment by the payment date and therefore did not receive tickets.

### **Fee Paying Schools**

487. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent of public funds that are provided to fee-paying schools; the number of fee-paying schools receiving public funds; and the number of pupils supported by such funds. [36744/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Gross salaries paid to teachers in 51 fee charging schools in the 2017/2018 school year amounted to €91,660,946 (€96.2 million including employers PRSI contributions). There were 25,606 pupils enrolled in fee charging schools in the 18/19 school year.

In 2018 there were a total of 114 posts allocated by the NCSE for special needs in fee charging schools. The posts are allocated based on the needs of the children and the number of posts changes each year according to the care needs required. Approximately €4,000,000 was paid in salaries to Special Needs Assistants in fee charging schools in 2018/2019 school year.

Capital funding of €268,428 was provided to fee charging secondary schools in 2018.

### **Apprenticeship Data**

488. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding provided for apprenticeships. [36746/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The 2019 budget allocation for apprenticeship training is €142m which represents an increase of over 16% on the 2018 allocation of €122m. The 2019 allocation is apportioned between SOLAS (€105m) and the HEA (€37m) and will support an apprenticeship population which is forecast to be in excess of 18,000 by the end of 2019.

### **Student Grant Scheme Expenditure**

489. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding provided under the SUSI grants scheme. [36748/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In 2019, €404.45m was provided for in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for student support and related expenditure. It is anticipated that circa €380m of this funding will be spent on SUSI grants and related activities.

### **DEIS Expenditure**

490. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of funding provided for DEIS schools over and above normal school funding. [36749/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's overall annual spend on the DEIS Programme is approximately €125 million. Additional funding is provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the School Meals Programme and by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for the School Completion Programme.

The substantial annual investment by my Department on the DEIS Programme includes the provision of;

- 415 Home School Community Liaison Coordinators serving 533 schools, catering for approximately 156,000 pupils.

- Additional posts for DEIS Band 1 primary schools to allow for a reduced pupil teacher ratio.

- Curriculum supports

- Priority access to continuing professional development

- School Excellence Fund - DEIS

- DEIS grants and enhanced book grants.

The full list of supports available to DEIS Schools is available on my Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Supporting-Information/Supports-to-DEIS-Schools.html>

In the 2019/20 school year there are 891 schools participating in the DEIS Programme serving over 183,000 pupils and the full list of schools (broken down by Urban Band 1, Urban Band 2, Rural and Post-Primary) is available also on my Department's website at the following link;

[https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/deis\\_school\\_list.xls](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/deis_school_list.xls)

The list also gives the location of each school.

The number of schools participating in the DEIS Programme can change slightly year on year taking account of both school amalgamations and school closures. 79 schools were added to the DEIS Programme for the first time from September 2017 following the application of the new DEIS identification process and 30 more schools were upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1.

Each DEIS school is paid an annual DEIS Grant which the school should use to support those pupils most at risk of educational disadvantage. The following table gives details of DEIS Grant expenditure for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years and the latest data available for the 2019/20 school year.

School Year	Total Primary €	Total Post Primary
2017/18	€12,154,155	€4,007,245
2018/19	€12,175,367	€4,034,588
2019/20	€12,266,105	Figure not available – grants are scheduled to issue in September 2019

### Pupil-Teacher Ratio

491. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost in the first year and in a full year for every one point reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level. [36750/19]

**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.

The allocation of teachers to schools is on the basis of the whole school population. 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.

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €4.7m in the first year and €14.4m for the full year.

### **Special Educational Needs Expenditure**

492. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost in the first year and in a full year for every 100 new special needs assistants recruited. [36751/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The cost of employing 100 Special Need Assistants in the first year from September to December 2019 is estimated at €0.9m. The full year cost is estimated at €2.8m.

This estimated cost includes the pay increases under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 to 2020 and employers PRSI.

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

493. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special needs assistants in the education system; the overall pupil-to-SNA ratio; his plans to improve the ratio; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36752/19]

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

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

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

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

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE take account

of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources.

### Third Level Fees

494. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first year and full year cost for every €100 reduction in the student contribution charge. [36753/19]

**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. It is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the contribution since 2014/15.

Based on the overall number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2018/19 (and were therefore liable to pay the Student Contribution), and taking into account expected increases in student numbers, the estimated net cost to my Department of reducing the contribution by €100 is €7.9m. This figure is based on the student projections for 2019/20.

It should be noted that the above estimates incorporate the resulting reduction to my Department's Student Grant Scheme budget as the exchequer pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students who are in receipt of student grant assistance.

### Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

495. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first year and full year cost of changing the qualifying criteria for the non-adjacent rate of the third-level grant from 45 km to 24 km. [36754/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** 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 first year cost of "decreasing the non-adjacent rate of third-level grants from 45 km to 24 km" is estimated to be in the region of €11.5m. The full year cost of this proposal would be in the region of €26m.

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

### Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

496. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated first year and full year cost of every 1% increase in grants under the SUSI scheme. [36755/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The estimated cost of increasing all SUSI maintenance grants by 1% would be €775k in the first year (Sept-Dec) and €1.7m for the full year cost.

*Question No. 497 answered with Question No. 426.*

### **School Transport Review**

498. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a major review of the school bus transport scheme will be initiated in view of the serious issues which arose throughout the country for this academic year. [36759/19]

**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. In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

The purpose of the School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school. Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Minister McHugh has sanctioned an additional €1m on the school transport budget to allow for temporary alleviation measures to address a shortage of school transport capacity on the post primary scheme in 2019. The cost of these measures is to be given to those areas where there is a significant concentration of post-primary children who have paid on time for the 2019/2020 school year and who are attending their second closest school. A number of measures have been confirmed to alleviate some of the capacity issues in the areas of highest demand in some parts of the country.

Bus Éireann continues to work with the Department of Education and Skills to process applications and design routes to ensure that all eligible pupils who paid on time are facilitated with school transport. In doing this they are endeavouring to facilitate as many concessionary pupils as possible where capacity exists. Work is also ongoing with Bus Éireann to assess where limited resources can be invested to ease pressures in other parts of the country.

### **Student Universal Support Ireland**

499. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider a comprehensive review of the SUSI grant scheme with a view to increasing expenditure on grants and expanding income eligibility brackets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36761/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In 2019, €404.45m was provided for in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) for student support and related expenditure. It is anticipated that circa €380m of this funding will be spent on SUSI grants and related activities.

The funding allocation for student grants is determined in the context of the overall Estimates and Budgetary process undertaken by all Government Departments. It would not be appropriate to comment on specific issues or proposals including those relating to student grants at this stage.

However, all proposals made in relation to education expenditure will be considered in the context of Budget 2020, having regard to overall resource constraints and other competing demands in the education sector.

### Third Level Fees

500. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to reduce the student contribution for higher education over the next three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36762/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As the Deputy will be aware, under my Department's free fees schemes, the Exchequer provides funding toward the tuition fee costs of eligible students with students paying the student contribution which currently stands at €3,000.

The Student Contribution, was introduced with effect from the 2011/12 academic year. While the student contribution now stands at €3,000, it is important to recognise that there has been no increase in the contribution since 2014/15. 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.

Following a request from the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills for an economic examination of the three policy options proposed by the report on future funding of higher education (Cassells report), my Department engaged with the European Commission Structural Support Service throughout 2018 to ascertain the scope for the economic evaluation to be carried out with support from the European Commission Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP). The SRSP provides tailor-made support to all EU countries for their institutional, administrative and growth-enhancing reforms to carry out the analysis of the three policy options identified by the Expert Group.

A formal application for support under the SRSP was submitted in October 2018 and subsequently approved by the Commission. The Commission has sought the submission for proposals to undertake the work as outlined in the detailed Terms of Reference. It is currently expected that the evaluation of the applications will be completed in September 2020 and the review commence following the appointment of a consultant.

Having this evaluation undertaken through the Commission's SRSP will provide access to the type of independent international expertise and analysis that will be very beneficial to a major evaluation of this nature. I have no plans to implement policy changes with regards to funding options pending the outcome of this review.

501. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the challenges faced by principals in large second-level DEIS schools as a result of the high level of social problems facing students in such schools; if he will consider enhancing the leadership staffing levels as requested by organisations (details supplied) to extend the additional deputy principal provision to all DEIS schools over 500 from 2019-2020 in view of the fact that DEIS schools between 600 and 699 students receive such provision immediately and that DEIS schools be prioritised in the allocation of outstanding posts of responsibility from 2019-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36763/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's overall annual spend on the DEIS Programme is approximately €125 million. Additional funding is provided by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the School Meals Programme and by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for the School Completion Programme. As the Deputy may be aware, my Department is currently undertaking data analysis with the ultimate aim of facilitating the matching of resources to identified need and to allow us to target extra resources at those schools most in need.

A list of the various supports and resources available to DEIS schools is available on my Department's website at the following link:

*<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/deis-supports-to-deis-schools-effective-from-2017-2018-school-year.pdf>*

The Centre for School Leadership, established in 2015, is charged with the development of a coherent continuum of professional development supports for school leaders. The Centre gives priority to leaders from DEIS schools who apply for the various programmes offered by the Centre including the Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management Clustering Initiative and the Principal Coaching Service.

I am aware of the request raised by the organisations referred to by the Deputy. The circulars on leadership and management in both primary and post schools for the 2019/20 school year are currently being finalised and will be available on my Department's website in due course. My Department has committed to revising the Posts of Responsibility table in the leadership and management circulars to take into account retirements during the school year. This ensures that the current level of Posts of Responsibilities are maintained in the school system. The extension of an additional deputy principal in large DEIS schools will be considered as part of my Department's overall Budget process.

### Schools Building Projects

502. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the costs to date of the remediation work at schools affected by structural defects in an area (details supplied) and at other schools in the area; the estimated remedial costs upon completion of works; the estimated date of completion; the legal costs to date; the estimated legal costs of cases being taken against contractors deemed responsible for defects in construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36777/19]

503. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if all documentation processed concerning the serious defects in schools built in an area (details supplied) will be provided; if legal proceedings have been issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36778/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions

Nos. 502 and 503 together.

The programme of structural remediation works at the schools to which the Deputy refers have now been undertaken. This has facilitated the removal of precautionary measures that were put in place in October/November 2018. The schools have re-opened for the new school year. For legal reasons, my Department is not in a position, at this time, to provide documentation in relation to the detailed nature of the issues arising in the buildings or in relation to the costs for the remediation works.

My Department continues to liaise with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the Attorney General's Office on the on-going legal process related to all 40 schools built by the contractor involved. Proceedings have issued in a number of schools to date. This includes for the schools in the area to which the Deputy refers. The next date Court date is expected to be in October 2019. At this early stage, details of legal costs are not available.

### **Schools Building Projects**

504. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if all documentation processed concerning the serious defects in the school building at a school (details supplied) will be provided; if legal proceedings have been issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36779/19]

505. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if all documentation processed concerning the serious defects in a school building (details supplied) will be provided; if legal proceedings have been issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36780/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 504 and 505 together.

For legal reasons my Department is not in a position to provide documentation in relation to the nature of the issues arising in the school buildings to which the Deputy refers. My Department has, however, provided the schools with written confirmation that the buildings are safe to occupy.

My Department continues to liaise with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the Attorney General's Office on the on-going legal process related to all 40 schools built by the contractor involved. Proceedings have already issued in a number of schools to date.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

506. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress of the building of a permanent school on the Phoenix Park racecourse site for a college (details supplied); when construction of the new permanent school building will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36781/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The building project referred to by the Deputy is being delivered under my Department's Design & Build programme. This delivery programme uses a professional external Project Manager to progress the project through the relevant stages of architectural planning, tendering and construction.

The next step in the process will be the application for planning permission which is expect-

ed to be lodged shortly. Thereafter, the timeframe for delivery of the school will be dependent on the grant of planning permission. My Department is working to deliver the school's permanent accommodation at the earliest possible date.

### **School Transport Provision**

507. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the school bus transport for primary school children (details supplied) in County Cork will be resolved in view of the large number of pupils involved. [36816/19]

**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.

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that there were a number of children in the area referred to by the Deputy were not allocated a ticket for the 2019/20 school year due to late applications, late payments, or being unsuccessful in the allocation of concessionary transport.

Bus Éireann has also confirmed that the service in question is operating to capacity.

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

508. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special needs assistants allocated to schools in the Dublin 22 area; and the funding allocated for SNAs in the Dublin 22 area in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, respectively. [36840/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** At the end of the 2018/19 school year there were approximately 15,030 SNA posts allocated to schools. I announced on 27 May that 792 additional SNA posts will be allocated to schools for the beginning of the 2019/20 school year, with almost 130 additional posts expected to be allocated by December

2019.

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

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

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

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

The number of SNAs allocated to schools at the end of the school year 2018/19 was 15,030. At the start of the current school year, 2019/20 there are approximately 15,800 SNAs posts allocated. Expenditure on SNA pay for 2018 was in the region of €525 million and approximately €551 million for 2019. 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 information requested is not available in the format requested by the Deputy. However, the NCSE publish the SNA allocations for individual schools for each school year on their website, [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

509. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of construction of a new school building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36880/19]

510. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his Department's assessment of the need for decanting of students during the period of construction of a new school building (details supplied); the details of the plans and preparations being made in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36881/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 509 and 510 together.

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 statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents.

A replacement Quantity Surveyor has recently been appointed to the project who is currently working with the Design Team members on the completion of the Stage 2(b) submission which will incorporate NZEB requirements.

Upon receipt and review of the Stage 2(b) submission the Department will be in contact with the school regarding the further progression of this project at that time.

My Department has recently received correspondence in relation to a suggested decant proposal during construction. The school have been advised that any proposals in relation to decant would need to be discussed in the first instance with the school's design team and would then require the submission of a fully costed Brief Change Request by the design team to the Department.

The Department understands from the school that it intends to have a meeting with the Design Team in the immediate future to discuss further the proposals in relation to the decant.

### **School Transport Eligibility**

511. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if free school transport will be extended for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36884/19]

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

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

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

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

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

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and will be facilitated where spare seats are available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann will allocate tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that the child referred to by the Deputy is not attending her nearest school and is therefore not eligible for school transport under the terms of the above scheme. Only children who are eligible for school transport and who hold a valid medical card (GMS scheme) are exempt from paying the annual charge.

Bus Éireann has also confirmed that no application was received for this pupil for the 2019/20 school year.

The terms of the Post Primary School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

512. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if SUSI higher level education funding will be made available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36897/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Student Grant Scheme 2019, opened for applications on 25 April 2019. The priority closing date (11 July 2019) for receipt of new applicants has now passed. However, SUSI is still accepting applications for the 2019/2020 academic year. Therefore, the student in question can still submit an application to have her eligibility for a student grant assessed by SUSI.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

513. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planned works at a school (details supplied). [36898/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Request for Tenders for the appointment of a Programme Manager and Design Team for the project has recently been issued by the NDFA.

While at this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of the project, the NDFA will be engaging directly with the school authority to keep it informed of progress.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

514. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of planned works at a school (details supplied). [36899/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA).

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Request for Tenders for the appointment of a Programme Manager and Design Team for the project has recently been issued by the NDFA.

While at this early stage it is not possible to provide a timeline for completion of the project, the NDFA will be engaging directly with the school authority to keep it informed of progress.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

515. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new building for a school (details supplied) will be completed; if the way in which State contracts are awarded will be reviewed in view of the delay; and if the project is within budget. [36900/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As previously advised, the project to which the Deputy refers is devolved to Westmeath County Council (WCC) for delivery.

I remain extremely disappointment and frustrated that the most recent programme provided by the contractor indicates a completion date for the school in October 2019, and with the unsatisfactory position that the school now finds itself in as described by the Deputy.

I have already informed the Deputy that it is in the nature of any building contract that difficulties can arise and the project in question is no different in that respect. Additional costs have arisen in this project in that context and some of these have already been paid out. However, there are also matters that are being addressed through the dispute resolution mechanisms set out in the Public Works Contract. Consequently, I am not in a position at this stage to comment any further at this time.

The Department is continually reviewing, within the constraints of EU procurement regulations, the way state contracts are awarded. The Department is also guided by the Capital Works Management Framework (under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) which is under review at present.

*Question No. 516 answered with Question No. 486.*

### **School Accommodation Provision**

517. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application by a school (details supplied) for capital funding to replace an under-sized classroom and old prefabricated unit; if he will consider this application as a matter of urgency in view of poor conditions being endured by teachers and pupils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36936/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department has recently approved capital funding under the Additional School Accommodation (ASA) scheme for the school in question. The School Authority has been informed accordingly.

### **Tender Process**

518. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the terms of the contract for the Garda footwear tender have changed from an open procedure to a single framework agreement. [35284/19]

519. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason no suitable tender was selected for the Garda footwear tender; and if all applicants failed to satisfy the minimum and-or maximum qualifying threshold marks as set out under the award criteria tables. [35285/19]

520. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason invitations for the Garda footwear tender now come from his office and not from An Garda Síochána directly. [35286/19]

521. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the invitation for tenders for Garda footwear does not refer to new technologies available which improve safety in footwear; and the reason these are not requirements. [35287/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 518 to 521, inclusive, together.

The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for managing the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Decisions in relation to the provision, allocation and management of Garda equipment and resources are also matters for Garda Commissioner. As Minister, I have

no role in those matters.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the tender process referred to by the Deputy is being managed by the Office of Government Procurement and has not yet closed. As the Deputy will appreciate, so as not to compromise the process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on what is a live procurement process.

### **Courts Service Properties**

522. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to carry out remedial works at Carlow courthouse and in particular on the railings there in view of the fact that the building is of historic importance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35441/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

To assist the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that they are aware that the railings surrounding Carlow Courthouse are in poor condition. They are committed to their full restoration at the earliest possible date.

I am further informed that restoring the railings is a significant and complex task requiring specialist conservation and iron-working expertise. The Courts Service does not have this expertise and is reliant on the Office of Public Works (OPW) to undertake and manage the task on its behalf.

The restoration work will be undertaken in phases. The first phase of the restoration will see 10 sections repaired and will be subject to a competitive OPW tendering process. A great deal of background work has been undertaken by the OPW to date including technical appraisals, experimental repairs, exploratory works and specification of repair methodologies. The OPW is currently finalising the tender documentation for the restoration of the initial 10 sections. Subject to a satisfactory tender process, it is anticipated that work will commence before the end of this year. The cost of restoring the initial 10 sections will be determined by the tendering process and the Courts Service has approved funding to cover the anticipated cost.

The first phase will inform how future phases of the project can be undertaken and will give an indication of the likely cost of restoring all sections of railings. It is anticipated that restoring all sections will take a number of years.

```
var ePQ = { silverSkinUrl: 'https://silverskin.cloud.gov.ie/', appUrl: 'https://justice-epq.cloudhostedapps.gov.ie' };
```

### **Disability Services Provision**

523. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his time-frame to ratify the optional protocol of the UNCRPD; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35635/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Convention and the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

cover a broad range of commitments some of which require substantive cultural change. Work is continuing on the reforms needed for Ireland's compliance with the Convention's requirements. For this reason, a phased approach is seen as the most practical and realistic way of moving forward.

The timescale to ratify the Optional Protocol will be determined as soon as the first reporting cycle under the Convention concludes.

### **Parental Leave**

524. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will take steps to extend the new paid parental leave scheme due to commence in November 2019 to all parents with children under one year of age in view of the recognition that the first 12 months in the life of a child are the most formative; if this payment will be made to parents with children under a year old and not only to those with children born after November 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35748/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** On 23 April, the Government announced that it had approved the priority drafting of the Parental Leave and Benefit Bill 2019. This will facilitate new parents in spending more time with their babies during their first year. The leave and benefit will be set at two weeks for each parent initially. The Government is committed to increasing both leave and benefit to seven weeks by 2021. The new EU Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers provides for paid parental leave of nine weeks. Seven weeks of these must be introduced by 2 August 2022. The remaining two weeks must be introduced by 2 August 2024.

I recognise the importance of parental care in the first year of a child's life. The Parental Leave and Benefit Bill is based on this principle. However, the Deputy's suggestion that parental leave and benefit should apply to parents of children aged under one year even if they are born prior to November 2019 would be tantamount to backdating the scheme by a year. This would have significant budgetary implications for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the payment of the parental benefit and for the Exchequer generally in relation to public sector employers. There would also be additional costs for other employers, for example administrative costs, lost output and the costs of recruiting replacement staff. With all of this in mind, I do not believe that it would be justifiable to backdate the scheme in the manner suggested.

### **Visa Applications**

525. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the refusal of a visitor's visa in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35782/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can inform the Deputy that nationals of South Africa are not visa required for travel to Ireland. An application by the person referred to was therefore neither made nor refused.

However, carrier airlines may make contact with the Immigration Service of my Department regarding the circumstances of particular passengers intending to travel to Ireland in advance of aircraft boarding. This is a common practice and carriers often seek advice on Irish immigration entry requirements, including for the purposes of ensuring that they are in com-

pliance with their legal obligations under section 2 of the Immigration Act 2003 (liability of carriers).

The carrier is advised of Irish entry requirements under section 4 of the Immigration Act 2004 and it is then a matter for the carrier to decide whether to allow the boarding of the passenger or passengers concerned.

### **Drugs Crime**

526. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for funding a Mulvey type report will be supported to assess and plan appropriately to manage the drugs crisis in Drogheda, County Louth, in view of the ongoing drug related criminality in the area and the murder that took place on 27 August 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36159/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, both the Taoiseach and I have visited Drogheda on a number of occasions in recent months to meet with Gardaí involved in tackling the ongoing and highly volatile feud as referred to by the Deputy. I have also been regularly briefed by the Commissioner about the dedicated policing operation - Operation Stratus - that is in place in Drogheda and specifically targets this feud.

Operation Stratus consists of high visibility patrols and checkpoints, days of action and covert policing initiatives, targeting specific parties to the feud. The operations are supplemented by personnel from the regional armed support unit, the drugs unit and the divisional roads policing unit and have resulted in the seizure of considerable amounts of cash, firearms and controlled drugs. To date, over 300 proactive searches have been carried out along with 870 Armed Support Unit / Roads Policing checkpoints and 1253 proactive uniform and plainclothes patrols.

Following the most recent Garda attestation in June 2019, the Garda Commissioner assigned 30 new probationer Gardaí to the Louth Division, including 25 to the Drogheda District.

I also want to reassure the local community in Drogheda that there are specialised regional Armed Support Units based in the Northern Region at Dundalk and Ballyshannon Garda Stations. Members of these Units are highly trained and equipped with a variety of non-lethal and lethal weapons and perform high visibility armed checkpoints and patrols throughout the region and support and supplement the national Emergency Response Unit which has also been deployed to Drogheda in recent times. The Commissioner recently made an operational decision to establish a third Regional ASU in the Northern Region at Cavan Garda station, and I understand that arrangements have commenced to establish this new unit in order to further support and strengthen Garda capacities in the region.

In terms of a Mulvey-type report, the Deputy will be aware that the Government last year endorsed the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, which sets out a blueprint for the future of policing in Ireland, and agreed to accept all 157 key recommendations contained in the report. The report emphasises the importance of community policing and the building of trust and strong relationships between gardaí and people in the community and also a new model of cooperation between Departments and agencies which provide essential services and supports to communities and individuals at risk.

The report is steadily being implemented in line with the high level implementation plan, "*A Policing Service for the Future*", which I published in December. Implementation of the

plan is being overseen by a dedicated programme office in the Department of the Taoiseach and involves a number of Departments and agencies.

As the Deputy will know, like him, I am determined that the situation in Drogheda cannot be allowed to continue. There has been a sustained and concerted effort on the part of An Garda Síochána to bring those engaged in the feud to justice. I know An Garda Síochána is dedicated to tackling gang-related violence in Drogheda and ensuring the safety of all citizens in the community and the wider area.

### **Passport Controls**

527. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the protocols and procedures for minors travelling alone in relation to passport control at Dublin Airport; the requirement, if applicable, for letters of consent from parents or guardians; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36495/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department (INIS), is responsible for immigration operations at the border at Dublin Airport. INIS is committed to the highest standards in child safeguarding, as are all divisions of my Department.

In the course of discharging immigration duties at the border, immigration officers regularly deal with minors, hence the requirement to be alert to potential child protection issues such as human trafficking and the exploitation of children is paramount. In circumstances where any child protection concerns emerge, immigration officers consult with Tusla, the statutory agency responsible for the welfare of children in Ireland.

For minors travelling unaccompanied it is advisable that they carry the following documentation.

Evidence of consent from a parent or guardian of the child, such as:

- A signed letter from the child's parent(s)/guardian giving consent for travel and providing his/her contact details

- A copy of a document identifying the parent/guardian, e.g. a copy of the picture page of a passport or driving licence

- Evidence of the parent/guardian relationship with the child, e.g. a copy of a birth or adoption certificate, or guardianship papers

- A death certificate in the case of a deceased parent

If the minor is not ordinarily resident in Ireland:

- Full address of where they will be staying

- Full contact details of who they will be staying with

In instances where an immigration officer considers it necessary to make further inquiries, such documentation may help to clarify matters, most particularly regarding family relationships.

An immigration officer may also seek to establish the relationship between an unaccompanied minor and any adult meeting the child on arrival at Dublin Airport, before permitting the

child to enter the State. In this case the immigration officer may seek similar documentation to that outlined above. This documentation is also outlined in detail on the INIS website.

Additionally, minors who are visa required must hold a valid visa to enter or re-enter the State. A parent or guardian must apply for the visa and their consent to the child travelling is required as part of the visa application.

### Commencement of Legislation

528. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the four year delay in commencing the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 with the exception of Part 8; the planned date of commencement for the Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35301/19]

529. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 with the exception of Part 8 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35154/19]

665. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the decision support service within the Mental Health Commission will become operational; the reason it has taken so long; the impact this is having on the commencement of large parts of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 and the operation of the wards of court system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36386/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 528, 529 and 665 together.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. The Act provides for the establishment of new administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health).

The commencement of the main provisions of the 2015 Act is expected to take place next year.

A number of the provisions of the 2015 Act have already commenced including Part 1 (excluding sections 3, 4 and 7 and Part 9 (excluding sections 96 and 102 and Chapter 3)). These provisions were commenced to progress the establishment of the Decision Support Service and the recruitment of its Director, Ms. Áine Flynn. Ms. Flynn was appointed in October 2017.

The Decision Support Service is working towards being operational and ready for the commencement of the main provisions of the 2015 Act next year. As I am sure the Deputy will appreciate, there are many complex strands to this preparatory work, including the involvement of multiple organisations. I am advised that this lead in time is required to ensure the following will be in place to ensure the Decision Support Service is established effectively: staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations.

A high-level Steering Group of senior officials is overseeing this on-going work. Membership is drawn from my department, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service, together with the Director of the Decision Support Service.

The 2015 Act will also abolish the current Wards of Court system, by repealing the Lunacy

Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871. Section 54 of the 2015 Act provides for the review by the wardship court of the capacity of all current adult wards within three years of the commencement of Part 6 of the Act.

Part 6 of the 2015 Act will be commenced when the Decision Support Service is open for business and ready to commence the new decision-making support options. The adults currently in wardship will transition to the new decision-making support arrangements provided for in the 2015 Act on a phased basis over 3 years from the commencement of Part 6.

Certain provisions of Part 8 of the Act related to advanced healthcare directives have also been commenced by my colleague, the Minister for Health.

### **Visa Applications**

530. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for a remain to stay visa by persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34684/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that, notifications have issued to the persons concerned pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended).

All representations received, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **International Protection**

531. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the cultural liaison service at the Reception and Integration Agency; the NGOs contacted in this regard; the expertise required or criteria applied to be considered for inclusion as a provider of the service; the way in which the service will operate; the way in which persons within the international protection system are to contact the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34736/19]

532. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the range of time, by weeks, that families within the international protection system are being accommodated in hotel rooms in emergency accommodation centres; the steps being taken to ensure that such families' private family life rights are vindicated; the steps being taken to ensure that the rights of children within these families are vindicated; the names and job specifications of the NGOs contracted to provide cultural liaison services in Reception and Integration Agency accommodation including ordinary hotels in which some international protection applicants are accommodated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34737/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

I propose to take Questions Nos. 531 and 532 together.

The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department is experiencing significant upward pressure on its accommodation portfolio due to an increase in the numbers of persons claiming international protection and a growth in the percentage of protection applicants who require assistance with accommodation.

In order to ensure that the State can continue to provide accommodation for all protection applicants and continue to comply with the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive, which was transposed into Irish law in 2018, RIA has, since September 2018, arranged for the provision of emergency beds where the mainstream accommodation centres were at capacity.

In January 2019, the RIA placed an Expression of Interest for Emergency Bed provision in the national media. Such accommodation involves the use of hotel and guest house accommodation where RIA typically contracts a defined number of rooms within existing commercial hotels/guest houses.

Every effort is being made to re-accommodate residents in emergency locations to a dedicated accommodation centre as quickly as possible. RIA is actively working on securing additional capacity, both in existing centres and through sourcing new centres via a series of regional procurement competitions.

It is not possible to provide the statistics in the manner requested by the Deputy, however the statistics can be provided in a monthly breakdown as detailed in the following tabular statement:

As of 30th July 2019, there are 1,043 people residing in emergency accommodation, which includes 178 children, 334 adult females and 530 adults males.

No. Applicants in Emergency Accommodation	Duration of Stay by Months
385	0&gt;3
402	3&gt;6
139	6&gt;9
117	9&gt;12

An exercise is underway in the Department whereby certain emergency accommodation locations are being designated specifically as family accommodation and others are being designated as being more suitable for single adults. The designated family locations have been selected on the basis of physical environment, location and access to school places. Families are allocated individual en-suite bedrooms and/or apartments to provide privacy and to facilitate family life to the greatest extent possible during these temporary arrangements.

In June, the Department requested quotations for a cultural liaison service from three Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in both the Dublin and North East regions. Each of the NGOs have experience of advocacy, migrant rights and working with disadvantaged communities.

The Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland (JRS) was recently appointed to provide the services to persons seeking international protection currently availing of emergency accommodation in the Dublin region, and the appointment of an NGO to provide a similar service in the North East region will be finalised in the near future. My Department then intends to seek quotations from suitably experienced NGOs to provide assistance to those in emergency accommodation in the

remainder of the country.

In the Dublin region, JRS proposes to hold an initial introductory meeting in each of the emergency accommodation locations, where representatives of the NGO can introduce themselves and explain the assistance/services that are on offer to persons being accommodated there. Clinics will be held in each location twice a month following that initial meeting. The types of service JRS representatives will provide include, but are not limited to, assisting persons with access to other public services and with applying for medical cards. In addition, representatives of JRS will forward details of any queries or complaints to my Department, where necessary for appropriate follow up.

### **Citizenship Applications**

533. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the new ruling for persons who wish to apply for citizenship (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34738/19]

554. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of citizenship applications affected by a judgment (details supplied); if he will be applying the judgment retrospectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34866/19]

555. **Deputy Hildegard Naughton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will be seeking emergency legislation to amend the Act to ensure the continuous residence criteria allows travel for a reasonable length of time, for example, the six weeks advised by his Department before a judgment (details supplied) was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34867/19]

558. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions he plans to take further to a recent High Court judgement (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34957/19]

569. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce legislation to deal with the recent judgement of the High Court relating to continuous residency under section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35018/19]

571. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to amend the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 and in particular the 12 months continuous residence clause following the High Court decision of a person (details supplied) which deemed that even a single day out of the State during that 12 months would not be deemed to meet the continuous residence condition as stipulated in the Act. [35036/19]

601. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking in response to the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 (as amended); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35464/19]

636. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will be applying the High Court ruling (details supplied) criteria of no travel in the year preceding a citizenship application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36051/19]

637. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will be seeking emergency legislation to amend the legislation to ensure the continuous residence cri-

teria allows travel for a reasonable length of time (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36052/19]

638. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of citizenship applications that will be affected by a High Court ruling (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36053/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 533, 554, 555, 558, 569, 571, 601 and 636 to 638, inclusive, together.

I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. As of 3rd September there were 15,647 applications for citizenship on hand. The majority of such applicants are potentially affected by the ruling. To date this year a total of 2,981 adults and 849 minors have been naturalised. I am advised that this ruling is not considered to have consequences for anyone who has already obtained citizenship under the Act.

I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

Those who are planning to apply for citizenship should continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

### **Departmental Meetings**

534. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he or his officials met with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade or his officials and-or the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence and-or his officials to discuss the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34777/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that these are very sensitive matters.

For reasons of security and the safety of individuals, I do not intend to comment publicly on the details of any individual case or the arrangements that may be in place.

I can assure the Deputy that I, along with my Government colleagues and officials within our respective Departments, continue to monitor the situation.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

535. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when an order to deport will be revoked in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34787/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order issued on 29 August 2018. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders are a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

It is open to the person concerned to submit representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

536. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when residency status will be determined in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34788/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Citizenship Applications**

537. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when further consideration will be given in respect of an application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34789/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that it has received a request for permission to remain in

the State from the person referred to by the Deputy. I am further advised that the Immigration Service issued a request to the person concerned for further documentation on 10 July 2019, and are yet to receive a response.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

538. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the information on the file of a person (details supplied) will be updated in accordance with the facts in view of the fact they returned to their homeland before a deportation order was put into effect and have made an application for a visa to re-enter in order to rejoin their spouse; if the relevant section of his Department will recognise their situation; if they will be permitted to re-join their spouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34790/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 20 June 2002.

Requests were received from the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and this decision was communicated to the person concerned by registered post dated 9 November 2017.

It is open to the person concerned to submit further representations requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful. To date no such further representations have been received in this case.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

539. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the permanent relationship between persons (details supplied) will be recognised as a basis for naturalisation in the case of a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34791/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the Immigration Service website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **International Protection**

540. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34792/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that an application for renewal of permission to remain has been received from the person concerned. This application is under consideration at present. When consideration of this application has been completed, and a decision is arrived at, the person concerned will be notified in writing.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

541. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34793/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy continues to be processed and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. If further documentation is required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to

preserve the integrity of the process.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. The nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigrations Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Refugee Status Applications**

542. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a review of the case in respect of an application for refugee status will be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34795/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that if an application for International Protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications and the applicant or his or her designated legal advisor should contact the International Protection Office directly, either by email to [info@ipo.gov.ie](mailto:info@ipo.gov.ie), by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 ,or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.

Similarly, the International Protection Appeals Tribunal operates an email service which can be contacted by individuals with any queries regarding their application - [info@protectionappeals.ie](mailto:info@protectionappeals.ie).

The Ministerial Decisions Unit also operates an email service at [mduinfo@justice.ie](mailto:mduinfo@justice.ie).

Under Section 26 of the International Protection Act 2015, it is an offence to identify an international protection applicant. The offence is punishable by summary conviction to a Class A fine or a term of imprisonment of 12 months or both.

An applicant may appeal a recommendation by an international protection officer that the applicant should not be given a refugee declaration and/or a recommendation that the applicant should not be given a subsidiary protection declaration to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.

Where an international protection officer recommends that an applicant should be given neither a refugee nor a subsidiary protection declaration, the Minister will consider in accordance with Section 49 of the International Protection Act 2015 whether to give the applicant concerned a permission to remain in the State.

Where the Tribunal affirms a recommendation that the applicant should not be given a refugee declaration and a recommendation that the applicant should not be given a subsidiary protection declaration, the Minister will, upon becoming aware of a change in circumstances or receiving new information from an applicant that had it been in the possession of the Minister when making such decision would have been relevant to that decision, review the decision in

relation to permission to remain in the State.

The Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications for International Protection under the International Protection Act 2015 on 27 February 2017, which is available on the website of the International Protection Office [www.ipo.gov.ie](http://www.ipo.gov.ie).

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Citizenship Applications**

543. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the eligibility for citizenship in regard to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34796/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended.

Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the Immigration Service website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Public Order Offences**

544. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fixed-charge penalty notices issued in each of the years 2007 to 2018, for public order related offences by Garda sub-district in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34801/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Since 31 July 2008, offences under section 4 and section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, as amend-

ed by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, may be dealt with by way of a fixed charge notice.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the collating the information sought by the Deputy by Garda sub-district would require a disproportionate amount of Garda time.

However, An Garda Síochána has provided detail of the fixed charged notices issued for public order offences by Garda Division from 2008 – 30 June 2019. This information is set out in the attached table, for the information of the Deputy. I would emphasise that An Garda Síochána has informed me that these figures are provisional, operational and subject to change.

### Fixed Charge Notices for Public Order Offences

Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Cavan/ Monaghan	4	83	92	189	329	256	268	265	298	304	365	154	2607
Clare	1	105	298	196	241	283	228	178	249	261	289	87	2416
Cork City	48	511	730	653	732	441	288	235	209	259	307	132	4545
Cork North	52	241	353	460	504	390	395	388	435	435	345	162	4160
Cork West	6	99	166	132	157	111	137	126	117	129	135	53	1368
D.M.R. Eastern	14	51	44	40	36	44	20	15	41	125	126	47	603
D.M.R. North Central	33	62	48	42	26	34	31	21	29	89	190	77	682
D.M.R. Northern	14	72	56	66	92	95	55	77	130	142	204	75	1078
D.M.R. South Central	49	214	142	156	154	148	66	63	108	184	209	72	1565
D.M.R. Southern	27	66	20	42	48	38	40	49	91	154	185	95	855
D.M.R. Western	12	96	94	120	231	119	91	79	164	236	319	158	1719
Donegal	48	127	173	354	369	251	245	312	412	395	487	258	3431
Galway	6	518	634	876	935	787	737	891	928	861	810	353	8336
Kerry	2	28	134	339	759	605	585	691	574	558	515	261	5051
Kildare	16	39	9	35	33	52	83	68	176	263	387	197	1358
Kilkenny/ Carlow	66	608	786	839	824	600	594	455	562	657	684	353	7028
Laois/Of- faly	17	65	80	111	140	114	146	142	223	217	233	142	1630
Limerick	7	11	151	234	331	235	215	222	336	342	367	189	2640
Louth	3	36	37	58	92	29	45	50	89	155	206	72	872
Mayo	5	142	363	346	433	328	340	376	436	320	362	143	3594
Meath	14	39	34	28	94	69	64	63	112	181	118	83	899
Roscom- mon/Long- ford		3	28	24	29	25	47	48	112	165	149	42	672
Sligo/ Leitrim	6	5	25	62	170	153	177	297	258	215	285	133	1786
Tipperary	1	21	124	194	175	207	238	246	210	405	461	187	2469
Waterford	75	466	461	500	441	505	366	329	323	225	237	118	4046
Westmeath	31	62	87	110	143	148	136	171	220	209	190	103	1610
Wexford	5	42	112	203	236	243	166	230	353	348	407	184	2529
Wicklow	8	82	61	65	92	182	244	183	161	238	235	107	1658
Total	570	3894	5342	6474	7846	6492	6047	6270	7356	8072	8807	4037	71207

**Note: Figures supplied from An Garda Síochána for the period 2008-30 June 2019 and compiled as of the 08/08/2019. All figures are provisional, operational and subject to change.**

## Crime Data

545. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cautions issued under the adult scheme in each of the years 2007 to 2018, by Garda sub-district and category of public order, criminal damage and assault in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34802/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that the attached table outlines the number of cautions issued by offence under the adult scheme in each of the years requested by the Deputy. The information provided is up to 30 August 2019 and is operational and subject to change.

It should be noted that to produce this report, data was collated from PULSE of incidents where the suspected offender was issued with an Adult Caution for the years 2007 to 2018 for crime categories Assault, Public Order and Criminal Damage offences.

Only Sub-Districts where 10 or more Adult Cautions were issued between 2007 and 2018 are listed. Where no Adult Caution was issued in a particular Sub-District in a given year, this is shown as "0". Where less than 10 incidents are recorded within a particular Sub-District is shown as "\*\*"

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the attached table outlines the number of cautions issued by offence under the adult scheme in each of the years requested by the Deputy. The information provided is up to 30 August 2019 and is operational and subject to change.

It should be noted that to produce this report, data was collated from PULSE of incidents where the suspected offender was issued with an Adult Caution for the years 2007 to 2018 for crime categories Assault, Public Order and Criminal Damage offences.

Only Sub-Districts where 10 or more Adult Cautions were issued between 2007 and 2018 are listed. Where no Adult Caution was issued in a particular Sub-District in a given year, this is shown as "0". Where less than 10 incidents are recorded within a particular Sub-District is shown as "\*\*"

[[https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-09-06\\_pq545-06-09-19\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-09-06_pq545-06-09-19_en.pdf)] Number of Cautions]

## Immigrant Investor Programme Data

546. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the ongoing review of the immigrant investor programme; his plans for the programme in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34806/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) was introduced in April 2012 to encourage inward investment and create business and employment opportunities in the State. The programme provides investors with the opportunity to invest in Ireland. Key to the programme is that the investments are beneficial for Ireland, generate or sustain employment and are generally in the public interest.

Successful applicants under the Immigrant Investment Programme and their nominated family members may be granted a residence permission in Ireland under Stamp 4 conditions. Stamp 4 conditions permit non-EEA nationals to work, study or start their own businesses in Ireland. Therefore, given the significant immigration benefits accruing and to ensure the highest

degree of transparency and accountability for the programme, it is essential that all applications are subject to a robust due diligence process in respect of both personal and financial checks to protect the State's interests, several enhanced control mechanisms have been introduced within the past 12 months.

Following a tender process, a contract to carry out the review was signed in June and work is underway. The Terms of Reference for the review have been published on the Immigration Service website on the "Investor & entrepreneur schemes" page (link provided) - the relevant document is the third one at the bottom of the page. The first phase of the review is scheduled to be presented to my Department by the end of September. In the meantime, applications continue to be assessed by a panel, accepted and processed.

### **Immigrant Investor Programme Data**

547. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to speed up the process by which applications are made under the immigrant investor programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34807/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that, in 2019, processing times for applications will be between 6-9 months. I am advised that timeframe compares very favourably to international peers, some of whom operate a decision-making framework of between 12 and 24 months.

Successful applicants under the Immigrant Investment Programme and their nominated family members may be granted a residence permission in Ireland under Stamp 4 conditions. Stamp 4 conditions permit non-EEA nationals to work, study or start their own businesses in Ireland. Therefore, given the significant immigration benefits accruing and to ensure the highest degree of transparency and accountability for the programme, it is essential that all applications are subject to enhanced levels of due diligence processes in respect of both personal and financial checks to protect the State's interests.

### **Garda Resources**

548. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional resources assigned to the Garda specialist units that come within the ambit of special crime operatives, including the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34835/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. An unprecedented €1.76 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to €92 million this year.

This significant investment is supporting progress towards achievement of the Government's plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal. Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. We currently have over

14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,600 Garda staff. And these numbers are increasing, with ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of experienced Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line.

It is important to note that the Garda Commissioner has responsibility for managing An Garda Síochána as well as for the allocation of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for personnel matters. I understand 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.

The Deputy raised the specific question of resources assigned to the Garda specialist units and I have set out in the attached tables data, provided to my Department by the Garda authorities, in relation to the current strength of Garda national units. This information will also be added to my Department's website [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) in the near future.

In relation to the attached tables, it is important to note that national specialist units which form Garda Special Crime Operations support the work of all Garda Divisions nationwide, where necessary and appropriate. These include national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the National Immigration Bureau, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I should point out, in relation to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), that responsibility for border management function in Dublin Airport moved from GNIB to my Department in recent years as part of a programme of "civilianisation" designed to ensure that trained Garda officers are available for frontline duties nationwide. Further, GNIB is a national unit which supports the immigration-related work of Gardaí in all Divisions nationwide. Only those Garda members assigned deployed to GNIB are included in the table attached.

The Special Detective Unit (SDU) also comes under this heading. As the Deputy may be aware, the SDU is responsible for the investigation of threats to state security and monitoring of persons who pose a threat to the security of the State on both national and international fronts, as well as security for visiting VIPs, cash in transit movements and further is the operational wing of the Witness Security Programme. The highly trained and equipped specialist intervention unit, the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), is also part of SDU. For security and operational reasons the strength of the SDU, ERU, Regional Support Units and the Special Tactics and Operational Command (STOC) Unit cannot be provided.

Tables:

Strength of Garda Special Crime Operations 31 May 2019									
	CR	DC	AC	CS	SU	IN	SG	GD	TOTAL
Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau	0	0	0	1	3	4	12	86	106
Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	21	27
Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (formerly Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation)	0	0	0	1	2	3	10	43	59

Strength of Garda Special Crime Operations 31 May 2019									
	CR	DC	AC	CS	SU	IN	SG	GD	TOTAL
Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation	0	0	0	1	4	5	12	52	74
Garda National Protective Services Bureau	0	0	0	1	3	2	16	40	64
Garda National Technical Bureau	0	0	0	0	1	2	15	46	64
Criminal Assets Bureau	0	0	0	1	1	2	6	34	44

\*As of 31 May 2019

Key: GD= Garda; SG= Sergeant; IN= Inspector; SU= Superintendent; CS= Chief Superintendent; AC= Assistant Commissioner; DC= Deputy Commissioner; CR= Commissioner

Garda National Immigration Bureau 2009 - 2019*						
Year	Garda	Sergeant	Inspector	SU	CS	Total
2009	164	22	5	2	1	194
2010	154	19	5	2	1	181
2011	149	17	5	2	1	174
2012	134	15	5	2	1	157
2013	126	15	3	1	1	146
2014	120	12	3	1	1	137
2015	105	9	2	2	1	119
2016	99	9	4	2	1	115
2017	102	15	2	2	1	122
2018	96	12	4	2	1	115
2019	93	13	4	2	1	113

\*As of 31 May 2019

### Ministerial Advisers Data

549. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Ministers of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34850/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There are two special advisers employed in my Department. Both advisers are remunerated on the Principal Officer standard scale (PPC).

- Ms Sarah Kavanagh, whose salary is €101,114.00, i.e. the fifth point of the Principal Officer Scale

- Ms Caroline Murphy, whose salary is €98,082.00, i.e. the fourth point of the Principal Officer scale

Ms Kavanagh holds a BA degree in History and Politics, an MA degree in Politics, an MA

degree in Political Communication, a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies and a Barrister at Law Degree. Ms. Kavanagh worked in the Houses of the Oireachtas as a Parliamentary Assistant and Senior Policy Officer for nine years and as a Special Advisor in three Government Departments over the last five years.

Ms. Murphy has over 30 years' experience in the fields of communications and media and is qualified as an Organisational Psychologist.

### **Legislative Programme**

**550. Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress of the legislation to amend section 5 of the Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 following the referendum in May 2019; when he plans to have the Bill progress in both Houses of the Oireachtas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34856/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I published the General Scheme of the Family Law Bill 2019 on 11 July 2019, following its approval by Government. The main purpose of the Family Law Bill will be to amend the law in relation to divorce following the enactment of the Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Act 2019, which was approved by the people in a referendum on 24 May.

The Bill will reduce the minimum living apart period specified in section 5 of the Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 to two years during the previous three years.

The Bill will enable spouses whose judicial separation application is pending before a court to be granted a divorce if they have been living apart for at least two years during the previous three years on 11 June 2019 (the date of enactment of the Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Act 2019).

The Bill will clarify the meaning of the “living apart” requirement for divorce applications by giving certainty to the interpretation that has been given by the Irish courts to the phrase “lived apart from one another” as including spouses who are living in the same dwelling but are otherwise living separate lives.

The Bill will reduce to one year the living apart period of three years that applies to judicial separation applications on the basis of living apart where the respondent does not consent to the decree of judicial separation being granted.

Finally, the Bill will ensure, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, that the recognition in Ireland of divorces granted in the United Kingdom after EU legislation in this area came into operation on 1 March 2001 will continue to be on the basis of habitual residence, rather than the domicile requirement which applies to divorces granted in non-EU states. This provision will be brought into operation only if and when the UK withdraws from the EU without an agreement.

The General Scheme of the Bill has been submitted to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality for pre-legislative scrutiny and to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible for me to predict the outcome of the legislative process with regard to this or any other Bill. However, my aim is that the Bill will be enacted as soon as possible this year.

## Garda Deployment

551. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda juvenile liaison officers assigned to the Dublin metropolitan region north and north central respectively. [34857/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing An Garda Síochána, including personnel matters, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution under review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities to ensure optimum use is made of the resources.

I am advised by the Commissioner that Garda Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs) are specially trained to fulfil a key role in implementing the Garda Diversion Programme. Their role includes the administration of formal and informal cautions as well as appropriate supervision of children who have been admitted to the Diversion Programme, as provided in Part 4 of the Children Act 2001.

I am informed by the Commissioner that JLOs are assigned on a Garda Divisional basis. Accordingly, for the Deputy's information I have set out in the attached table, as supplied by the Commissioner, the figures by Division in each of the years 2008 to 30 June 2019, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

### Juvenile Liaison Officers by Division 2008 -2019

DIVISION	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Jun-19
D.M.R. EAST	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	6	5	5	6	6
D.M.R. NORTH	12	12	11	11	11	12	13	13	13	12	12	11
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	3
D.M.R. SOUTH	10	10	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	8
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	5	6	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	9
D.M.R. WEST	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	9	11	11	11	11
CARLOW/ KILDARE	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KILDARE	0	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
LAOIS/ OF- FALY	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
MEATH	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
LONGFORD/ WESTMEATH	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WESTMEATH	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
WICKLOW	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
DONEGAL	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
LOUTH	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
SLIGO/ LEITRIM	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
WATERFORD/ KILKENNY	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KILKENNY/ CARLOW	0	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
TIPPERARY	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Questions - Written Answers

DIVISION	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Jun-19
WATERFORD	0	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
WEXFORD	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
CORK CITY	7	7	6	8	7	7	7	7	7	10	7	7
CORK NORTH	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
CORK WEST	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
KERRY	3	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
LIMERICK	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	5	6	6
CLARE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
GALWAY	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4
MAYO	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
ROSCOMMON/ GALWAY EAST	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ROSCOMMON/ LONGFORD	0	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL	109	108	109	115	111	117	116	114	110	114	114	114

For further information on the Garda Workforce please see the link below.

[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda\\_Workforce](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce)

For more general information on Garda Facts and Figures please see the link below

[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An\\_Garda\\_Siochana\\_facts\\_and\\_figures](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures)

### Garda Deployment

552. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a protective services unit has been established in the Dublin metropolitan region north and north central divisions respectively; and if so, if both divisions are fully staffed and operational. [34862/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the management and efficient use of Garda resources is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner. This includes responsibility for deployment of personnel. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters. I understand, 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 have been informed by the Commissioner that to date, Divisional Protective Services Units have been established in DMR South Central, Waterford, Kerry, Kilkenny, Carlow, Limerick and Galway Garda Divisions. These are in addition to the units previously established in DMR West, Cork City and Louth Divisions in the initial phase of this initiative.

I am informed by Garda management that it is expected that Divisional Protective Services Units should be rolled-out to the remaining Garda Divisions, including the Dublin Metropolitan Region North and North Central Divisions, on a phased basis by the end of 2019. This expected timetable is in accordance with the target set out in 'A Policing Service for the Future', the implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland.

Finally and in terms of the current arrangements in the Divisions referred to, the Deputy may be interested to hear that Garda management has informed me that both DMR North and DMR North Central have Child Protection Units and further that DMR North has a Domestic Abuse Intervention Unit.

## Prisoner Data

553. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners born male located in women's prisons; and the number of sex offenders born male located in women's prisons. [34863/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise the Deputy that on 2 September 2019 there was one prisoner known to the Irish Prison Service who was born male, but is now recognised as female under the Gender Recognition Act 2015, being detained in a female prison.

I can further advise the Deputy that there is one prisoner known to the Irish Prison Service who was born male but is now recognised as female under the Gender Recognition Act 2015 being detained in a female prison for an alleged sexual offence.

The Irish Prison Service must accept all prisoners into custody into whatever prison a Judge orders under the Consolidated Committal Order which was signed by the Minister for Justice and Equality in 2015.

Upon committal, all prisoners are brought to the reception/committal unit of the prison, where there is an opportunity to provide personal and physical details as part of the regular committal interview process. The assessment of the prisoner's needs, may require the Prison Governor to consider the biological gender, legal gender, gender identity, transgender, gender expression, sexual orientation or gender recognition legislation.

In such cases the Governor may make a recommendation on the appropriate placement within the prison system, taking into consideration good order, security & operational issues, protection issues for both the prisoner and other prisoners, available accommodation and the healthcare needs of the prisoner.

*Questions Nos. 554 and 555 answered with Question No. 533.*

## Bankruptcy Data

556. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons who availed of bankruptcy in each of the years since 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34892/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Bankruptcy is a formal High Court insolvency solution for people in debt over €20,000. During the bankruptcy process, the ownership of the person's property and possessions transfer to the Official Assignee in Bankruptcy to be sold by him for the benefit of those to whom the individual owes debts (i.e., creditors).

When the person's property is sold, the Official Assignee makes sure that the proceeds are shared out among creditors and any outstanding debt will be written off.

On 03 December 2013, the Official Assignee officially transferred to the Insolvency Service of Ireland.

The Insolvency Service of Ireland publishes quarterly figures in relation to bankruptcy on its website at [https://www.isi.gov.ie/en/isi/pages/media\\_&\\_statistics](https://www.isi.gov.ie/en/isi/pages/media_&_statistics).

There have been 2,323 bankruptcy cases adjudicated from January 2014 to December 2018,

inclusive; the breakdown by year of that figure is displayed in the table below. The number of Self Petitions (i.e. a debtor seeking their own bankruptcy) in the period was 2,178 or 94% while the number of Creditor Petitions (where a creditor sought to make an individual bankrupt for non-payment of a debt) was 145 or 6%.

To put the numbers in context, the total number of persons adjudicated in the previous 14 years (i.e. 2000 to 2013) was 225 cases - an average of 16 cases per year (and they were predominantly Creditor Petition cases). The number of bankruptcies in Ireland is now falling from a peak in 2016, notwithstanding the reduction in the bankruptcy terms in 2015 from three years to one year.

Year	Self-Petition total	Creditor Petition total	Total Cases	Self-Petition %	Creditor Petition %
2014	430	18	448	96%	4%
2014	446	33	479	93%	7%
2016	497	29	526	94%	6%
2017	432	41	473	91%	9%
2018	373	24	397	94%	6%
Overall Total	2,178	145	2,323	94%	6%

### Garda Equipment

557. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the information requested in Parliamentary Question No. 139 of 28 May 2019 will be supplied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34953/19]

**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 as well as capital allocation of €92 million this year.

Very significant capital investment is being made in the Garda fleet. An allocation of €10 million has been made for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019, as part of a total €46 million 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.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the 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.

The Deputy may wish to know that Garda authorities have informed me that this year's allocation of €10 million is being used for the purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles.

The Garda authorities have further informed me that the following table sets out the number of motorbikes allocated to and removed from Roads Policing Duties in 2018 and to date in 2019.

Roads Policing Duty	Motorbikes Allocated	Motorbikes Removed
2018	4	7
2019 (to 1 August 2019)	0	10

It is important to note that this table refers to new vehicles allocated to operational duty. While I understand that no new motorbikes have been allocated to Roads Policing Duty to date in 2019, I am informed by the Garda authorities that orders have been placed for 25 motorbikes with a Garda Roads Policing specific fit-out. I am advised that following delivery, it is expected that these motorbikes will be allocated to operational duty in the fleet early in 2020.

*Question No. 558 answered with Question No. 533.*

### Departmental Staff Data

559. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff working in his Department that were or are members of An Garda Síochána in 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34977/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** It is not possible to provide the information that the Deputy has requested. The Public Appointments Service collects data on the previous career history of candidates as part of the recruitment process to the Civil Service. However, this information is not recorded by the Department of Justice & Equality or linked to the file of any individual staff member. The retention of such information would be contrary to the data minimisation principle under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal Data

560. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 466 and 549 of 8 May 2019, the position regarding the assessment of the caseload of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal which was due to be finished; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34979/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed that this assessment will be submitted to me shortly and I will provide the Deputy with a further update at that point.

### Public Inquiries

561. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the public inquiry will commence into the death of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34984/19]

666. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to hold a public inquiry in to the death of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36387/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 561 and 666 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of the late Shane O'Farrell have been addressed by me on several occasions in both the Dáil and the Seanad.

Following the Dáil motion calling for a public inquiry last year, I sought the advice of the Attorney General on how best to proceed, given the fact that the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission was still investigating certain matters in relation to the case. Following the conclusion of the GSOC investigation, I appointed retired District Court Judge Gerard Haughton to conduct a scoping exercise and to advise me in relation to the case.

Judge Haughton subsequently met with the O'Farrell family to discuss the terms of reference and to seek their views. Following his engagement with the family, I received a proposal from Judge Haughton for some changes to the terms of reference for the scoping exercise. Revised draft terms of reference have been provided to Judge Haughton and I understand that he has engaged further with the O'Farrell family.

I regret that it has taken longer than I would have liked to reach this point however it has been necessary to review the original draft terms of reference and the suggested amendments in light of the Supreme Court judgment in *Shatter v Guerin*. I am sure that the Deputy will appreciate the importance of ensuring that any new scoping exercise is framed and conducted in accordance with that judgment.

I expect that it will be possible for Judge Haughton to commence the scoping exercise shortly. Judge Haughton is required to provide me with an interim report within 8 weeks of commencement. He is free to make any recommendation he sees fit, including the establishment of any of the various forms of statutory or non-statutory inquiry. Should he consider it necessary to recommend an inquiry, of whatever type, I have asked him to provide me with draft terms of reference.

### Commencement of Legislation

562. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 with the exception of Parts 2 and 3 of the Act will be fully commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34986/19]

640. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when all sections of the Family Relationships Act 2015 with the exception of Parts 2 and 3 of the Act will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36068/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 562 and 640 together.

Many of the provisions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 were commenced in January 2016. Parts 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of the Act were brought into operation at that time.

In July 2017, part of section 47(c) of the Act was commenced and in November of that year, the provisions of the Act relating to adoption by civil partners and cohabiting couples were commenced.

Section 177 of the Act has not been commenced. The purpose of the section was to amend the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 to provide access to adoptive leave and benefit to the "qualified adopter", that is the member of a civil partnership or cohabiting same-sex couple chosen as such

by the partners or couple. Following the adoption of the 34th Amendment to the Constitution and the subsequent related legislative changes, this is no longer adequate as it does not cover the situation of same-sex married couples. I intend to bring forward a provision on this for inclusion in a suitable Bill as soon as an opportunity arises.

Part 9 of the 2015 Act provides for a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004, all of which have yet to be commenced. Most of these amendments are for the purpose of enabling the registration of the birth of a child born as a result of a Donor-Assisted Human Reproduction (DAHR) procedure, as defined under Parts 2 and 3 of the 2015 Act. Part 9 amends the 2004 Act to include a definition of “parent” in relation to a child born as a result of a DAHR procedure to which Parts 2 and 3 apply. The Civil Registration Act 2019, which was signed into law on 23 May 2019, provides for amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004, including some amendments to address technical issues regarding the wording of some sections of Part 9 of the 2015 Act.

No provision of Part 9 of the 2015 Act has yet been commenced. Section 1(7) of the 2015 Act, as amended by section 12 of the Civil Registration Act 2019, provides that Part 9 shall come into operation 54 months from enactment or on such earlier day or days as the Minister for Justice and Equality may, after consulting with the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, appoint by order. Different days may be appointed for the commencement of different provisions of Part 9. The provisions of Part 9 of the 2015 Act relating to the registration of the birth of donor-conceived children are so closely interlinked with and dependent on Parts 2 and 3 that those provisions of Part 9 cannot be operated until Parts 2 and 3 are brought into operation by my colleague, the Minister for Health.

Part 10 of the Act, which amended the Passports Act 2008, was commenced by my colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in July 2015.

Part 11 of the Act, which relates to adoption, was not commenced and was repealed by section 2(2) of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, which came into operation on in October 2017.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

563. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the terms of the recent divorce referendum will pass into law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34988/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Act 2019 was signed into law on 11 June 2019, following its approval by the people in a referendum on 24 May.

I published the General Scheme of the Family Law Bill 2019 on 11 July 2019, following its approval by Government. The main purpose of the Family Law Bill will be to amend the law in relation to divorce following the enactment of the Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Act 2019.

The Bill will reduce the minimum living apart period specified in section 5 of the Family Law (Divorce) Act 1996 to two years during the previous three years.

The Bill will enable spouses whose judicial separation application is pending before a court to be granted a divorce if they have been living apart for at least two years during the previous three years on 11 June 2019 (the date of enactment of the Thirty-eighth Amendment of the

Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Act 2019).

The Bill will clarify the meaning of the “living apart” requirement for divorce applications by giving certainty to the interpretation that has been given by the Irish courts to the phrase “lived apart from one another” as including spouses who are living in the same dwelling but are otherwise living separate lives.

The Bill will reduce to one year the living apart period of three years that applies to judicial separation applications on the basis of living apart where the respondent does not consent to the decree of judicial separation being granted.

Finally, the Bill will ensure, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, that the recognition in Ireland of divorces granted in the United Kingdom after EU legislation in this area came into operation on 1 March 2001 will continue to be on the basis of habitual residence, rather than the domicile requirement which applies to divorces granted in non-EU states. This provision will be brought into operation only if and when the UK withdraws from the EU without an agreement.

The General Scheme of the Bill has been submitted to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality for pre-legislative scrutiny and to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible for me to predict the outcome of the legislative process with regard to this or any other Bill. However, my aim is that the Bill will be enacted as soon as possible this year.

### Direct Provision Data

564. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the provision of a direct provision centre in the south-east; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34997/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** There are currently five accommodation centres under contract to my Department to provide accommodation and ancillary services in the South East region (counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford). Details of these are given in tabular form below.

Name	Location	Capacity
Atlantic House	Tramore, Co. Waterford	82
Birchwood House	Waterford	145
Bridgewater House	Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary	161
Ocean View	Tramore, Co. Waterford	100
Viking House	Waterford	81

Last December, my Department, in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement, published a Request for Tender (RFT) for accommodation and ancillary services for the South East region. The purpose of the tender was to develop a framework of premises, the members of which would then be offered services contracts depending on the level of demand for accommodation. Each of the above premises was successful in being placed on the framework. No new premises were offered as part of the RFT. Due to the increase in demand for accommodation over the past year, contracts for services were offered to each of the framework members.

A contract for services will only be awarded to a framework member on the condition that they provide independent living (cooking facilities and a food hall) to residents, and family living spaces where applicable. Each framework member is given a 16-week mobilisation period in which to implement these improvements. Each of the premises listed above is currently undergoing mobilisation, and we anticipate that independent living will be in operation in each of the centres by Q4 of this year. Introducing independent living will improve the standard of accommodation available to people seeking international accommodation in the South East, in particular for families and children.

### Legal Aid

565. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration is being given to increasing the income threshold for free legal aid from the present level of €18,000 and also to increasing the mortgage or rent allowance in assessing means from €8,000 maximum per annum in view of the fact that these income thresholds are perceived as restrictive for persons on modest incomes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35004/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Legal Aid Board periodically reviews the operation of the civil legal aid scheme and submits proposals, including proposals related to eligibility, to my Department. My Department works with the Legal Aid Board on an on going basis in evaluating all such proposals with the aim of optimising the ability of the Board to provide civil legal aid to persons of insufficient means. It is not currently proposed to raise the income thresholds, having regard to competing resource demands on the part of the Board, and the overall funding available.

Ensuring that all eligible persons have access to civil legal aid and advice is a priority for the Government and the Legal Aid Board. The Government has prioritised and maintained the Legal Aid Board budget in recent years, ensuring that its budget allocation has increased from nearly €30.37m in 2011 to €40.796m for 2019. This represents an increase of over 34%.

### Courts Service Data

566. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if information (details supplied) will be provided for each of the years 2015 to 2018 in the interests of planning to safeguard vulnerable adults. [35009/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service. The Courts Service is independent in exercising its functions and these include the provision of information on the courts system.

In order to be of assistance to the Deputy I have requested that enquiries made. In response to those enquiries, the Courts Service has informed me that they do not compile data in a way that can provide the details sought by the Deputy.

The specific reasons why the details sought in parts a) to e) of the question cannot be provided are set out below:

- In relation to the details sought in parts a) and b), the Courts Service does not ask people to provide their age, gender or disability for applications under the Domestic Violence Acts (1996/2018).

- In relation to part c), the recording system cannot provide the categories of information that are sought. The Courts Service can only provide information on the number of applications made by type (e.g. total number of applications for a safety order). These figures are published in the Courts Service annual reports.

- In relation to part d), the Courts Service does not ask people to provide their age, gender or disability or other personal information such as their vulnerability. In addition, the system cannot create a report that shows how many applications were made by the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) under section 11 of the 2018 Act/section 6 of the 1996 Act.

- In relation to part e), the Courts Service does not record this information on their systems.

### **Legislative Programme**

567. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 will be amended to take account of the issue of coercive control which is not limited to persons in intimate relationships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35010/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018, which came into effect on 1 January 2019, provides that the offence of coercive control is committed where a person knowingly and persistently engages in a behaviour that:

- (a) is controlling or coercive
- (b) has a serious effect on a relevant person and
- (c) a reasonable person would consider likely to have a serious effect on a relevant person.

Section 39(4) of the Act provides that a person is a relevant person in respect of another person if he or she

(a) is the spouse or civil partner of that other person, or

(b) is not the spouse or civil partner of that person and is not related to that other person within a prohibited degree of relationship, but is or was in an intimate relationship with that other person.

The legislation was drafted following detailed discussion in the Oireachtas and in consultation with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Garda Síochána and the Courts Service.

The Domestic Violence Act 2018 has been fully in operation since 1 January 2019 and improves the protections available to victims of domestic violence under both the civil and criminal law. While all new legislation takes some time to bed in, the effectiveness of the innovative new offence of coercive control for the categories set out in Section 39(4) will take some time to evaluate, given that a pattern of persistent behaviour as provided for in Section 39(1) needs to be established. If the Deputy wishes to bring to my attention any issues in relation to the matter, I will arrange to have it examined.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

568. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the arrangements put in place under the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 to arrange for interviews of victims of crime that have a disability to be carried out as soon as practicable after a complaint is made under sections 14 and 15 of the Act; and the number of persons who received specialist training for the purpose of carrying out such interviews under section 17 of the Act. [35011/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Section 14 of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act, 2017 sets out the general provisions governing the protection of victims during interviews and this includes provision for the carrying out of interviews with victims as soon as possible and only where necessary.

Section 15 of the Act makes provision for the assessment of victims and the implementation of protection and special measures identified by the assessment. Under section 15 (2) of the Act, in carrying out such assessments, a member of An Garda Síochána or an officer of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission as the case may be, shall have regard to a wide range of matters including if the victim has a disability. In this regard each victim is individually assessed to establish any particular protection needs he or she may have and if they would benefit from any special measures during the course of the criminal proceedings. This assessment takes into account the nature and circumstances of the crime but the focus is on the personal needs of the victim.

Specifically with regard to interviews, under section 17 of the Act, special measures available during an investigation for victims of crime, including for victims who have a disability, may include the following measures;

- (i) carrying out such interviews in specially adapted premises and by persons trained for that purpose
- (ii) where there is more than one interview, for interviews to be carried out, where possible, by the same member or members of the Garda Síochána or the same officer or officers of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, as the case may be; and
- (iii) where the alleged offence involves sexual violence, gender-based violence or violence in a close relationship, that the victim be informed of his or her right to request that interviews are carried out by a person of the same sex as themselves.

In applying these provisions the Garda authorities have advised me that since the introduction of Section 16(1) (b) of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992, An Garda Síochána has operated the practice of recording the evidence-in-chief of children and persons with a mental disability on DVD and that this is now an established Garda practice.

The Garda authorities also advise that records held at the Garda National Protective Services Bureau show that 114 members of An Garda Síochána and 19 Tusla staff are currently operating as such specialist interviewers. These interviewers undergo an intensive 4-week training course at the Garda Síochána College, Templemore, Co Tipperary. There are nine specialist interview suites throughout the country, all of which are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities.

Prior to an interview taking place, the specialist interviewer will meet with the victim (and their guardian where applicable) and explain the interview process to them. In the course of this meeting the interviewer carries out an assessment of the victim's ability to provide evidence. This assessment is separate from, and additional to, the assessment carried out of all victims under section 15 of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act, 2017. Since the enactment of this legislation the specialist interview constitutes a special measure as provided for under sec-

tion 17 of that Act.

In addition, as a further support to victims of crime with a disability, An Garda Síochána's "Short Guide to Cultural and Diversity Awareness" contains advice for Garda members on dealing with everyday practical policing issues including assisting or communicating with a person with a particular physical disability.

Further to this and as impairments are not always obvious, many people may not identify as having a disability. For that reason the Garda Síochána Victim Information Leaflet which is provided to victims of crime in accordance with section 7 of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017, invites victims to let members of An Garda Síochána know if there is any particular need or support the victim considers necessary to assist in providing a professional policing service to them.

In addition to this information provided to me by the Garda authorities, I have also been advised by the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) that in accordance with the Victims of Crime Act, 2017, the protection needs of all victims of crime who come under their remit are assessed.

As part of this process, the personal characteristics of the victim including any disability and other factors, are taken into account for the purpose of ascertaining whether a victim might benefit from protection and/or special measures. With regard to interviews, I am further advised by GSOC that it currently has four members of staff who are specially trained in interviewing but that plans are in place to significantly increase this number.

*Question No. 569 answered with Question No. 533.*

### **Closed-Circuit Television Systems**

570. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the allocations from the grant aid scheme for community closed-circuit television schemes with a view to extending the availability of grants beyond 2019 to allow communities that experienced difficulties in establishing their schemes to benefit from same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35024/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems.

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 act as data controller, and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes, regardless of how they are funded and these key legal requirements have not changed since 2006. The possibility of establishing a Community CCTV scheme is available to groups that meet these legal requirements, anywhere

in the country.

Since 2017, my Department has administered a grant aid scheme supporting groups wishing to establish a community-based CCTV system in their area. To date, 21 applications have been approved under the Scheme, involving approved grants totalling more than €540,000.

The Deputy will appreciate that while the Estimates process is ongoing, I am not in a position to respond to his query in relation to funding possibilities for the coming year. However, I can confirm that the grant aid scheme remains open for applications from interested groups in 2019 and that all fully completed applications received before the end of 2019 will be considered.

Eligible groups, including community groups and local authorities nationwide, can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum total of €40,000. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have recently expanded the grant aid scheme to cover not only new CCTV systems but also to allow funding applications for extension or upgrade of existing Community CCTV systems which are incomplete or obsolete. Applicants can now also seek a grant of up to €5,000 for minor maintenance costs.

I must emphasise that grant funding can be considered only for CCTV systems which meet the legal requirements for CCTV, in other words CCTV systems which have been approved by the relevant Joint Policing Committee, the relevant Local Authority (also acting as Data Controller) and which have received the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

If the Deputy is aware of groups wishing to avail of the scheme, further details are available to download from my Department's website - [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) and support and guidance is available to help interested groups through a dedicated email address [communitycctv@justice.ie](mailto:communitycctv@justice.ie)

*Question No. 571 answered with Question No. 533.*

### **Immigration Data**

572. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons from Colombia living here; the number on a stamp 2 and stamp 4; and the number of Colombians who have sought asylum in the past decade. [35040/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by Immigration Service of my Department that all non-EEA nationals who have permission to remain in the State for longer than three months are required to register their permission to be in the State. Registration of permissions are recorded on a Garda ICT system and the Garda authorities advise that there are 344 Colombian nationals currently registered in the State. Of these a total of 125 are on stamp 4 conditions and 61 are on stamp 2 conditions.

I also wish to inform the Deputy that the International Protection Office indicate that the number of persons providing Colombia as their country of origin is very low. Statistics relating to individual nationalities in such circumstances are not disclosed for confidentiality reasons as it may lead to the identification of individual applicants.

### **Travel Documents**

573. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the processing times for travel documents; his plans to increase resources to reduce the processing time; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [35060/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the processing time for Travel Document applications is 16 weeks from the receipt of a fully completed, accurate application form. Applications for Temporary Travel Documents, and those which require the facilitation of a third party, may take longer. This processing time is stated on the Immigration Service website.

Processing times fluctuate depending on the number of applications received at any given time however currently processing times are within the stated timeframe. The allocation of resources to this and all other areas of the immigration service is kept under regular review and there are no immediate plans to adjust the resource allocation to this area at present.

### Naturalisation Applications

574. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for naturalisation received by month in 2018 and to date in 2019. [35061/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The INIS Service Improvement Plan 2018-2020 commits the Immigration Service of my Department to significant investment in technological developments including the roll-out of online forms and payments for citizenship applications. Such developments are expected to deliver significant improvements to customer experiences and processing timescales.

I am advised that the number of applications for naturalisation received by month in 2018 and to date in 2019 is as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2018	990	1062	943	999	1248	1094	988	973	1099	1206	1208	1048
2019	1124	1335	1312	1026	996	862	927	669	-	-	-	-

The Immigration Service devotes considerable resources to the processing of these applications. It also operates a dedicated phone helpline and email helpdesk available for all applicants interested in the progress of their application, details of which are available on their website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

### Direct Provision Data

575. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons seeking international protection here that were placed in emergency accommodation rather than dedicated direct provision centres in 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of persons that have had their application approved with a permission to remain that have not exited on a full-time basis from direct provision centres following receipt of their due date to vacate premises in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; the level of engagement he has had with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of meeting housing needs for persons exiting direct provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35072/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

As of 11th August 2019, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department was accommodating 6,045 people in its 38 accommodation centres. A further 1,087 people were accommodated by RIA in emergency accommodation in hotels and guesthouses. This figure has increased from 289 people in emergency accommodation on 31st December 2018. The use of emergency accommodation is not the ideal scenario. However, while we wait for new accommodation centres to come on stream, we must ensure that each person arriving today to claim international protection, with no advance warning, will tonight have shelter, food and any urgent medical care they require.

Coupled with an increase in the number of people applying for protection in recent years there are over 900 people with an international protection status (refugee status or subsidiary protection status) or a humanitarian permission to remain who continue to live in RIA accommodation.

People with an international protection status or a permission to remain have the same access to mainstream housing supports and services as nationals. We are working intensively with organisations like the Peter McVerry Trust, Depaul and the Jesuit Refugee Service to assist these people to transition to mainstream housing services but that is challenging in the current housing environment.

RIA staff meet regularly with colleagues from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and with staff from the City and County Manager's Association (CCMA) to work collectively to ensure those with status or permission to remain are assisted to move on to longer term accommodation as soon as possible.

### Emergency Services Data

576. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of hoax 999 calls received by An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2016 to 2018 in numerical terms and as a percentage of total calls received; and the number of man hours expended on such calls. [35090/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that the current Garda Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and PULSE systems do not have specific categories that record hoax calls. As a result, the information being sought by the Deputy is not readily available at this time.

However I would note that the resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

As part of the ongoing process of upgrade of Garda ICT and in keeping with the recommendations of the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, I am advised by the Garda authorities that planning is underway for a modern system which will equip Garda regional control and contact centres with up to date systems and technology including a new CAD system integrated with other Garda systems including the Rosters and Duty Management System, telephony and radio, mobile and mapping and so on.

I am further informed that it is intended that a tender for CAD 2 will be advertised in the EU Journal before the end of 2019. This is in keeping with the target set out in the implementation plan for the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland - "A Policing Service for the Future".

I understand that as well as enhancing Garda capacity as set out above, the new CAD system, once operational, will have the ability to gather the type of information requested by the Deputy as well as many other forms of data in a timely and accurate manner.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

577. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to facilitate an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35127/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received. Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the website of the Immigration Service at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations.

On 25 July 2019, I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue. My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the website of the Immigration Service.

Those who are planning to apply for citizenship should continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Deportation Orders**

578. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a deportation order will be set aside in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35128/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 29 September 2017. This Order requires the person to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

As previously advised, representations were received from the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked including information regarding her marriage. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and notified to the person concerned by letter dated 27 November 2018.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the parliamentary questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Deportation Orders Re-examination**

579. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to previous correspondence and Parliamentary Questions, if the case of a person (details supplied) will be re-examined with a view to setting aside the deportation order; if stamp 4 status will be issued in view of the circumstances of the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35129/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 25 August 2017. This Order requires the person to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Representations were received from the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and notified to the person concerned by letter dated 08 May 2019. There are no outstanding correspondence or applications on file for this applicant.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the parliamentary questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## **Immigration Data**

580. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 335 of 11 July 2019, the position regarding the processing of applications under the special scheme for non-European Economic Area nationals that held a student permission (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35194/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the Special Scheme for Students was launched on 15 October 2018 and closed to new applications on 20 January 2019. Approximately 3,100 applications were received comprising former students and their family members. To date, the Immigration Service has made a decision in approximately 2,364 cases. Decisions have also been made in a further approximately 100 applications for a review of an original decision to refuse permission under the scheme.

The Deputy will appreciate that it is necessary to process these applications in full compliance with legal requirements and in accordance with the criteria of the Scheme. I am assured by the Immigration Service that it continues to optimise all available resources, including the provision of overtime, to deliver decisions to all applicants under the scheme as soon as possible.

## **Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal Applications**

581. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 165 of 14 November 2018, the status of a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35196/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal, which has responsibility for the administration of the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted, is independent of my Department in the processing of individual applications under the Scheme.

However, to be of assistance to the Deputy I have made enquiries with the Tribunal and have been informed that the Tribunal wrote to the applicant on 27 June 2019 seeking additional information necessary for consideration of the case and is awaiting a response.

## **Garda Equipment**

582. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda patrol cars assigned to Mountjoy Garda station in 2018 and to date in 2019, by the existing allocation and new allocations in each year. [35271/19]

583. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda vans assigned to Mountjoy Garda station in 2018 and to date in 2019, by the existing allocation and new allocations for each year. [35272/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 582 and 583 together.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda

fleet between 2016 and 2021. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

€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.

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.

€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.

The information in the table below, provided to me by the Garda Commissioner, outlines the number of vehicles allocated to DMR North Central Division, in which Mountjoy Station is located, for the dates requested by the Deputy.

DMR North Central	2018 Fleet Total (as on 31/12/2018)	2018 Fleet Allocations	2019 Fleet Total (as on 20/08/2019)	2019 Fleet Allocations (to 20/08/2019)
Cars	47	2	46	10
Vans	12	3	11	1

### Departmental Expenditure

584. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35345/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** My Department spent €2,261,886 on Lotus Notes licences between 2009 and 2019.

I am advised that my Department is due to carry out an audit of its Lotus Notes estate in September 2019, which will determine the licenses needed from 2020 onwards and the resulting costs. I am further advised that my Department expects to have completely replaced Lotus Notes in favour of newer technologies over the next five years. The annual spend each year over this period will reduce as the migration of individual systems completes.

### **Personal Injury Claims**

585. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of establishing and the annual cost of running the register of personal injuries actions in accordance with section 30 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004. [35352/19]

586. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the challenges created by the establishment of the register of personal injuries actions in accordance with section 30 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004; the impact of same on GDPR and other data protection law; and the way in which it could be overcome. [35353/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 585 and 586 together.

My Department submitted a report detailing some of the challenges in establishing a register of personal injuries actions to the Cost of Insurance Working Group in February this year, following its review of section 30 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004.

The main conclusion of the report is that the Courts Service does not recommend proceeding with the setting up of a register at this time. The reasons cited in the report include: data protection concerns, technical/resources considerations, and the perceived limited benefits from developing a register that only includes Court actions.

In summary, a number of challenges have been identified in collating the type of data sought on personal injuries actions claimants. The Courts Service recommended, as conveyed in my Department's report to the working group in February 2019, that these challenges could be most effectively overcome through the appropriate use of the proposed new courts Civil Case Management System. This system would include all civil litigation details including personal injuries actions. This is particularly relevant given that GDPR standards and compliance have developed considerably in law since the Civil Liability Act was enacted in 2004.

### **Citizenship Applications**

587. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the spouse and children of a naturalised Irish citizen living in the United Kingdom and whose family joined them there through family reunification can be granted Irish citizenship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35372/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. It is not possible to provide a definitive response to queries such as this as the individual circumstances of each case can be different. For example, if the children of the naturalised father were born after he became an Irish citizen, they would be eligible to apply for an Irish passport through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as Irish citizens.

On a general note applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. As the Deputy will appreciate, a determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria can only be made after an application is received.

In general, eligibility for a certificate of naturalisation is based either on Section 15 or Section 16 of the Act. Section 15 requires, among other conditions, that minimum periods of residency in the State are met. These periods are reduced in respect of a spouse of an Irish national.

Under Section 16, it is also open to make an application on the basis of Irish association. In such cases, the Minister may in his or her absolute discretion waive the conditions for naturalisation set out under the Act, including residency. The onus is on the applicant to provide evidence of Irish association to the Minister for consideration.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, including in respect of children, is available on the Immigration Service website at [ww.inis.gov.ie](http://ww.inis.gov.ie).

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Citizenship Applications**

588. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a citizenship application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35388/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy on 19 February 2019. Processing of this application is on-going, with a view to establishing whether the conditions for naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, are satisfied. As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

In relation to applications for citizenship, I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue. My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

589. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a work permit application or short-term residency status will be extended in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35392/19]

695. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the appropriate procedure to be followed to regularise residency in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36600/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 589 and 695 together.

I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the personal information provided by the Deputy is not sufficient to establish the correct identity of the individual concerned in order to provide a response on the matter.

As the Deputy will be aware, queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited. If further information is available to the Deputy to help the Immigration Service to identify the individual concerned, they would be happy to follow up.

Work permit applications are a matter for the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation. I understand that the Deputy has also addressed his query to that Department for their appropriate response.

### **Immigration Status**

590. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the unexpected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35394/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Immigration Service of my Department that a request for further permission to remain was received from the person concerned on 8 March 2018. Further documentation in support of this request was received on 2 and 8 July 2019. The Deputy will appreciate that all such requests are dealt with in chronological order. I understand that the request is under active consideration and a decision will be made as soon as possible.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which

has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

591. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35395/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 30 May 2019. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

Representations have been received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). This request will be considered as soon as possible. A decision will then be made to either "affirm" or "revoke" the existing Deportation Order. This decision will be communicated in writing. In the meantime, the Deportation Order remains valid and in place.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

592. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35396/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications. The applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted: by email to [info@ipo.gov.ie](mailto:info@ipo.gov.ie); by telephone to the IPO Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either: by email to [info@protectionappeals.ie](mailto:info@protectionappeals.ie); by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

Following the commencement of the International Protection Act 2015 on 31 December

2016, new arrangements for the investigation and determination of applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and cases involving permission to remain in the State have been introduced. Such applications are now processed, as part of a single application procedure, by the International Protection Office (IPO) which has replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) from that date. The staff of that Office (the Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers) are independent in the performance of their protection functions.

For your information, on 27 February 2017, the Chief International Protection Officer, following consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), published a statement on the Prioritisation of Applications under the International Protection Act 2015, which is available to view on the website of the International Protection Office ([www.ipo.gov.ie](http://www.ipo.gov.ie)).

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the parliamentary questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

593. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 192 of 19 July 2019, if appropriate residency status to facilitate employment in the case of a person (details supplied) will be granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35397/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application having been received in relation to the person referred to by the Deputy.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application to the Immigration Service outlining the particular circumstances of their case. The person concerned should write directly to Residence Division, Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. In their correspondence, they should provide sufficient biographical information to allow them to be identified and should set out the details of their case. Information on the different application types, qualifying criteria, and the required documentation are available to view on the website ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)). This may be of assistance when preparing their correspondence.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Eligibility**

594. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) who is a stamp 4 holder but may qualify for

naturalisation; if such an application will be accepted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35398/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. The person concerned currently has permission to reside in the State until 4 April 2020.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice.

I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on Thursday 25 July, 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

Those who are planning to apply for citizenship should continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

595. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) that was awarded stamp 4 status but is still awaiting an appointment to register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35399/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that when the person concerned attended their recent appointment with the Immigration Registration Office in Dublin, they provided an out of date permission letter. They were advised by the Registration Office that they should re-apply to my Department for further permission.

As previously advised in their original permission letter dated 17 September 2018, future

renewals of the permission to remain should be applied for four weeks in advance of the permission expiring to the Acknowledgement Unit, Repatriation Division, Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Family Reunification Applications**

596. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for family reunification in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35400/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that a proposal under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme Humanitarian Admissions Programme (known as IHAP) was received from the person referred to by the Deputy.

The IHAP provides an opportunity for Irish citizens and persons with status (Convention refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and programme refugee status), who have eligible family members under the scheme, to make a proposal for these family members to join them here in Ireland. The IHAP focuses on family members from the top ten major source countries of refugees listed under the UNHCR's Annual Global Trends Report (currently Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea and Burundi).

The first call for proposals under the Programme was made in summer 2018, and 166 people were ultimately granted permission to come to the State. A second call for proposals issued last December, with a closing date for proposals of 8 February 2019. Over 800 proposals were received in this round in respect of over 1,700 potential beneficiaries. Processing of these proposals is ongoing.

The person referred to by the Deputy, submitted a proposal under the second call. The proposer was notified in writing of the decision in respect of this proposal by letter dated 11 July 2019.

As the Deputy may be aware, queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

597. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to

which the case of a person (details supplied) can be re-examined with a view to granting temporary residency; if the matter can be further examined with a view to setting aside the deportation order in order to facilitate a reassessment of the person's case for residency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35402/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person referred to is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 11 March 2005.

As previously advised, representations were received on behalf of the person concerned pursuant to Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to revoke the Deportation Order. Following the consideration of those representations, a decision was taken in July 2018 that the Deportation Order should be affirmed and this decision was communicated to the person concerned by registered post dated 16 July 2018.

Further representations were received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

The Deputy might wish to note that the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the Order is legally obliged to leave the State and to remain outside of the State. The enforcement of a Deportation Order is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Garda Strength**

598. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the Garda strength by rank including Garda reserves based in each station in a district (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35407/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the allocation and distribution of resources including the recruitment and training of Garda members and members of the Garda Reserve is entirely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no responsibility in this matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

The Deputy may wish to refer to information published, and regularly updated, on my department's website in relation to the Garda workforce. Information available relates to the breakdown of the force by rank as well as Garda numbers by district and division and it is available here:

[http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda\\_Workforce](http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce)

The Garda Reserve strength in each of the years from 2009 to 30 June 2019, the most recent figures available to me, as provided by the Garda Commissioner is available on my Depart-

ment's website through the link below. Please note that the breakdown of Garda Reserves is only available on a Divisional basis.

[http://justice.ie/en/JELR/006\\_Garda\\_Reserve\\_Strength\\_2009\\_to\\_June\\_2019.xlsx/Files/006\\_Garda\\_Reserve\\_Strength\\_2009\\_to\\_June\\_2019.xlsx](http://justice.ie/en/JELR/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_June_2019.xlsx/Files/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_June_2019.xlsx)

I am informed by An Garda Síochána that a class of approximately 100 Garda reserve recruits commenced training on 23/24 March 2019 at the Garda College, Templemore. This is a positive development and delivers on the target set out under 'A Policing Service for the Future', the implementation plan for the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

As the Deputy will be aware, An Garda Síochána is currently conducting a strategic review of the Garda Reserve to inform future decisions around the use of the Reserve. This approach is in line with the recommendation in the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland which recommended that recruitment to the Garda Reserve be paused and a Strategy developed. The Strategy will inform the development and preparation for a new Reserve recruitment drive by the end of 2019.

### **Visa Applications**

**599. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied); the extent to which the case is progressing or approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35450/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the application referred to was received by the Visa Office in Moscow on 17 June 2019. Visa applications are dealt with in chronological order by date of receipt within the particular category. The application is currently being processed by staff in the Immigration Service Moscow Visa Office.

A visa application to join with a family member, where the sponsor is an Irish national, can normally be expected to be dealt with within 6 months of receipt of the required documentation, as set out in the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification. This is a business target which reflects the detailed assessment that is required to be carried out in relation to applications for family reunification. It does not constitute a legal obligation and such applications may take longer due to the individual circumstances or complexity of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Parental Leave**

**600. Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which parents of children with autism and other special needs are considered to meet the criteria for disability under the provisions of unpaid parental leave legislation and therefore qualify for a higher child qualifying age under the legislation; and the mechanisms in place to ensure that his

Department is informed of difficulties for parents of special needs children meeting the criteria for the higher age bracket. [35463/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**

As the Deputy will be aware, under the Parental Leave Act 1998 “a ‘disability’, in relation to a child, is defined as “an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment of the child such that the level of care required for the child is substantially more than the level of care that is generally required for children of the same age who do not have any such impairment”.

For the purposes of establishing an entitlement to parental leave until a child is 16, any child that meets these criteria is considered to have a disability.

I am not aware of any issues concerning parents of disabled children experiencing difficulties taking parental leave under the legislation, however if parents do encounter any such difficulties, they can avail of the dispute resolution mechanisms under Part IV of the Parental Leave Act, 1998.

*Question No. 601 answered with Question No. 533.*

### **Visa Applications**

602. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to change the process of applying for extension of volunteer visas for non-EU citizens beyond the current two years; his further plans and processes to allow volunteer visa holders from non-EU countries to apply for citizenship without having to be resident here for five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35499/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that a new Volunteering in Ireland preclearance process for non-EEA citizens was launched in April 2018. Under the terms of the volunteering immigration permission, an individual granted such a permission can work in a volunteering role in Ireland for a period of up to 24 months, and may be eligible for a further extension of one year, to an aggregate total of 36 months. Applications for a third year extension should be made before the volunteer worker’s current permission expires. An extension will only be allowed for volunteer service with the applicant’s current sponsor and will be considered only if the sponsor can demonstrate a genuine need for the volunteer to continue working in that role.

Volunteers are typically granted a Stamp 3 immigration permission when they register for an Irish Residence Permit. I am advised that the Immigration Service currently has no plans to change the policy in relation to the immigration permission and the duration of the permission granted to volunteers. I am further advised that there are no plans to apply separate criteria for citizenship applications to the cohort of persons that come to work in Ireland on a volunteer basis.

### **Garda Recruitment**

603. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Number 464 of 8 May 2019, if he has engaged or consulted with the Garda Commissioner in respect of extending or abolishing the upper age limit for persons wishing to make an application to become a full-time serving trainee Garda; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [35565/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, recruitment to An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013 which provide that the age at which a person may apply to join An Garda Síochána as a full time member is not more than 35 years.

On 18 December 2018, the Government endorsed the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland and agreed to accept all of its 157 key recommendations, including those related to Garda workforce planning and modernisation. The report is now being implemented in accordance with the targets and timelines set out in “A Policing Service for the Future”, the four year implementation plan for the recommendations of the Commission.

Among the issues highlighted in the report was that An Garda Síochána should reflect the diversity of Irish society and should therefore develop recruitment strategies to achieve a more diverse intake. In this regard, it recommended that age limits for recruitment should be removed.

I can inform the Deputy that as set out in my previous response to the same question of 8 May 2019, the question of the appropriate age for recruitment to An Garda Síochána will be considered as part of my Department’s broader review of entry to An Garda Síochána.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

604. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training on same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35580/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Staff in my Department have undertaken a range of training courses on all aspects of GDPR. Online training was rolled out to all staff in 2018 and continues to be provided to new staff. In addition an external company was engaged to provide customised training in relation to Data Protection, including GDPR, to nominated staff of my Department.

Details of costs associated with GDPR training are set out in the following table.

External Provider	Cost €
Legal Island (Online training)	19,250
Bridgecastle Information Management Ltd t/a Castlebridge (customised, classroom based training)	22,656
Total Cost €	41,906

### Visa Applications

605. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of a visa application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35597/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Im-

migration Service of my Department that the visa application referred to was refused by the Visa Office in Abu Dhabi. The applicant was advised of the reasons for the refusal by letter dated 27 August 2019.

The applicant was also advised that the decision could be appealed within two months. No appeal has yet been received in the Abu Dhabi Visa Office. Should the applicant wish to appeal the decision, they should address the reasons for refusal in any appeal and submit any information or documentation that they wish the Visa Appeals Officer at the Irish Embassy in Abu Dhabi to consider.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to Immigration Services by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail visa queries directly to [visamail@justice.ie](mailto:visamail@justice.ie).

### **Law Reform Proposals**

606. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the issue of litigation funding and access to justice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35632/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, the funding of litigation in this jurisdiction is illegal. By way of information, both common law and the Statute Law Revision Act 2007 seek to prevent spurious or frivolous litigation through the torts and offences of "maintenance" and "champerty".

"Maintenance" may be defined as giving financial assistance or encouragement to a party to litigation by a person who does not have an interest in the litigation or any motive recognised by the law which would justify interference. "Champerty" may be defined as an aggravated form of maintenance as it involves the support of litigation by a non-party for a share of the proceeds.

Aspects of litigation funding are also considered to be contrary to public policy. In particular, litigation funding may drive a market in legal claims and promote litigation for the benefit of the promoter rather than the litigant. This in turn may create a substantial injustice to a defendant in an action.

As recently as 23 May 2017, the Supreme Court confirmed that professional third party funding does offend the rules of maintenance and champerty (*Persona Digital Telephony Ltd. and others v The Minister for Public Enterprise, Attorney General and others*). The Supreme Court also considered the potential for new legislation and other broader aspects of the policy approach in this area.

I am also mindful that there have been developments in relation to these matters in other common law jurisdictions. The torts and crimes of maintenance and champerty were abolished in England and Wales under the Criminal Law Act of 1967 and in a number of States in Australia. New Zealand on the other hand has retained both.

As the Deputy will appreciate, there are a number of legal and broader policy aspects of litigation funding that need to be further considered. In that context, consideration will be given

to the anticipated report and recommendations of the Law Reform Commission consultation arising from its June 2016 Issues Paper on “Contempt of Court and Other Offences and Torts Involving the Administration of Justice”. I am advised that under Issue 6 of this paper, the Commission has opened up the retention of the related crimes and torts of “maintenance” and “champerty” to public consultation, along with the question of whether third-party funding of litigation should be permitted.

### Departmental Customer Charters

607. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and-or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35648/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** My Department is committed to delivering high quality customer service and aims to provide all customers with a complaints procedure that is accessible, efficient, effective, standardised and fair. The Customer Service Charter and Customer Service Action Plan 2016 – 2018 set out the commitments and standards of service that customers can expect in their dealing with my Department. A new Customer Service Charter and Customer Service Action Plan for 2019 – 2021 is being finalised.

If a customer is not happy with the standard of service received, they are advised to contact the relevant business area of the Department that they were dealing with to have the matter resolved in the first instance. If this does not resolve the issue, customers may contact the Department’s Customer Service Officer who will investigate the complaint.

Complaints received by the Department’s Customer Service Officer	2017	2018	2019
	4	2	0

If the complaint is concerning the standard of service in respect of immigration service delivery, customers are advised to contact the Quality Customer Service Officer for that area.

Complaints received by email to Immigration Service Customer Service Officer	2017	2018	2019
	170	298	190*

\*up to 29th August 2019

### Work Permits Applications

608. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of progress to reform the atypical working scheme permit rules enforced by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in order to deal with the damaging impact on the provision of out-of-hours general practitioner services particularly in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35681/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy

that policy responsibility relating to locum doctors is primarily a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE). The role of the Immigration Service of my Department is to provide immigration mechanisms by which non-EEA medical personnel may be recruited to fill temporary vacancies in the health sector as and when required. I am advised that in recent months the Immigration Service has consulted closely with the HSE to determine if the terms of the Scheme require any amendments. The Immigration Service remains committed to ongoing stakeholder engagement to ensure the smooth operating of the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) with regards to locum GP's.

Under current arrangements, which have been in place since 2015, doctors undertaking locum work in the Primary Care (GP) sector may be granted a 'block' 90-day permission for the duration of their 90-day contract. Exit from and re-entry into the State is not permitted during this 90-day period, except in exceptional circumstances. The terms of the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) also provide that at least one month must elapse from the expiry date of the 90 day permission before a new application may be made. The rationale for this approach, which applies to all such permissions, is rooted in the principle that an atypical permission is not a substitute for the replacement of full time labour (either sourced within Ireland or the EU or through the Non EEA Work Permit regime). Thus a person granted such permission cannot automatically roll over their atypical permission. These conditions have applied to permissions granted under the Scheme since its inception.

Atypical immigration permissions are specifically designed to cover such short term employments in the State and there are alternative options available for longer term employment through the work permit regime of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Firearms and Ammunition Security**

609. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter regarding the deactivation of old guns (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35723/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Under section 6 of the Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act 1990, as amended, deactivated or defective firearms, not capable of being fired, may be kept on the written authorisation of the local Garda Superintendent.

As the Deputy may be aware, on 8 April 2016, a regulation came into effect and introduced new EU-wide standards for deactivated firearms - the European Commission Implementing Regulation 2015/2403 establishing common guidelines on deactivation standards and techniques for ensuring that deactivated firearms are rendered irreversibly inoperable. It has subsequently been amended by Commission Implementing Regulation 2018/337, which came into effect in 2018.

Accordingly and since April 2016, a two-step process is involved, whereby the firearm is firstly deactivated in accordance with the technical requirements of the revised Regulation, followed by an independent verification of this deactivation by a competent public authority appointed by Member States within each jurisdiction.

The first step may be carried out by any Registered Firearms Dealer in Ireland. Arrangements for appointment of a competent public authority in Ireland are currently being progressed by my Department. Pending appointment of such a competent public authority in Ireland, the deactivation of firearms may be verified by the Competent Authority in any other Member State.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Assisted Decision Making**

610. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015; when it will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35740/19]

611. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the information and communications technology strategy for the decision support services underpinned by the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35741/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 610 and 611 together.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. The Act provides for the establishment of new administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health).

I am advised that the commencement of the main provisions of the 2015 Act is expected to take place next year.

A number of the provisions of the 2015 Act have already commenced including Part 1 (excluding sections 3, 4 and 7) and Part 9 (excluding sections 96 and 102 and Chapter 3). These provisions were commenced to progress the establishment of the Decision Support Service and the recruitment of its Director, Ms. Áine Flynn. Ms. Flynn was appointed in October 2017.

The Decision Support Service is working towards being operational and ready for the commencement of the main provisions of the 2015 Act next year. As I am sure the Deputy will appreciate, there are many complex strands to this preparatory work, including the involvement of multiple organisations. I am advised that this lead in time is required to ensure the necessary staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations will be in place to ensure the Decision Support Service is established effectively. A high-level Steering Group of senior officials from my Department, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service, together with the Director of the Decision Support Service, is overseeing this on-going work.

Certain provisions of Part 8 of the Act related to advanced healthcare directives have also been commenced by my colleague, the Minister for Health.

**Asylum Support Services**

612. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if discussions are taking place and consideration has been given to opening a reception centre for asylum seekers in a premises near a town (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35761/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I can advise the Deputy that my Department is in discussions with a number of parties regarding potential premises in a number of locations to meet our obligations to persons seeking international protection and requiring accommodation. In the first half of this year alone, we have seen a 36% annual increase in the number of applications received.

Furthermore, there is currently an ongoing public procurement process through the Government procurement portal [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie) for accommodation and ancillary services in the Western Region. As the Deputy will appreciate, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further while the tender process is ongoing.

### **Garda Reorganisation**

613. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he was consulted on the Garda reorganisation plan; if he has received a copy of same; if he has been informed of the new configuration of the Garda regions which are being reduced from six to four; if so, the details of the existing regions and the proposed regions as informed to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35767/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As Minister for Justice and Equality, I warmly welcome the announcement in recent weeks by the Garda Commissioner of a new Operating Model of An Garda Síochána.

This functional model has long been recommended by independent policing specialists, including the Garda Síochána Inspectorate and in the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI). Rollout of this model meets a key commitment in A Policing Service for the Future, the four year implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

While new to Ireland, this model is the norm in other countries. It is designed to reduce bureaucracy and will shift real decision-making power from Garda Headquarters to the Chief Superintendents, closer to the communities they serve. Importantly, it will also result in significantly more Sergeants and Inspectors on the ground where leadership, supervision and mentoring is crucial.

I understand that the finer details of the implementation of the new Divisional structures are currently being determined by the Garda Commissioner and his team, and the new model will be implemented on a phased basis throughout 2020. I further understand that the Commissioner and his team will be meeting Joint Policing Committees all over Ireland in the weeks ahead and there will be opportunities for detailed local engagement at that stage.

Of course, these changes are being introduced at a time of record investment in An Garda Síochána. €1.76 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to € 92 million this year. In terms of Garda numbers the Deputy will be aware of the Government's commitment to achieving a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021.

I am confident that this ongoing investment in Garda resources together with the ongoing reform process will result in an improved policing service for all communities.

Finally, I can confirm that while I have been informed of the Commissioner's plan and, of course, I was familiar with the recommendations of the expert Garda Síochána Inspectorate and the CoFPI on these matters, the detail of the plan was solely a matter for An Garda Síochána in line with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 which states that by law the allocation of all Garda resources, including the deployment and distribution of Garda personnel, is solely a matter for the Commissioner.

### **Immigration Status**

614. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Irish citizen child of a person (details supplied) will have to attend with the child's mother who has to lodge their application in France, in view of the fact that they first applied for asylum there; if this is likely to affect the application of the father for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35787/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person referred to does not have a live application for naturalisation but does have an application pending for permission to remain in the State as the parent of an Irish citizen child. This application is being dealt with by the relevant section of the Immigration Service of my Department. The application was submitted on 15 October 2018.

I am further advised by Immigration Service, that permission to parents of Irish Citizen Children is granted where the applicant can show that they are playing an active role in the life of the Irish Citizen Child. The child must also be continuously residing in Ireland. If the person concerned is granted permission as the parent of an Irish Citizen Child, the child will need to attend when they are registering their permission.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

615. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the likely status and procedure to be followed in order to regularise residency in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35788/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that, a notification issued from the Immigration Service of my Department to the person concerned under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The person concerned has not yet submitted any written representations in response.

The position in the State of the person concerned will be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. If any representations are submitted, they will be considered before a final decision is made.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## Naturalisation Eligibility

616. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) is eligible to apply for naturalisation; if the person's application has been received by the relevant department; if further information is required to process the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35789/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. As the Deputy will appreciate, a determination on whether an applicant satisfies the criteria for naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

It is open to any person to make an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements. Detailed information on Irish Citizenship and Naturalisation, as well as the relevant application forms, is available on the Immigration Service website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

In relation to applications for citizenship, I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

The Immigration Service are advising those who are planning to apply for citizenship to continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Services is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## Garda Reserve

617. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Garda Reserve and the geographical spread of active reservists by Garda district. [35794/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the allocation and distribution of resources including the recruitment and training

of Garda members and members of the Garda Reserve is entirely a matter for the Garda Commissioner. As Minister, I have no responsibility in this matter. 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.

The strength of the Garda Reserve in each of the years from 2009 to 30 June 2019, as provided by me by the Garda Commissioner, is available on my Department's website at the following link

[http://justice.ie/en/JELR/006\\_Garda\\_Reserve\\_Strength\\_2009\\_to\\_June\\_2019.xlsx/Files/006\\_Garda\\_Reserve\\_Strength\\_2009\\_to\\_June\\_2019.xlsx](http://justice.ie/en/JELR/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_June_2019.xlsx/Files/006_Garda_Reserve_Strength_2009_to_June_2019.xlsx)

It should be noted that the distribution of Garda Reserves is included in that table on a Divisional basis only.

I am informed by An Garda Síochána that a class of approximately 100 Garda reserve recruits commenced training in March 2019 at the Garda College, Templemore. This is a positive development and delivers on the target set out under 'A Policing Service for the Future', the implementation plan for the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

Finally and as the Deputy may be aware, An Garda Síochána is currently conducting a strategic review of the Garda Reserve to inform future decisions around its use. This approach is in line with the recommendation in the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. The Strategy is expected to inform the development and preparation for a new Reserve recruitment drive by the end of 2019.

### **Judicial Council**

618. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date of the establishment of the judicial council and thereafter the personal injuries guidelines committee in accordance with the Judicial Council Act 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35800/19]

683. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the implementation of the Judicial Council Act 2019 with regard to the establishment of a judicial council and the development of personal injury guidelines by the council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36583/19]

684. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking to facilitate the development of personal injury guidelines by the proposed judicial council as set out in the Judicial Council Act 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36584/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 618, 683 and 684 together.

In conjunction with the Courts Service, my Department is taking steps towards establishing the Judicial Council by the end of this year. This includes considering the practical arrangements for staffing and accommodation, which will need to be put in place before the Judicial Council is established.

The relevant Orders to commence the Judicial Council Act 2019 are expected to be made later this year.

In follow-up to the relevant recommendation of the Cost of Insurance Working Group chaired by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy TD, the Council will also include a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee. This Committee has been mandated by the Oireachtas to prepare a draft of the personal injuries guidelines within 6 months of its establishment by the Council. Those guidelines will then have to be adopted by the Judicial Council which, under the terms of the Act, will be independent in exercising its functions.

### **Prison Service Staff**

619. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff due to take compulsory retirement from a prison (details supplied) between 31 August 2019 and 31 December 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35802/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Director General of the Irish Prison Service that two members of staff are due to take compulsory retirement from the prison referred to by the Deputy during the period 31 August 2019 to 31 December 2020 having reached the maximum retirement age of 60.

### **Prison Service Staff**

620. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff the Irish Prison Service is planning to transfer to a location (details supplied) from other prisons between 31 August 2019 and 31 December 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35803/19]

621. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Irish Prison Service only transfers a small number of staff to a location (details supplied) in comparison to other prisons in view of the fact it is understaffed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35804/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 620 and 621 together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the transfer of staff to each prison is based on the number of vacancies at each grade and overall resource availability. The number of vacancies within a grade varies for a number of reasons and can change from week to week. These variations include staff promotions, retirements and transfers and as such it is not possible to predict the number of staff who will transfer to the prison referred to in the Question. The Irish Prison Service routinely review the number of vacancies across the Prison estate and progress transfers in line with available resources and to ensure the optimum allocation of these resources.

I am further advised by the Irish Prison Service that staffing requirements are continuously monitored, and that the Irish Prison Service recruitment process is on-going. Currently the Irish Prison Service are filling vacancies for Prison Clerical Officers, Recruit Prison Officers, Prison Nurses along with some Senior Level grades.

### **Visa Applications**

622. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will ad-

dress a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [35822/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the visa application referred to was refused by the Visa Office New Delhi on 12th June 2019. A subsequent appeal was unsuccessful and the original decision upheld. This was communicated to the applicant, along with the refusal reasons on 28th August 2019.

Only one appeal is permitted per application. However, it remains open to the applicant to make a fresh application. If such an application is made, the applicant should bear in mind the refusal reasons communicated to him and be in a position to address those reasons in any new application.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited. In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to the Immigration Service ([visamail@justice.ie](mailto:visamail@justice.ie)).

### **Personal Injury Claims**

623. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce legislation to cap insurance awards for soft tissue issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35827/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that the issue of awards in personal injuries claims is being dealt with within the framework of the Judicial Council Act 2019, which was passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas before the summer recess.

This landmark Act provides for the establishment of an independent Judicial Council. It also provides for the establishment of a number of committees including a personal injuries guidelines committee, which will be assigned the function of compiling guidelines for appropriate general damages for various types of personal injury.

It is anticipated that the Council will be established by the end of the year. My Department and the Courts Service are currently considering the practical arrangements, which will need to be in place before the Council is established.

### **Departmental Schemes**

624. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the recent changes to the atypical working scheme will be reviewed in view of the effect it is having on the availability of locum doctors who have been playing a strong role in out-of-hours general practitioner schemes, including Shannondoc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35834/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that policy responsibility relating to locum doctors is primarily a matter for the Health Service

Executive (HSE). The role of the Immigration Service of my Department is to provide immigration mechanisms by which non-EEA medical personnel may be recruited to fill temporary vacancies in the health sector as and when required. I am advised that in recent months the Immigration Service has consulted closely with the HSE to determine if the terms of the Scheme require any amendments. My Department remains committed to ongoing stakeholder engagement to ensure the smooth operating of the Atypical Working Scheme (AWS) with regards to locum GP's.

Under current arrangements, which have been in place since 2015, doctors undertaking locum work in the Primary Care (GP) sector may be granted a 'block' 90-day permission for the duration of their 90-day contract. Exit from and re-entry into the State is not permitted during this 90-day period, except in exceptional circumstances. The terms of the AWS also provide that at least one month must elapse from the expiry date of the 90 day permission before a new application may be made. The rationale for this approach, which applies to all such permissions, is rooted in the principle that an atypical permission is not a substitute for the replacement of full time labour (either sourced within Ireland or the EU or through the Non EEA Work Permit regime). Thus a person granted such permission cannot automatically roll over their atypical permission. These conditions have applied to permissions granted under the Scheme since its inception.

Atypical immigration permissions are specifically designed to cover such short term employments in the State and there are alternative options available for longer term employment through the work permit regime of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Deportation Orders**

625. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a deportation order (details supplied) will be reconsidered. [35841/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a deportation order made following a comprehensive and thorough examination of their asylum claim and a detailed examination of the representations they submitted for consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended).

The person concerned, through their legal representative, has made a request to have that deportation order revoked, based on the provisions of Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). This request will be considered as soon as it is possible to do. The Deputy might wish to note that the resulting decision will be to 'affirm' or to 'revoke' the existing Deportation Order.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Direct Provision Data**

626. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in RIA emergency accommodation services; the number in bed and breakfast accommodation nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35847/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As of 25 August 2019, 7,170 persons were residing in accommodation provided by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). Of this total, there were 1,182 applicants residing in 31 Emergency Accommodation locations. Of the 1,182 applicants in emergency accommodation, 834 reside in hotels and the remaining 348 applicants reside in guest houses.

The contractual obligation on the providers of emergency accommodation is for the provision of bed spaces and full board accommodation (breakfast, lunch and dinner). RIA often does not have exclusive use of the premises and many of the hotels and guesthouses continue to operate on a commercial basis.

In the first half of this year, there has been a 36% annual increase in the number of international protection applications received. To meet the associated increased demand for accommodation, RIA has initiated two processes to source additional accommodation. RIA has sought expressions of interest from parties who would be interested in providing accommodation and related services to people in the international protection process and has also launched a nationwide, regional tendering process to source new accommodation centres.

These new centres, which are expected to begin opening in the coming months, will provide for independent living for residents by way of cooking facilities and an onsite food hall. I expect that they will significantly enhance the daily lives of applicants and in particular families and children.

### **Cyberbullying Issues**

627. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to revise harassment laws here taking into consideration the impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35868/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, many forms of online content and behaviours, including cyberbullying, can be harmful but they are not necessarily criminal in nature. There is a general consensus that the appropriate response to addressing such online issues is one that encompasses educational and awareness raising campaigns, as well as effective actions and policies on the part of internet companies. The Government's Action Plan for Online Safety 2018 - 2019 has outlined plans to provide resources and to facilitate positive actions being taken to combat online safety issues including cyberbullying.

In relation to harassment laws specifically, the Law Reform Commission published a report on Harmful Communications and Digital Safety in 2016 which recommended a number of legislative changes to deal more effectively with the negative aspects of increased use of online communications. Many of the recommendations outlined in this report have been provided for in the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Bill 2017, a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Deputy Brendan Howlin. The main provisions of the Bill as published include extending the existing offence of harassment and the introduction of new offences to deal with the distribution of intimate images. The Bill also provides for a new offence in relation to sending indecent or obscene messages using any form of online or traditional method of communications.

The Bill completed second stage in the Dáil in January 2018 and was not opposed by Government. I obtained Cabinet approval to support Deputy Howlin's Bill to ensure that legislation in this area can be enacted as swiftly as possible. Following the agreement by Cabinet to support and amend the Bill, officials in my Department engaged in extensive consultations with the sponsor of the Bill and the Office of the Attorney General to prepare draft amendments. The amendments will ensure consistency in the provisions of the Bill. They will also introduce a distinct offence of stalking in Ireland for the first time. They will provide for two separate image-based offences to deal with the phenomena of "upskirting" and "revenge pornography". They will remove some of the civil provisions in the Bill that may be more appropriately dealt with through proposals to establish the Office of the Digital Safety Commissioner, currently being examined by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

These amendments were approved by Government on the 1 May 2019 and have now been sent to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to be formally drafted. They will be introduced at Committee Stage in the Dáil at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Insurance Fraud**

628. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of fraudulent insurance claims reported by the insurance industry to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by insurance company. [35954/19]

629. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents of fraudulent insurance claims reported by the public to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [35955/19]

630. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of defendants investigated in incidents of insurance fraud reported by the insurance industry to An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [35956/19]

631. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of units in the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau that assess insurance fraud as opposed to other categories of economic fraud and crime. [35957/19]

632. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of whole-time equivalent staff tasked with investigating and prosecuting instances of insurance fraud in the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau by personnel, including gardaí, sergeants, detectives, financial investigators and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35958/19]

633. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the added resources being dedicated to the divisional strategy for tackling insurance fraud, including personnel and funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35959/19]

634. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of establishing a stand-alone Garda insurance fraud unit consisting of six gardaí, one sergeant and an adequate and suitable number of detective superintendents and-or detective inspectors in addition to qualified financial investigators. [35960/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 628 to 634, inclusive, together.

The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for management of An Garda Síochána and

for the allocation of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. The Deputy will appreciate that the Commissioner is solely responsible for the allocation of personnel as well as organisational matters including the nature/number of Garda units involved in investigating any given criminal matter, including insurance fraud, and the resourcing of criminal investigations.

I can inform the Deputy that the Commissioner is of the view that a Divisional focus on insurance fraud is preferable to the establishment of a centralised investigation unit. This approach is aligned with the divisional-focussed Garda model. It is the intention of the Commissioner that the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) will guide Divisions and provide training in the investigation of insurance fraud.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group specifically called for An Garda Síochána to explore the potential for further cooperation between it and the insurance sector in relation to insurance fraud investigation. An industry-funded Garda insurance fraud unit was just one option considered in this regard. While the Commissioner has indicated that he does not support industry funding of Garda units, he is open to considering other industry-funded proposals to combat insurance fraud.

Reports of insurance-related fraud are received by An Garda Síochána and statistics are not held by my Department. I have been advised by the Garda authorities that changes were made to the Garda PULSE system last year to provide An Garda Síochána with the facility to more efficiently record insurance-related criminality. In relation to the scale of insurance fraud reported to An Garda Síochána, the most recent figures available to my Department are available in the ninth progress report published by the Cost of Insurance Working Group in July, a copy of which is available at the following link: <https://assets.gov.ie/19322/8404160a5cc44b53b482c34ac1316f3b.pdf>.

In the period 1 November 2018 (i.e. the date on which the new statistical category of ‘insurance fraud’ came into being) to end May 2019, 50 incidents of insurance fraud were recorded on PULSE. It should be noted that this data is correct as at 6 June 2019, however the data is operational and is therefore subject to change.

More recently, each Garda Síochána Division has been requested to provide information regarding the extent of insurance-related fraud. This information is being examined at the GNECB and will be utilised to determine investigative activity, which will be undertaken in future ‘days of action’ under Operation Coatee.

Operation Coatee was launched in April 2019, its focus being the prevention of insurance-related fraud and associated crimes on a coordinated basis throughout Ireland. In circumstances where insurance fraud has already occurred, Operation Coatee is designed to maximise the prospect of identifying suspected culprits, and, where possible and appropriate, to initiate criminal proceedings.

A ‘day of action’ was undertaken at the commencement of Operation Coatee on 24 April 2019. The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) engaged in operational activity associated with an investigation relating to over 20 insurance claims which have been made and which, in some cases, have already involved payment being made to claimants. Arising from the ‘day of action’, 6 high-value cars and jewellery with a value in excess of €300,000 were seized, along with a substantial amount of documentation and financial records. The evidence seized continues to be analysed.

On a wider level, I have previously referred to the constructive engagement that has taken place between An Garda Síochána and the insurance industry under the cost of insurance re-

view. This includes a commitment by An Garda Síochána and Insurance Ireland's Anti-Fraud Forum to meet on a regular basis in order to discuss and act upon current and ongoing general issues which arise in the area of insurance fraud.

### **Citizenship Applications**

635. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way he plans to address the continuous residence requirement for persons applying for citizenship; and the number of applications for citizenship affected by a ruling (details supplied). [35965/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice.

I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that, as of 3 September 2019, there were 15,647 applications for citizenship on hand. All of these applicants are potentially affected by the ruling. To date this year a total of 2,981 adults and 849 minors have been naturalised. I am further advised that this ruling is not considered to have consequences for anyone who has already obtained citizenship under the Act.

I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019, I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will also be posted on the website of the Immigration Service.

The Immigration Service is advising those who are planning to apply for citizenship to continue to collect all of the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of their application.

*Questions Nos. 636 to 638, inclusive, answered with Question No. 533.*

### **Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision**

639. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the CCTV scheme will extend beyond 2019 for funding purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36054/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, 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 act as data controller, and

- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes, regardless of how they are funded and these key legal requirements have not changed since 2006. The possibility of establishing a Community CCTV scheme is available to groups that meet these legal requirements, anywhere in the country.

Since 2017, my Department has administered a grant aid scheme supporting groups wishing to establish a community-based CCTV system in their area. To date, 21 applications have been approved under the scheme, involving approved grants totalling more than €540,000.

The Deputy will appreciate that while the Estimates process is ongoing, I am not in a position to respond to her query in relation to my Department's allocation for the coming year. However, I can confirm that the grant aid scheme remains open for applications from interested groups in 2019 and that all fully completed applications received before the end of 2019 will be considered.

Eligible groups, including community groups and local authorities nationwide, can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum total of €40,000. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have recently expanded the grant aid scheme to cover not only new CCTV systems but also to allow funding applications for extension or upgrade of existing Community CCTV systems which are incomplete or obsolete. Applicants can now also seek a grant of up to €5,000 for minor maintenance costs.

I must emphasise that grant funding can be considered only for CCTV systems which meet the legal requirements for CCTV, in other words CCTV systems which have been approved by the relevant Joint Policing Committee, the relevant Local Authority (also acting as Data Controller) and which have received the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

If the Deputy is aware of groups wishing to avail of the scheme, further details are available to download from my Department's website - [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) and support and guidance is available to help interested groups through a dedicated email address [communitycctv@justice.ie](mailto:communitycctv@justice.ie)

*Question No. 640 answered with Question No. 562.*

## **Garda Equipment**

641. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to replace aircraft and-or helicopters in the Garda air support unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36117/19]

**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 investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 and investment of €46 million in the Garda fleet over the same period.

As the Deputy will appreciate, in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources is a matter for the

Commissioner, in light of his identified operational demands.

I understand that the Garda Air Support Unit was established in September 1997 with the delivery of a Pilatus Britten-Norman BN 2T-4S Defender 4000 fixed wing aircraft and a Eurocopter AS355N Eceuriel helicopter. In 2001 the Unit acquired a second helicopter - a Eurocopter EC135 T2. In 2007 the Eceuriel helicopter was replaced by a second EC135 T2+.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the question of prioritising the upgrading or replacement of these aircraft is in the first instance for the Commissioner, in the context of the investment being made in An Garda Síochána and his operational priorities.

I understand from the Garda authorities that neither the two helicopters nor the Fixed Wing Aircraft have reached the end of their operational lives and as such, no funding has been provided in the 2019 budget for the replacement of these aircrafts.

In relation to the equipment on the helicopters, I can inform the Deputy that funding has been allocated for upgrade of the Role Equipment on the Eurocopter EC135 T2+. A tendering process for this upgrade has commenced and has been published. I am informed that it is intended that the Role Equipment currently on this aircraft will subsequently be installed into the Eurocopter 135 T2 Helicopter.

Regarding the future replacement of the fixed wing aircraft, I can confirm that a Technical Advisory Group comprising of personnel from my Department, An Garda Síochána, the Department of Defence and the Irish Air Corps was established and met for the first time in 2016 to examine the options in that regard. My Department continues to engage with Garda management on an ongoing basis in relation to that matter, as well as ongoing engagement more generally on current and capital resource needs.

## **Garda Operations**

642. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 310 of 12 February 2019, if he will report on Garda Operation Disruption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36119/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer to Parliamentary Question No 310 for answer on 12 February 2019. At the time I responded that I would request the information sought by you from the Garda authorities and that I would write directly to you on receipt of same. This information has been received and is included in the substantive response as follows.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Disruption consists of uniform personnel temporarily assigned to the Crime Office, Henry Street Station, Limerick for periods ranging from 3 to 6 months. Gardaí are tasked to carry out proactive and preventive patrols in targeted areas based on crime trends and crime “hot spots”, as identified by Crime Analysts attached to Henry Street.

I am advised that since the inception of Operation Disruption in 2014 up to 26 March 2019, Operation Disruption has dealt with 4,985 crimes, with 1,255 of those crimes recorded as cases detected. I am further advised that in 852 cases, prosecutions have commenced resulting in 527 convictions. I have sought a further update from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy directly when the information is to hand.

I am assured by the Garda authorities that all new and emerging crime trends are constantly

monitored by Garda management to ensure the effectiveness of all Garda patrols in the area.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

643. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 253 of 26 February 2019 to which no reply was received, the number of juvenile anti-social behaviour orders in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019 under Part 13 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36120/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer to Parliamentary Question No. 253 for answer on 26 February 2019. I responded at that time to indicate that I would request the relevant information and I undertook to contact you again when a report had been received. The information which I have received is outlined as follows.

The following table, provided to me by the Garda authorities, outlines the number of behavioural warnings issued to children for the time-period 2007 - 2019 (as of 17 July). As there were fewer than 10 behaviour orders or good behaviour contracts issued per year from 2007 to 2018 and to date in 2019, this data cannot be reported.

It is important to note that this information is operational, subject to change and is accurate as of 17 July 2019.

#### Incident Counts (Crime Counting Rules Not Applied)

Year Reported	Behaviour Warnings (Children) (I.S.)
2007	78
2008	539
2009	468
2010	613
2011	460
2012	332
2013	303
2014	238
2015	236
2016	211
2017	123
2018	123
2019	52

### Misuse of Drugs

644. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 544 of 26 March 2019 (details supplied), if he now has to hand the report on crack cocaine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36121/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have sought a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter. I am following up in relation to the matter and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive the requested information.

**Garda Transport Data**

645. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 541 of 8 May 2019 to which no reply was received, the number of marked and unmarked cars and motorbikes attached to the north Dublin roads policing units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36122/19]

**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.

A capital allocation of €10 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019 and 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, 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.

The following table, as provided to me by the Garda Commissioner, outlines the number of vehicles allocated to the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) for the years requested by the Deputy. The figures provided for 2019 are correct as of 30 April 2019.

Within the DMR, there is a Roads Policing Division based in Dublin Castle (referred to in the below table as Traffic) and there are also units within each of the six geographical Divisions within the DMR which cover road policing duties.

**DMR Region - Roads Policing Duty by Division 2017-2019 ( as of 30/04/2019)**

	Cars	Vans	Motor-cycles	4 x 4	Others	Total
30/04/2019	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	
DMR (Total)	28	1	48	7	8	92
East	2	0	0	0	1	3
North	3	0	0	0	2	5
North Central	4	0	0	1	0	5
South	1	0	0	2	0	3
South Central	1	0	0	0	1	2
West	2	0	0	0	1	3
Traffic	15	1	48	4	3	71

	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4x4	Other	
31/12/2018	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
DMR (Total)	28	1	40	7	4	80
East	2	0	3	0	1	6
North	3	0	0	0	1	4
North Central	4	0	1	1	0	6
South	1	0	1	2	0	4
South Central	1	0	2	0	0	3
West	2	0	2	0	1	5
Traffic	15	1	31	4	1	52
	Cars	Vans	Motorbikes	4x4	Other	
31/12/2017	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
DMR (Total)	30	2	42	7	1	82
East	2	0	3	0	0	5
North	4	0	0	0	0	4
North Central	4	0	3	1	0	8
South	1	0	1	2	0	4
South Central	2	1	2	1	0	6
West	2	0	2	0	0	4
Traffic	15	1	31	3	1	51

### Road Traffic Offences Data

646. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 229 of 5 March and 545 of 8 May 2019 to which no reply was received, the number of drivers summoned for driving while disqualified; the number convicted and the penalty imposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36123/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer to your Parliamentary Questions No 229 for answer on 5 March 2019 and No 545 for answer on 8 May 2019. At the time, I indicated that I would request the information sought from the Courts Service and that I would write directly to you on receipt of same. This information has now been received and forms the basis of this response.

The statistics that the Courts Service can produce in relation to specific offences are obtained by running a report on its Criminal Court Tracking System, using the code for each specific offence. The codes in all instances are provided by An Garda Síochána.

I am informed that An Garda Síochána has been instructed to cease using a code for the of-

fence of ‘driving while disqualified’ after advice was received from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions clarifying that there is no separate offence of ‘driving while disqualified’.

Section 38 of the Road Traffic Act 1961, as amended, creates an offence of driving without a licence. Section 38 (5) of the Act provides an increased penalty in respect of a person who is summarily convicted of an offence of driving without a licence during the period of disqualification (namely a fine not exceeding €5,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or both). However, the specific offence remains one of driving without a licence. As such, the code ‘driving while disqualified’ has now been discontinued. As such, the Courts Service is not in a position to supply the information requested.

My Department has however made further enquiries made with An Garda Síochána and the following broader information may be of interest to the Deputy.

The following table, provided to me by the Garda authorities, sets out the number of courts proceedings taken in relation to the offence of driving without a driving licence for the years 2011 to 2019 (as of 12 July 2019):

Year	No. of People Driving without a Driving licence
2011	28,405
2012	25,116
2013	21,610
2014	20,806
2015	20,050
2016	21,516
2017	22,440
2018	21,566
2019* (to 12/07/2019)	7,106

The Deputy may also be interested to know that further informed that additional powers were provided to An Garda Síochána, allowing the arrest of people who drive while disqualified, under section 6(b) and (c) of the Road Traffic Act 2014, which came into effect from 22 June 2015.

### Garda Resources

647. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 118 of 22 May 2019 to which no reply was received, if he will seek additional resources for traffic policing in budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36124/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I refer to your Parliamentary Question No 118 for answer on 22 May 2019. At the time I responded that I would request the relevant information from Garda authorities and that I would write directly to you on receipt of same. This information has been received and is included in the substantive response that follows.

In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. Further, the allocation of Garda resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions, is a matter for the Commissioner, in light of his identified operational demands. As Min-

ister, I have no direct role in this matter.

The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. I understand 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.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 and investment of €46 million in the Garda fleet over the same period, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet.

Given the Government's plan to increase the size of the Garda organisation to 21,000 personnel by 2021, it is anticipated that there will be sufficient numbers of Garda members that can be allocated to traffic policing consistent with the Commissioner's operational priorities.

A selection competition to increase the overall strength of Garda Roads Policing Units commenced nationwide in 2017. This selection competition is now complete and an additional 146 Garda members were assigned to Roads Policing Units nationwide in Q4 2018.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a further competition to increase the overall strength of Roads Policing Units commenced nationwide in February 2019. This competition is currently ongoing and it is envisaged that by the end of 2019 there will be an increase in members attached to Roads Policing Units nationwide. The following table indicates the Garda staffing projection for the Roads Policing Units Nationwide envisaged by 2021:

Year	Target Level
2018	744
2019	891
2020	980
2021	1,035

### Garda Operations

648. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 168 of 28 May 2019 to which no reply was received, if he will report on Garda Operation Coatee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36125/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I undertook to obtain a Garda report in relation to Parliamentary Question No. 168 of 28 May 2019 and to revert to the Deputy on receipt of information from An Garda Síochána. I have received a Garda report on the matter and can inform the Deputy as follows.

Operation Coatee was launched in April 2019. Its focus is the prevention of insurance-related fraud and associated crimes on a co-ordinated basis throughout Ireland. In circumstances where insurance fraud has already occurred, Operation Coatee is designed to maximise the prospect of identifying suspected culprits, and, where possible and appropriate, to initiate criminal proceedings.

A 'day of action' was undertaken at the commencement of Operation Coatee on 24 April 2019. The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) engaged in operational activity associated with an investigation relating to over 20 insurance claims which have been made and which, in some cases, have already involved payment being made to claimants. Investigations

carried out to date by GNECB indicate that a number of targets in this operation have submitted multiple claims, in many circumstances while using false identities. The suspected bogus claims involved in this case, result from false claims of injury sustained through slips and falls.

Personnel attached to GNECB, supported by personnel from within the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR), the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) and Armed Support Units (ASUs), undertook a number of searches in the West Dublin area for the purpose of gathering additional evidence, with a view to submitting files to the Director of Public Prosecutions, in an effort to prosecute those suspected of insurance-related criminality.

In addition, search warrants were executed at a number of solicitors' offices. Arising from the day of action, six high-value cars and jewellery with a value in excess of €300,000 were seized, along with a substantial amount of documentation and financial records. The evidence seized continues to be analysed.

As the Deputy will appreciate, reports of insurance-related fraud are received by An Garda Síochána, and statistics are not held by my Department. Changes were made to the Garda PULSE system last year to provide An Garda Síochána with the facility to more efficiently record insurance-related criminality. In relation to the scale of insurance fraud reported to An Garda Síochána, the most recent figures available to my Department are available in the ninth progress report published by the Cost of Insurance Working Group in July, a copy of which is available at the following link: <https://assets.gov.ie/19322/8404160a5cc44b53b482c34ac1316f3b.pdf>.

In the period from 1 November 2018 (i.e. the date on which the new statistical category of 'insurance fraud' came into being) to the end of May 2019, 50 incidents of insurance fraud were recorded on PULSE. This data is correct as at 6 June 2019, however data is operational and subject to change.

More recently, each Garda Síochána Division has been requested to provide information regarding the extent of insurance-related fraud. This information is being examined at the GNECB and will be utilised to determine investigative activity, which will be undertaken in additional 'days of action' under Operation Coatee.

Finally, the Deputy may be interested to note that, over a number of years, the GNECB and the Garda Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB) have delivered training courses to Garda members engaged in economic crime-related investigations, across all Garda divisions. Since 2015, in conjunction with the Garda Síochána Training College and University College Dublin (UCD), GNECB and GNCCB have offered an accredited course to about 44 members per annum, drawn from all Garda Divisions, as well as from specialist units engaged in the investigation of economic crime. Representatives from the private sector, including the insurance industry are also invited to contribute to the course, thereby providing specialist insight into relevant insurance sector-related topics. On completion of training, successful candidates are awarded a Post Graduate Certificate in Fraud and E-Crime Investigation from UCD. It is anticipated that additional training of this nature, will commence in November 2019.

## **Garda Warrants**

649. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of committal warrants issued to gardaí in the R district in 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of such warrants executed within 60 days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36129/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have sought a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive the requested information.

### **Visa Applications**

650. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) will be allowed entry to study; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36136/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there are in total twelve grounds on which an immigration officer may refuse to give a permission to enter the State. These are set out at Section 4 (3) of the Immigration Act 2004 (as amended by the International protection Act 2015). While a person may be refused permission to enter the State based on a number of grounds, a refusal need only be based on any one of those grounds. Immigration officers are required to provide a written notice to the person refused entry that sets out the reasons for the decision. In all cases, removals from the State are conducted in accordance with the law.

I am advised that the individual referred to in the Deputy's question was refused entry into the State by an Immigration officer in 2014 as they had not established a valid reason for entry. The individual in question had violated the terms of their visa granted in 2012 by overstaying for a period of 2 years and working without permission.

If a person who has been refused leave to land in the State seeks entry at a future point, their application will be assessed on its own merits taking all relevant information into consideration at that time. While their prior immigration history is a matter of record, this does not preclude them from seeking permission to enter the State in the future. All relevant factors are taken into account, the principal ones being: the purpose of the visit or stay, the duration of the stay, the ability of the individual to support themselves during their stay, and, proof that the person will exit the country on or before the expiry of any permission given, or register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, as applicable.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Departmental Internships**

651. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36152/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Department of Justice and Equality has, during the specified period, operated paid internship programmes, paid

and unpaid educational placements, and placements under the JobBridge scheme.

The Department is currently undertaking a major transformation programme and in light of this the Department is making further enquiries in respect of the Deputy's query. I will provide an update to the Deputy when further information is available.

### **Data Retention**

652. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the work under way in his Department to review or reform the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36165/19]

653. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the engagement that has taken place to date, formal or informal, between his Department and representatives of the telecommunications industry or individual telecommunications operators on proposed reforms to the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36166/19]

654. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the guidance provided to private sector companies that retain telecommunications data under the provisions of the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011 in view of recent judgments pertaining to the legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36167/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 652 to 654, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the law in this area continues to evolve in light of emerging jurisprudence in the national courts of the Member States and the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Ireland, along with many other Member States, is currently intervening in the European Court of Justice in a number of important cases. We await the judgment of the Court in these cases, which are expected to be heard in the coming days.

The Deputy will also be aware that the State has lodged an appeal in a recent High Court Judgment relevant to this area of the law. The appeal in this case was made having regard to the general public importance of the issues arising in these proceedings and in light of the ongoing Court of Justice cases mentioned above which raise fundamental questions about the scope and meaning of previous judgments made by that Court.

While all States must seek to address the issues raised by the ECJ in national legislation, it is considered essential that the implications arising from ECJ jurisprudence are addressed at European level and we continue to encourage progress on this important and sensitive area of law.

The Communications (Retention of Data) Bill 2019 will replace the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011 and take account of evolving ECJ jurisprudence on data retention. Drafting of that Bill is at an advanced stage. Consultation with stakeholders has taken place in this regard. The Deputy will however appreciate that engagement with stakeholders, including the telecoms industry, is complicated given the continuing scrutiny of the laws by the courts at this time. I assure the Deputy that further consultation with stakeholders will take place in the context of the drafting work that is underway.

## **Garda Vetting**

655. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding Garda vetting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36170/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the primary purpose of the employment vetting, carried out by the National Vetting Bureau, is to seek to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. It is carried out by An Garda Síochána, primarily in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016, and is, as I am sure you will agree, a very important task which must be done thoroughly and correctly.

My Department has no role in the processing of individual vetting applications.

Regarding sharing of vetting information between organisations, vetting checks are conducted by the Garda National Vetting Bureau for each new vetting application received to ensure that the most recent data available is taken into account. This is because once there has been any significant lapse of time between one employment and another, the original vetting disclosure must be reviewed to take account of any changes in information, such as more recent criminal convictions.

In addition, the Data Protection Acts require that any sensitive personal data which employers use in regard to their employees must be current, accurate and up-to-date. Importantly, the general non-transferability and contemporaneous nature of the current process also helps to protect against the risk of fraud or forgery in the process.

The Act does however provide for the sharing of vetting disclosures in certain circumstances by registered organisations; a facility which I understand is of assistance in the health and education sectors, for example, in reducing the need for multiple vetting applications.

All Garda vetting applications are processed on a first come, first served basis in chronological order from date of receipt. This is with a view to observing equity and fairness in respect of all vetting subjects.

In respect of certain applications, it is necessary for the Vetting Bureau to conduct further enquiries; for example to confirm information provided by the applicant with external bodies. The time required to receive such information may be outside of the control of the Vetting Bureau. In such instances, processing times may be significantly longer than the average.

However, in general, the vetting process is working well and I understand that there are no backlogs or delays in Garda vetting at present.

This efficiency has been achieved by the deployment of the e-vetting system which facilitates the on-line processing of applications for vetting from registered organisations. The current turnaround time for vetting applications submitted by organisations utilising the e-vetting system is 5 working days for over 85% of applications received.

Individual applicants can also track the process of their application online using the e-vetting tracking system, details of which are contained in the email received by applicants when completing their application online.

## **Protected Disclosures**

656. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the safeguards in place to protect the identity of the person who has made the protected disclosure in instances in which protected disclosures are shared with external consultants; if the person who made the protected disclosure is notified in advance; if the person's consent is required to share the disclosure with external consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36200/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** My Department engages external service providers to carry out independent assessments and investigations on disclosures received, relying on an Office of Government Procurement national framework and contractual terms which clearly set out the protections provided to persons under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. This includes a confidentiality clause.

Section 16(1) of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 provides that "a person to whom a protected disclosure is made, and any person to whom a protected disclosure is referred in the performance of that person's duties, shall not disclose to another person any information that might identify the person by whom the protected disclosure was made". The Act further provides at section 16(2)(c) that this restriction does not apply if "the person to whom the disclosure was made or referred reasonably believes that disclosing any such information is necessary for the effective investigation of the relevant wrongdoing concerned." The Department limits the extent of communication to a limited number of officials and external assessors/investigators to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

As a matter of general practice, my Department informs the discloser of any external assessment/investigation in advance of its commencement and requests permission from the discloser to share their contact details with the assessor/investigator. The discloser is also provided with the Terms of Reference for the investigation, in advance of its commencement.

### **Deportation Orders**

657. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in a person (details supplied) receiving a family permanent visa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36206/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 7 September 2018.

Representations have been received by the Immigration Service of my Department on behalf of the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the deportation order be revoked.

This request will be considered as soon as possible. A decision will then be made to either "affirm" or "revoke" the existing deportation order. This decision will be communicated to the applicant in writing. In the meantime, the deportation order remains valid and in place.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Visa Applications**

658. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the process regarding an elderly parent visa application for a person (details supplied). [36212/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that comprehensive guidelines for all types of visa applications are published on the Immigration Service website ([www.inis.ie](http://www.inis.ie)). The guidance for a visa for the purpose of joining family members residing in Ireland refers applicants to the Government Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification. The criteria set out in that policy is used in assessing both visa applicants for this type of visa and any subsequent residence application should the person's visa application be successful.

Section 18.7 of the Family Reunification Policy Document outlines the rationale for the approach adopted and the sound reasons why persons coming on a visitor visa are not permitted, once here, to overstay or turn a short stay into more permanent residency.

I am advised that the person concerned applied for and was issued with a number of short stay visas to visit his family in Ireland. On each occasion he has sought permission to extend his stay beyond the original permission period and has been granted limited extensions. Applications for long-stay visas for the purpose of joining with family require more detailed consideration than those of short stay visits as there is a requirement for the applicant to show that they can be supported without undue reliance on the State. For this reason, such applications made after the person has arrived in the State having obtained a visa for a different purpose, i.e. a short visit, is not permitted.

It is, however, open to the person concerned to contact the Immigration Service again, in writing, setting out their particular circumstances and addressing any matters that were raised in the refusal letter, which he has most recently received. Any such request will be given detailed consideration by my Department upon receipt of the relevant information and documentary evidence from the individual concerned.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Visa Applications**

659. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason persons (details supplied) are still waiting on final paperwork to be finalised and visas issued. [36217/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the persons concerned. These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information

on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

**660. Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if funding will be increased for initiatives such as community policing on public bus and rail services in view of the increased number of attacks and antisocial incidents across transport networks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36218/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can assure the Deputy that addressing local community concerns in relation to public order and anti-social behaviour is a key focus for An Garda Síochána.

I would remind her that the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing placed a particular emphasis on the importance of community policing, in which front-line Gardaí are visible and engaged in communities, and develop partnerships with other public agencies and services to deliver a multiagency approach to community safety.

The new Garda Operating Model and revised Divisional Structure, announced recently by the Commissioner, meets a key priority in A Policing Service for the Future, the four year implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing. In line with the ethos of community policing, the new model will provide more visible Gardaí on the frontline and devolve more power and decision making from Garda Headquarters to Chief Superintendents leading Divisions, which will ensure a more localised and responsive police service reflecting local needs.

I can also confirm that the Government also remains committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our communities. An unprecedented €1.76 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to € 92 million this year.

The Garda Commissioner is responsible for the effective and efficient use of these resources as well as for the allocation and deployment of personnel. 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.

In relation to the specific issue of anti-social incidents on our transport networks, I am advised by An Garda Síochána that Garda management engages extensively with transport operators and that a range of regional and local operations have been put in place to address incidents and issues that have arisen. There is ongoing communication between An Garda Síochána and the respective control centres, and access to good quality CCTV helps provide assistance to Gardaí when investigating serious incidents.

Clearly, Garda visibility is a key element in tackling anti-social behaviour and in this context I would point out that An Garda Síochána is a growing organisation. We currently have over 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,600 Garda staff. With ongoing and increased recruitment of new Gardaí and Garda staff, we are on track for the Government's plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest by the end of this year. Further, the Commissioner's decision to recruit a net 600 Garda staff in 2019 will allow for the redeployment of approximately 500 experienced

Gardaí to frontline and visible policing duties by the end of this year.

It should also be noted that a range of strong legislative provisions are available to Gardaí in relation to public order and anti-social behaviour, including those under:

- the Criminal Damage Act 1991;
- Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994;
- the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003; and
- the Intoxicating Liquor Acts 2003 and 2008.

I am confident that these measures - the unprecedented resourcing of and increased recruitment to An Garda Síochána, as well as the ongoing process of Garda reform including a strengthened focus on community policing - will assist in ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country which will maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

661. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in respect of cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36232/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** My Department employs dedicated professionally trained cybersecurity personnel and recruits additional specialists when needed. The Department also retains external cybersecurity expertise and utilises this service as necessary. A risk register is maintained within the Department and any breaches to security are reported to management for evaluation and response.

### **Departmental Operations**

662. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36248/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Department has in place arrangements and communication protocols to be utilised in extreme weather or other events that render workplace environments inaccessible. As part of this, the Department has established remote working provisions for key staff to ensure the continuity of core business activities and customer services in emergency situations.

The Department's primary ICT infrastructure is hosted in a very high availability environment with built-in resilience, in the Revenue Data Centre, a very high quality facility utilised by a number of other public sector bodies. In addition, specific disaster recovery arrangements are in place for a number of key applications and systems. The Office of the Government Chief information Officer (OGCIO) provides a number of centrally delivered applications to public sector bodies, including my Department, through its Build to Share initiative. The infrastructure underpinning these applications includes a disaster recovery plan and a secondary data site. A

separate disaster recovery site is also in place for the Department's Financial Shared Services systems and network, which provides a full range of payroll and financial services not only to my Department but to nine other client Departments and agencies. Work is ongoing to enhance and further develop recovery capacity for other IT systems and my Department will also continue to liaise with OGCIO in respect of public sector policy in this regard, including development of any new DR sites for the public sector.

### **Immigrant Investor Programme Applications**

663. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36256/19]

664. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application by a person (details supplied) will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36360/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 663 and 664 together.

I am informed by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy made an application under the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) on 24 May 2019, which is currently being processed.

Successful applicants under the IIP and their nominated family members may be granted a residence permission in Ireland under Stamp 4 conditions. Stamp 4 conditions permit non-EEA nationals to work, study or start their own businesses in Ireland. Therefore, given the significant immigration benefits accruing and, to ensure the highest degree of transparency and accountability for the programme, it is essential that all applications are subject to enhanced levels of due diligence processes in respect of both personal and financial checks to protect the State's interests.

During 2019, I am informed that processing times for these type of applications will be between 6-9 months. I am further advised that this timeframe compares very favourably to international peers, some of whom operate a decision-making framework of between 12 and 24 months.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

*Question No. 665 answered with Question No. 528.*

*Question No. 666 answered with Question No. 561.*

### **Garda Deployment**

667. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí by rank attached to the child protection unit at Mountjoy Garda station, Dublin 7, as

of 27 July 2019. [36398/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, the manner in which the resources of An Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard. However, I understand 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 Commissioner that as of 27 July 2019, there were six Gardaí and one Detective Sergeant attached to the Child Protection Unit at Mountjoy Garda Station, located within the Dublin Metropolitan Region North Central Division.

The Deputy may also be interested to hear that I have been informed by Garda management that it is expected that Divisional Protective Services Units should be rolled-out to all Garda Divisions on a phased basis by the end of this year. This expected timetable is in accordance with the target set out in ‘A Policing Service for the Future’, the implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland.

I have been informed by the Commissioner that to date, Divisional Protective Services Units have been established in DMR South Central, Waterford, Kerry, Kilkenny, Carlow, Limerick and Galway Garda Divisions. These are in addition to the units previously established in DMR West, Cork City and Louth Divisions in the initial phase of this initiative.

#### **Direct Provision Data**

668. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision that are not in a direct provision or reception centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36442/19]

669. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in emergency accommodation that are also in direct provision. [36443/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 668 and 669 together.

As of 2 September 2019, 7241 people were residing in accommodation provided by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). Of this total, there were 1,200 applicants residing in 31 Emergency Accommodation locations.

The contractual obligation on the providers of emergency accommodation is for the provision of bed spaces and full board accommodation (breakfast, lunch and dinner). RIA often does not have exclusive use of the premises and many of the hotels and guesthouses continue to operate on a commercial basis.

In the first half of this year, there has been a 36% annual increase in the number of international protection applications received. To meet the associated increased demand for accommodation, RIA has initiated two processes to source additional accommodation. RIA has sought expressions of interest from parties who would be interested in providing accommodation and related services to people in the international protection process and has also launched a nationwide, regional tendering process to source new accommodation centres.

These new centres, which are expected to begin opening in the coming months, will provide

for independent living for residents by way of cooking facilities and an onsite food hall. I expect that they will significantly enhance the daily lives of applicants and in particular families and children.

### **Garda Procedures**

670. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the protocols, regulations and supports in situations in which gardaí must use personal vehicles on official business (details supplied). [36445/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** First, I note that in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. The allocation of Garda resources is also 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.

The station referred to by the Deputy is in the Letterkenny Garda District. I am informed by the Garda authorities, as of 31 July 2019, there were a total of 25 Garda vehicles assigned to the Letterkenny Garda District, including 17 cars.

Responsibility for the efficient deployment of Garda vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between districts and stations as required by operational requirements.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that in certain circumstances, a Garda member may be authorised to use a personal vehicle in the course of official duties.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a Form of Undertaking must be signed by any Garda member authorised to use their private motor vehicle on official business. This confirms that the vehicle complies with any relevant regulations or conditions in force, in particular that the vehicle is insured, and acknowledges that the State will accept no liability for any loss or damage resulting from the use of any motor vehicle on official business.

Garda members who use their personal vehicles in the course of official duties are entitled to travel and subsistence payments in line with civil service guidelines.

In relation to the general process for authorisation, I am advised that Divisional Officer may authorise use of a personal vehicle on special tours of duty, or on duty of a regularly recurring nature. A District Officer may authorise a member to use such a vehicle on duty of an urgent and important nature. And in cases of extreme urgency and importance and only if official transport is not available, the Member-in-Charge of a station may authorise the use of a privately owned vehicle or alternatively if the Member-in-Charge is not readily available, members whose duty it is to go to the scene may do so, provided that in all cases the vehicle may be lawfully used.

Finally, it should be noted that 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 includes a capital allocation of €10 million 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.

### **General Data Protection Regulation**

671. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has been informed of breaches of GDPR related to the processing of information for technology companies operating here by third parties by those companies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36451/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, the Data Protection Commission (DPC) is the national independent authority responsible for upholding the fundamental right of individuals in the EU to have their personal data protected.

I can confirm that the Data Protection Commission is currently engaging with the company/s in question in relation to the issues raised in the recent media coverage.

### **Gambling Sector**

672. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of investigations and successful prosecutions that have occurred regarding instances of underage gambling in on street bookmaker shops and track side bookmakers in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36455/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may know, section 23 of the Betting Act 1931, which is the responsibility of the Minister for Finance, currently governs this area. The Act provides that “no licensed bookmaker – land based or remote - shall make a bet or engage in a betting transaction with a person under the age of eighteen years whether such person is acting on his own behalf or as agent for another person.”

The Courts Service and An Garda Síochána have advised that they do not have the records requested for the years in question.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) Bill 2019 is currently passing through the houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill addresses certain deficiencies with regard to the conduct of activities regulated under the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956 and provide for the modernisation of that Act by way of, among other matters, arrangements for the better promotion of lotteries, updating certain stake and prize limits and crucially standardising the minimum gambling age at 18. More generally, efforts are ongoing in the Department to prepare comprehensive legislation to update the law on gambling, including betting. The protection of young and vulnerable persons will be a major consideration in the new legislation.

### **Immigration Status**

673. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a permission as a person of independent means; if the application will be finalised by 14 September 2019 when the current stamp expires; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36472/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned has an on-going application

for temporary and limited permission to remain, which was received on 12 August 2019. The Deputy will appreciate that, in the interests of fairness, applications are dealt with in chronological order. I understand that the application is currently under consideration and the person concerned will be contacted in due course.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the parliamentary questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Firearms and Ammunition Security**

674. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce regulations for the storage of ammunition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36492/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am pleased to confirm for the Deputy that a number of regulations are already in place in relation to storage of firearms and ammunition in Ireland.

The Firearms (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 2009 (SI No. 307 of 2009) introduced regulations governing the secure storage of firearms in the home. These regulations set out the minimum security standards in relation to the provision of secure accommodation for relevant firearms.

The Firearms (Storage of Firearms and Ammunition by Firearms Dealers) Regulations 2017 (SI No. 646 of 2017) set out minimum standards for the safe and secure storage of firearms and ammunition in the premises of firearms dealers. The different categories of firearms dealers are recognised and the regulations scale the requirements depending on the quantities of ammunition and firearms being stored.

Most recently, the European Communities (Acquisition and Possession of Weapons and Ammunition) Regulations 2019 (SI No. 420 of 2019) came into effect on 1 September 2019. These regulations give effect in national law to EU Directive 2017/953. Among other provisions, requirements are set out in relation to the storage of ammunition for relevant firearms. The regulations provide that when the relevant firearm is not in use, the ammunition for it must be stored in a locked receptacle that is separate from any firearm in which that ammunition is capable of being used. The regulation also provides that when a relevant firearm or ammunition is being transported, the firearm must be concealed from view and stored separately from the ammunition, and that the ammunition must be stored in a locked receptacle.

### **EU Regulations**

675. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of an organisation (details supplied) in relation to a proposed EU wide ban on lead shot; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36522/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that while I am aware of the organisation's concerns in relation to this particular issue, the mat-

ter is outside of my remit as Minister for Justice and Equality.

As my Department has no function in the matter, I would encourage the organisation in question to raise this matter directly with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht who will be better placed to address any concerns they might have.

### **Drugs Dealing**

676. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional measures he plans to introduce along with a multi-agency approach to address the availability of cocaine nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36525/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that there have been increased seizures of cocaine and evidence of increased circulation of the drug in Ireland. The same trend can be observed in other European countries, which is an unfortunate and worrying development.

As the Deputy may be aware, from a health perspective, cocaine remains the third most common drug reported among people presenting to treatment in Ireland. Since 2014 there has been a steady increase in the proportion of new cases for treatment reporting cocaine as a main problem drug in Ireland, rising from a low of 297 cases in 2013 to 568 cases in 2016. And in 2016, 12.3% of cases reported problem cocaine use, the highest proportion since 2010.

I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continues to prioritise tackling drugs and organised crime as a core focus of its work, including the continued disruption of the supply of all illicit drugs as a key priority.

Multi-disciplinary approaches are used to ensure that those involved in illicit drugs activity are effectively targeted, including through the use of drugs legislation, the Proceeds of Crime legislation, money laundering legislation and the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau.

Gardaí are pursuing a number of strategies to tackle drug trafficking by organised criminal gangs including:

- gathering intelligence on those involved in the distribution of drugs;
- conducting targeted operations on criminal networks based on intelligence;
- working with the Criminal Assets Bureau to seize the assets of criminals and disrupt their activities; and
- working in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, both within and outside the jurisdiction.

An Garda Síochána also continues to work closely with communities to address any drug-related issues, including through high visibility patrolling by uniformed personnel and through intelligence led operations targeting known criminals. Investing in capacity building measures to support the role of law enforcement authorities is important in dealing with emerging trends in relation to drugs.

Given the global nature of the drugs trade, international law enforcement co-operation remains a key element in the overall response. In this regard, An Garda Síochána has strong and strategic partnerships in place at an international level targeting drug trafficking including working closely with relevant law enforcement agencies such as Interpol and Europol and par-

ticipating in the Maritime Analysis Operations centre for Narcotics based in Lisbon (MAOC-N). The seizure of 2.2 tonnes of cocaine found aboard a vessel off the coast of Cape Verde last month following exchange of operational information with MAOC-N is an example of the excellent work done by these agencies.

In addition to the work of An Garda Síochána in co-operation with international agencies, it is important to remember that other state agencies are tasked with important responsibilities in this regard. Government policy in relation to drug and alcohol misuse is set out in Ireland's National Drug Strategy, 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery', a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025.

The Strategy represents a whole-of-Government response to the problem of drug and alcohol use in Ireland. It draws upon a range of government policy frameworks in order to reduce the risk factors for substance misuse. It also commits to address the harms of drugs markets and reduce access to drugs for harmful use. Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategy rests with my colleague, Minister of State Catherine Byrne TD in the Department of Health. My own Department has responsibility as the lead agency or partner in a number of actions, including keeping drugs legislation under review as the joint lead agency with the Department of Health.

Through the National Drugs Strategy, the Deputy may also be aware that the HSE is working to strengthen early harm reduction responses to current and emerging trends and patterns of drug use, create greater awareness and expand the geographical spread and range of treatment services. The Deputy will also be aware that in July last year my colleague, the Minister of State with responsibility for Health Promotion and the National Drugs Strategy, Catherine Byrne TD, launched a harm reduction campaign in relation to cocaine and crack cocaine which was developed by the Ana Liffey Drug Project and the HSE.

### **Garda Deployment**

677. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the need to provide additional staffing resources to the Border region for the remainder of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36539/19]

678. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the need to provide additional staffing resources to the Border region in 2020 in view of the adverse impacts of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36540/19]

679. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the need to provide additional staffing resources to the Border region in 2020 in view of the adverse impacts of Brexit and the unique policing demands on Garda Border divisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36541/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 677 to 679, inclusive, together.

The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for managing An Garda Síochána and for the allocation of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the manner in which Gardaí are deployed. As Minister I have no direct role in that matters. I understand 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.

In common with all Government Departments and State Agencies, An Garda Síochána has been preparing for Brexit and there is ongoing engagement between senior Garda management and my Department in this regard. Preparation has had a wide-ranging focus on operational requirements, including personnel, infrastructure and technology. I know the Commissioner is committed to ensuring the organisation can deal with any policing challenges arising from Brexit though clearly the circumstances which may arise are dependant on the political settlement.

As the Deputy will appreciate, policing in the border region has always presented particular challenges and this can be expected to increase in the context of Brexit. It is also the case that violent dissident republican groups continue to seek to frustrate counter-terrorism efforts and organised criminals seek to exploit the two jurisdictions in order to try to evade detection.

The 2018 Cross-Border Threat Assessment prepared jointly by An Garda Síochána and the PSNI estimated that some 43 per cent of organised crime gangs in Northern Ireland have a cross-border dimension. Likewise, mobile organised crime groups, responsible for multiple instances of domestic burglary, operate on an all-island basis. There are increasing instances of borderless crimes such as cyber fraud and international terrorism.

The success of cross border policing actions is grounded in the recognition that the best means of combatting the threat to our communities is to maintain and enhance the excellent levels of cooperation between law enforcement agencies north and south of the border. The Gardaí and PSNI, along with other agencies, have worked together closely for many years and enjoy an excellent working relationship and co-operation at all levels.

The Fresh Start Agreement recognised this and led to the establishment of Joint Agency Investigation Teams which have had considerable success in combatting this type of crime. I understand this is also the context for the Commissioner's operational decision to establish an additional Armed Support Unit in Cavan.

As the Deputy may be aware, Garda Armed Support Units provide a rapid armed response capacity and capability on a regional basis. Members of the ASUs are highly trained and equipped with a variety of non-lethal and lethal weapons and perform high visibility armed checkpoints and patrols throughout their respective Regions. ASU's are already based in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal and Dundalk, Co. Louth in the Northern Region.

I would also point out that An Garda Síochána is a growing organisation. We currently have over 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,600 Garda staff. And as part of the Government's plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line. Since the reopening of the Garda Training College in 2014, approximately 2,800 new Garda members have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties in communities throughout the country. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest by the end of this year. Further, the Garda Commissioner's decision to recruit a net 600 Garda staff in 2019 will allow for the redeployment of approximately 500 experienced Gardaí to frontline and visible policing duties by the end of this year.

As part of this overall increase, additional Garda resources have been deployed to border areas in recent months and this process is continuing. I am advised by the Commissioner that the strength of the Northern Region as on 31 July, the latest date for which figures are currently available, was 1,494 Gardaí. There are 56 Garda Reserves and 150 Garda civilian staff attached to the Northern Region. An additional 50 Gardaí were assigned to the region from the last attestation on 7 June 2019. In total, there are now more than 150 additional Gardaí deployed in the Northern Region compared to the position at the end of 2017.

The increased resources coming on stream have also provided the capacity to expand the specialist bureaus including the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, all of which are particularly active in the Northern Region in addition to the Armed Support Units.

The ongoing recruitment will provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí to deliver a visible, effective and responsive policing service. These requirements will be kept under ongoing review by Garda management with a view to addressing any policing requirements for the Border region which may arise. In the event that a “no deal” Brexit gives rise to additional requirements in border areas, further resources can and will be provided through redeployment.

### **Garda Resources**

680. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost to provide security to Vice President Pence during his visit to Ireland; if the costs will be met from existing Garda resources; if not, if costs will be provided for via a supplementary budget; the reform projects which will be affected if the costs of the visit are met from existing Garda resources; the nature of the changes to reform projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36549/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. €1.76 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, in addition to capital investment amounting to €92 million this year.

I would remind the Deputy that the Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. He is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including the allocation of Garda resources.

In relation to the matter raised by the Deputy, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the overall cost to An Garda Síochána of the visit to Ireland of Vice President Pence has not yet been finalised.

I fully support the Commissioner in his performance of this role and in his efforts to ensure that the Garda Vote comes in on budget. Garda management and my Department keep the financial position of An Garda Síochána under ongoing review.

### **Garda Transport Data**

681. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda marked and unmarked cars and vehicles assigned to each Dublin Garda division; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36571/19]

**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 capital allocation 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.

The information below, as provided to me by the Garda Commissioner, sets out the number of vehicles allocated to the Dublin Metropolitan Region as at 31 July 2019. For security and operational reasons, these tables do not include a breakdown between marked and unmarked vehicle allocations. It should be noted that the following table includes detail on the Divisions in the DMR, as well as the Traffic unit based in Dublin Castle (which is not itself a Garda Division). This table does not include detail in relation to National Units including those located in the region.

Vehicle	Cars	Vans	Motorcycles	4x4	Other	Total
DMR incl. Traffic (Total as of 31/07/2019)	358	77	47	11	19	512
Eastern Division	44	9	0	1	2	56
Northern Division	78	13	0	1	4	96
North Central Division	45	11	0	3	1	60
Southern Division	58	17	0	2	0	77
South Central Division	48	13	0	0	2	63
Western Division	68	13	0	0	7	88
Traffic - Dublin Castle	17	1	47	4	3	72

### Drugs Seizures

682. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the types of drug and the quantities and values of each seized by An Garda Síochána in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36575/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** A core focus of the work carried out by An Garda Síochána is aimed at tackling drug distribution and organised crime. The continued disruption of the supply of all illicit drugs remains a priority for An Garda Síochána and the other state agencies tasked with responsibilities in this regard.

Since its establishment in 2015, the National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, which manages national and international drug trafficking and organised crime investigations, has continued to make significant seizures of controlled drugs and to make related arrests.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that recent intelligence-led operations have resulted in significant drugs seizures by An Garda Síochána, including a seizure of heroin with an estimated value of €1 million euro (subject to analysis) in Dublin and Meath on Sunday, 1 September. This seizure was part of a joint operation involving members of the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau and the United Kingdom National Crime Agency.

Such seizures represent a major blow to criminal gangs, who planned to profit from selling these drugs. The success of this and other operations demonstrates the effectiveness of the various enforcement bodies within this State working together with their international counterparts.

The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the following table from data available in the 2015 to 2017 Annual Reports of An Garda Síochána. The 2018 annual report has not yet been published, and data to date in 2019 is not yet available.

Drug Seizures by An Garda Síochána, 2015-2017

Year	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Anabolic Steroids				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	24	63	185	272
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	1,763	371	833	2,967
Value	€1,058	€223	€548	€1,829
Benzodiazepines				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	749	1,364	16,341	18454
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	495,557	74,122	115,567	685246
Value	€991,113	€135,686	€1,374,908	€2,501,707
Cannabis Herb				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	558,678	479,695	2,597,258	3635631
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	3			3
Value	€11,173,554	€9,593,907	€53,290,457	€74,057,918
Cannabis Plants				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	12,539	7,273	9,046	28858
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)				0
Value	€10,031,084	€5,818,247	€7,237,175	€23,086,506
Cannabis Resin				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	263,363	59,089	79,007	401459
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)				0
Value	€1,580,178	€354,533	€593,945	€2,528,656
Cathinones				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	6,744	3,619	728	11091
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	69		107	176
Value	€236,041	€180,940	€50,197	€467,178
Cocaine				
(Grams/mls/Plant)	108,817	91,016	51,811	251644
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)			374	374
Value	€7,617,223	€6,371,150	€3,963,371	€17,951,744

Questions - Written Answers

Year	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Diamorphine				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	61,741	38,386	18,226	118353
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	3		2	5
Value	€9,261,194	€5,374,033	€2,880,502	€17,515,729
Hallucinogens				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	22,136	3,990	23,775	49901
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	4,956	1,128	367	6451
Value	€1,576,943	€238,335	€111,509	€1,926,787
Mixing Agents				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	49,656	83,218	58,483	191357
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	315	340	209	864
Value	€24,828	€41,609	€32,333	€98,770
Opioids Other				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	12,448	3,087	2,739	18274
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	76	192	515	783
Value	€4,108	€617	€64,790	€69,515
Other				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)		117		117
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	458	3,521		3979
Value	€0	€347		€347
Phenethyl- amines (includ- ing ecstasy (MDMA) and other similar related drugs)				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	27,436	24,051	25,527	77014
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	187,681	30,257	15,468	233406
Value	€3,522,972	€1,556,257	€2,203,895	€7,283,124
Piperazine				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	172	97	33	302
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	2,304	30	354	2688
Value	€20,103	€4,993	€3,425	€28,521
Sleeping Tablet				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	15		5,711	5726
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)	331,896	16,070	23,652	371618
Value	€663,792	€32,140	€47,804	€743,736

Year	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Solvents				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)		2,961	3,646	6607
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)				0
Value		€2,961	€3,646	€6,607
Synthetic Can- nabinoids				
(Grams/mls/ Plant)	3	15	59	77
(TbIs/Sqr/Caps)				0
Value	€57	€303	€1,189	€1,549
<b>TOTAL VALUE</b>	<b>€46,704,248</b>	<b>€29,706,281</b>	<b>€71,859,695</b>	<b>€148,270,224</b>

Cannabis plants are calculated on figures recorded on PULSE as not all plants are routinely sent to FSI. All figures are provisional, operational and subject to change. The above figures refer to drug seizures conducted by An Garda Síochána alone and do not include the amount and value of drugs seized in multi-agency operations in which An Garda Síochána was centrally involved.

*Questions Nos. 683 and 684 answered with Question No. 618.*

### Naturalisation Eligibility

685. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) is eligible to apply for naturalisation notwithstanding a number of summonses that have been paid; if the case will be favourably considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36585/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The eligibility criteria for becoming an Irish citizen by naturalisation is set out in the website of the Immigration Service of my Department ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)). One of the criteria is that a person must be of good character. Any interaction that a person has had with An Garda Síochána or other law enforcement authorities or with the courts will be considered.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is not possible to indicate in advance of a full assessment of an application whether a decision on an application will be positive or not.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### Naturalisation Eligibility

686. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when eligibility to apply for naturalisation will be clarified in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36586/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. As the Deputy will appreciate, a determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, which governs the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation. Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, as well as the relevant application forms, is available on the Immigration Service website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

In relation to applications for citizenship, I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

The Immigration Service are advising those who are planning to apply for citizenship to continue to collect all of the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

687. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which progress continues on the update of stamp 4 and-or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36588/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The application from the person referred to by the Deputy for a certificate of naturalisation will be assessed and submitted to me for decision by the Immigration Service of my Department as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant by my Department in due course.

I recognise that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. The nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of

reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

I am also aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

The Immigration Service are advising those who are planning to apply for citizenship to continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application. I am further advised that this ruling is not considered to have consequences for anyone who has already obtained citizenship under the Act.

Individual queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Citizenship Status**

**688. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the means by which a person (details supplied) can regularise or update their status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36589/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Immigration Service of my Department issued a notification to the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The person concerned has not as yet submitted written representations in response.

The person may contact my Department in writing to confirm or correct their address for the issue of correspondence to them. My Department will then re-issue the correspondence, which will allow an additional 15 days for a response. The address to write to is: Acknowledgements Unit, Repatriation Division, Department of Justice and Equality, 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

The status in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. If any representations are submitted, they will be considered before a final decision is made.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration

cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Immigration Status**

689. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to be followed to regularise residency in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36590/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that from the information provided by the Deputy it has not been possible to identify any application made to them on behalf of the person concerned.

It is open to the person concerned to contact the Immigration Service, in writing, and to set out their particular circumstances, for consideration. All relevant information and any supporting documentary evidence should be included in the request. The website ([www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)) contains the relevant contact addresses for correspondence depending on the particular circumstances of the individual.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Immigration Status**

690. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36591/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I must inform the Deputy that the person referred to cannot be identified with any immigration related application or process from the information provided. I will be happy to follow up further on the matter if the Deputy can provide additional information on the nature of the immigration issue.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

691. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application for naturalisation in case a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36596/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is currently being considered by the Immigration Service of my Department. On completion of the necessary processing, the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the INIS website.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Naturalisation Eligibility**

692. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the termination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36597/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that an application for a certificate of Naturalisation was received on 10 October 2018 from the person referred to by the Deputy. Processing of this application is on-going to establish whether the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied.

I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireach-

tas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Deportation Orders**

693. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider setting aside the deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied); if he will use his discretion to set aside the deportation order affirmed 11 years ago on the basis that time and circumstances are completely different from those prevailing before the decision to deport or affirmation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36598/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person concerned is subject to a Deportation order. Representations have been received on behalf of the person concerned requesting that the deportation order be revoked, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended).

This request will be considered as soon as possible. A decision will then be made to either "affirm" or "revoke" the existing deportation order. This decision will be communicated in writing. In the meantime, the deportation order remains valid and in place.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

694. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected position in respect of residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36599/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made. Once a final decision is made, this will be communicated to the person concerned.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which

has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

*Question No. 695 answered with Question No. 589.*

### **Naturalisation Applications**

696. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a meeting can be arranged with an appropriate person in his Department or the INIS in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36601/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy on 28 September 2018. A letter was issued on the 22 October 2018 stating that the application was deemed ineligible due to required criteria not being met at that time.

I would like to advise the Deputy that it is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

In relation to applications for citizenship, I am aware that the recent judgment of the High Court relating to continuous residency under Section 15(1)(c) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956 (as amended) has given cause for concern. The matter remains before the courts with the lodgement of an appeal before the Court of Appeal and is therefore sub-judice. I can, however, assure the Deputy that my Department is continuing to work on finding solutions to the situation as quickly as possible. The best interests of both current and future applicants are foremost in these considerations and on 25 July 2019 I obtained Cabinet approval for the drafting of a Bill, which seeks to resolve the issue.

My officials are working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in the Attorney General's Office to have a bill drafted on an urgent basis and be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas as quickly as possible on resumption of business in mid-September. Further updates, as they become available, will be posted on the Immigration Service website.

The Immigration Service are advising those who are planning to apply for citizenship to continue to collect all the necessary proofs that support their application and to submit a comprehensive application form. Once a solution is in place, if any additional information is required, applicants will be contacted as part of the processing of the application. I am further advised that this ruling is not considered to have consequences for anyone who has already obtained citizenship under the Act.

Individual queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## **Deportation Orders**

697. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the personal handwritten letter sent to the relevant section of his Department by a person (details supplied) has been received by the relevant section of his Department on 2 April 2019; if the contents have been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36606/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed that the person referred to by the Deputy is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 29 September 2017. This Order requires the person to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

As previously advised, representations were received by the Immigration Service of my Department from the person concerned. The representations, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requested that the Deportation Order be revoked and included information from the person concerned regarding her marriage. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and the person concerned was notified of this by letter dated 27 November 2018.

There is no outstanding correspondence or application on file for this person. However, it is open to the person concerned to submit any new correspondence, or to re-submit earlier correspondence, which they wish to have considered.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## **Immigration Support Services**

698. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) can obtain an appointment with the person's local immigration officer before 25 September 2019 in view of the fact that the period for ratification of the person's stamp 4 will have expired within the next ten days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36607/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Immigration Service of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy lives outside of Dublin. The Immigration Service is responsible for the registration of non-EEA nationals who live in Dublin city or county, while An Garda Síochána are responsible for the registration of non-EEA nationals living anywhere else in the State.

The person concerned must contact their local Garda Registration Office to make an appointment to renew their registration. In the case of this individual, their local Registration Office is Leixlip Garda station.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service

enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Crime Data**

699. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his Department maintains a database of unsolved homicide and manslaughter cases here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36640/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can confirm that my Department does not maintain a database of unsolved homicide cases.

The Deputy will appreciate that the conduct of Garda investigations, including cold cases, is a matter solely for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I have no role in that regard.

However, I am advised by the Garda authorities that the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT) continues to review serious cases that remain unsolved including the identification of evidence and witnesses to assist in the development of these cases.

I am further advised that at the conclusion of each review by the SCRT, a substantive report is provided to the Senior Investigating Officer who considers the opportunities for further investigation. Any recommendation of organisational effect is disseminated within the Garda organisation to improve the overall investigative capability of An Garda Síochána.

### **Residency Permits**

700. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application by a person (details supplied) will be considered in respect of a case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36647/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The application referred to by the Deputy is being dealt with by the relevant section of the Immigration Service of my Department. The application was submitted on 15 October 2018.

Permission to remain in the State for parents of Irish Citizen Children may be granted where the applicant can show that they are playing an active role in the life of the Irish Citizen Child. The child must also be residing continuously in Ireland. If the person concerned is granted permission as the parent of an Irish Citizen Child, the child will need to attend the Immigration Service when their parent is registering their permission to reside in the State.

The Deputy may wish to note that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department, by e-mail, using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## **Naturalisation Applications**

701. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied). [36648/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I understand that an application for naturalisation from the person concerned was deemed ineligible as the Statutory Declaration, which forms a solemn and fundamental part of the prescribed application form, was not fully completed. The importance of both signing and dating the Statutory Declaration is highlighted in the guidelines attached to the application form.

It is open to the person concerned to submit a further application with all of the completed documentation, for consideration.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, as well as the relevant application forms, is available on the website of the Immigration Service at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie). The website also contains guidance on how to complete an application form, along with an on-line naturalisation residency calculator, which may be helpful to establish if a person meets the statutory residency requirements.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the Immigration Service of my Department by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility, which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

## **Juvenile Offenders**

702. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of juvenile referrals to the national office by Garda division in each of the past three years and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [36690/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have sought a report from the Garda Authorities in relation to this matter and I will write directly to the Deputy when I receive the requested information.

## **Garda Recruitment**

703. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of each 100 additional gardaí and each additional 100 new Garda civilian staff to be recruited, respectively, in 2020. [36703/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** There has been an unprecedented level of investment in An Garda Síochána in recent years. The budgetary allocation to An Garda Síochána for 2019 amounts to €1.76 billion, which includes provision for sustained recruitment to An Garda Síochána this year.

The Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the recruitment and training of personnel. Further, the allocation of Garda resources and distribution of personnel are a mat-

ter for the Commissioner, in light of identified operational demands.

I am pleased to say that recruitment of Garda members and staff is ongoing - An Garda Síochána is a growing organisation. We currently have over 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,600 Garda staff. And as part of the Government's plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line. Since the reopening of the Garda Training College in 2014, approximately 2,800 new Garda members have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties in communities throughout the country. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest by the end of this year. Further, the Garda Commissioner's decision to recruit a net 600 Garda staff in 2019 will allow for the redeployment of approximately 500 experienced Gardaí to frontline and visible policing duties by the end of this year.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the current estimated full year cost of employing 100 new Gardaí in 2020 is approximately €2,390,700. I am further informed that this estimate assumes that 100 all new recruits commence training on 1 January 2020.

It should be noted that payroll costs for new Garda recruits include a basic allowance of €184 per week. After 32 weeks of training, Garda recruits are attested and move on to the first point of the Garda pay scale €30,980 (on the basis of the pay scale which will be in operation on completion of training in August 2020). These figures include Employer's PRSI and an estimate of allowances which Garda members may qualify for depending on their assignments. The annual cost will increase as the members move up the Garda pay scale each year.

With regard to Garda staff, I am informed that such staff positions range from clerical support and financial management functions to specialised roles in HR, IT and telecommunications, as well as finance and procurement, internal audit, communications, research and analysis, accommodation, scene-of-crime support and legal and medical services. Large numbers of Garda staff also work in operational areas including the Garda Central Vetting Bureau, the Garda Information Service Centre, the Fixed Charge Processing Office and the Command and Control Centre.

Bearing in mind this broad range of duties, I am advised by the Garda authorities that the estimated cost of employing 100 Garda staff would be approximately €4,500,000, on the basis of an average estimated cost per civilian employee of approximately €45,000, including employer costs such as PRSI.

### **Direct Provision Data**

704. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the anticipated cost in 2019 of the direct provision system. [36704/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** On 15 August 2019, the Spending Review on Direct Provision 2019 was published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, as is the normal practice for Spending Reviews. The Review was prepared by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) unit of my Department with key input from the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). For the Deputy's further information I attach a link to the published Review.

[http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Spending\\_Review.pdf/Files/Spending\\_Review.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Spending_Review.pdf/Files/Spending_Review.pdf)

As set out in the Review, the total expenditure in 2018 on accommodation and ancillary services by my Department to meet the accommodation needs of people seeking international protection was €78 million. This was the highest level since 2010. The Review further indicates that the cost could exceed €120 million this year, based on most recent trends.

It found that the expected increase is due to a number of factors, in particular the planned improvements to accommodation standards and the rising number of people seeking international protection. In the first half of this year alone, we have seen a 36% annual increase in the number of applications received. The use of emergency accommodation is also putting significant additional pressure on costs for this year.

To reduce our reliance on emergency accommodation, a public procurement process is currently underway to source new accommodation centres. These centres, which are expected to begin opening in the coming months, will provide for independent living for residents by way of cooking facilities and an onsite food hall. I expect that this will significantly enhance the daily lives of all applicants and in particular families and children.

### **Direct Provision System**

705. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a transfer request by a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36721/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department has considered the request from the person referred to by the Deputy and replied to him on 4th September.

The Deputy may wish to note that RIA is currently providing accommodation for approximately 7,241 persons. The composition of protection applicants requiring RIA accommodation (in terms of individuals/couples/ families) is dynamic, which means that the process of matching the facilities and accommodation available to the changing requirements of those in need of accommodation is an on-going exercise.

Persons seeking international protection in Ireland are offered accommodation by the Department in one of a number of accommodation centres under contract to the Department. Transfers are normally only permitted for very specific reasons and where there is accommodation available in the centre or location to which they are seeking to be transferred.

### **Asylum Applications**

706. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the entitlement or otherwise to temporary or long-term residency in the case of a person (details supplied); if the case will be favourably considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36727/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, if an application for asylum or subsidiary protection has been made in the State, for confidentiality reasons it is not the practice to comment on such applications. The applicant or his legal representative should contact either the International Protection Office (IPO) or the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) directly, as appropriate.

The IPO may be contacted either by email to [info@ipo.gov.ie](mailto:info@ipo.gov.ie), by telephone to the IPO

Customer Service Centre at 01 6028008 or in writing to Customer Service Centre, International Protection Office, 79-83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal may be contacted either by email to [info@protectionappeals.ie](mailto:info@protectionappeals.ie), by telephone at 01-4748400 (or Lo-Call 1890 201 458), or in writing to Corporate Services Division, The International Protection Appeals Tribunal, 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin D02 W320.

### **Work Permits Applications**

707. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if consideration of a work permit supported by a potential employer will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34800/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that not enough information has been provided to determine whether the person (details supplied) qualifies for an employment permit.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit are available on our website at the following link - <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/>, which includes a frequently asked questions document and email helpdesk for any other queries arising.

### **Work Permits Eligibility**

708. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if healthcare assistants will be put on the critical skills visa list in order that healthcare assistants from abroad can be employed here due to the acute shortage of these skills. [35039/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The State's general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within the workforce of the State and other EEA states. Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State and EEA, the employment permits system offers a conduit into the Irish labour market for non-EEA nationals with in-demand skills and is operated as a vacancy led system.

The system is managed through the operation of the Critical Skills Occupations List and the Ineligible Occupations List for the purposes of granting an employment permit. The Lists are subject to twice-yearly review which is predicated on a formalised and evidence-based process and involves consideration of the research undertaken by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (Solas), the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), the National Skills Council, and input by relevant Government Departments in addition to the public consultation phase. Submissions to the review process are also considered by the Economic Migration Policy Interdepartmental Group chaired by DBEI and which includes a representative from the Department of Health.

Healthcare assistants and Homecare workers are currently on the Ineligible Occupations List and in order to have an occupation removed from the ineligible list, there would need to be a clear demonstration that recruitment difficulties are solely due to shortages across the EEA and not to other factors such as salary and/or employment conditions. Organisations in the sector would need to provide the necessary evidence to substantiate their claims.

Following completion of the most recent review, the roles of Healthcare Assistant and

Homecare workers were not proposed for amendment at this time. The views of the lead policy Government Department for the sector, in this case, the Department of Health, are an important part of the decision-making process. Officials of that Department have advised the sector of the need for further evidence, demonstrating genuine efforts to recruit across the EEA. In particular the sector needs to engage with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social protection who have responsibility for EURES the (European Employment Services), and who are well positioned to help sectors to recruit from within the EEA.

The mid-year Review of the Occupational Lists is now underway, and submissions received in July are currently under consideration. I expect to receive recommendations, based on available evidence, in relation to possible changes to the lists before the end of the year.

### **Brexit Preparations**

709. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the fact that InterTradeIreland has found that most businesses are choosing to disregard the potential effects of the UK leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement (details supplied); and the steps she is taking to help such traders prepare for and deal with a no-deal crash out Brexit. [36085/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Although the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland, one which cannot be underestimated. Notwithstanding the uncertainty, however, there are several areas where businesses can take immediate action to prepare.

Since 2016, my Department and its agencies have been working to prepare Irish businesses for the potential challenges posed by Brexit by helping them to assess their preparedness and helping them to implement practical action plans in areas such as customs, supply chain and sourcing, and financial management. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The Government's suite of Brexit supports include preparedness vouchers, consultancy and mentoring supports, tariff advisory services, research on new markets and innovation supports through Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and InterTrade Ireland. Supports and advice is also available from the National Standards Authority of Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority, IDA Ireland, Revenue, Skillnet Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, Bord Bia and Failte Ireland.

The most immediate consequences of a hard Brexit are likely to be currency movements, supply chain constraints, delays, duties and tariffs. In the first instance, there will be a strain on the working capital position of businesses.

Of the Government's suite of supports, the €300m Brexit Loan Scheme is designed to address working capital challenges brought about by Brexit. Under the Scheme, loans of up to €1.5 million are available at a rate of 4% or less, with loans of up to €500,000 available on an unsecured basis. Similarly, the €300m Future Growth Loan Scheme is designed to support strategic long-term investment in SMEs in a post-Brexit environment.

InterTrade Ireland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs

have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

In August, ITI launched a new advertising campaign and a new online resource to encourage and assist firms in preparing for Brexit. The online "Bitesize Brexit" resource is a one-stop-shop for cross-border traders, presenting information in easily digestible segments and includes specific actions businesses should take in preparing for Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland also recently revealed 12 'Brexit Essential' questions aimed at helping exporting businesses further prepare and take action ahead of the UK's impending withdrawal from the EU. The Brexit Essentials campaign highlights the key questions and documentation that businesses need to address in order to trade successfully with the UK post 31 October.

The Irish Government, in association with key industry partners, also launched a new support measure to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK's departure from the EU. The new initiative called Clear Customs comprises of a training programme and a customs financial support to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles.

In addition, the Government has held over 100 Brexit information seminars and events since last September. I also have been convening regular roundtable discussions with the main retail grocery and distribution players since December to better understand contingency planning within the sector on food supply. Revenue, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Dublin Port and relevant Government Departments also attend these meetings. Furthermore, my Department has engaged with enterprises through the Brexit Consultation Forum and continues to host a series of Brexit information meetings in the Border Region in collaboration with the Accountancy Bodies of Ireland.

The UK's exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses. With less than 9 weeks to go to the 31 October withdrawal date, I urge businesses to accelerate their preparations and avail of the wide range of State supports on offer. By taking the necessary practical steps, businesses will be better placed to address the challenges they may face and in doing so, they can help future proof their businesses and continue to trade with the UK and other EU Member States.

## **IDA Ireland Data**

710. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the name and location of each IDA client company in County Meath; the number employed by each company to 31 December 2018; the level of employment grants provided by IDA to each identified client company in 2018; the number of IDA sponsored site visits to County Meath to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34719/19]

711. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the name and location of each IDA client company in County Louth; the number employed by each company to 31 December 2018; the level of employment grants provided by IDA to each identified client company in 2018; the number of IDA sponsored site visits to County Louth to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34720/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 710 and 711 together.

Regional development remains an absolute priority of mine. I am focused on supporting and sustaining existing regional employment while also working to create new economic opportunities and jobs in every county of Ireland. There are now over 230,000 people working in IDA client firms. Last year saw more IDA-supported jobs added in regional Ireland than at any time over the past 17 years, with 58% of total such employment now located outside of Dublin.

With respect to grants, the IDA is authorised by my Department to provide a range of financial supports in the form of employment, capital, research and development, environmental and training grants. These grants are an important means of encouraging companies to invest in Ireland, particularly in regional locations. While IDA client companies in Meath received no employment grants in 2018, the Agency paid a total of €182,259 in training grants to two firms in the County.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is growing in Louth and Meath. Both Counties, for example, experienced an increase of 4% in FDI-driven employment in 2018. While progress has been made in helping to generate new economic opportunities in Louth and Meath, the Government remains determined to achieve more. The IDA has a key role to play in this and the Agency is engaging with its clients, and with other enterprise agencies, to help create new jobs and source further investment.

The following tables outline the number of IDA site visits to Counties Louth and Meath to date in 2019, the name and location and approximate employment ranges of each IDA client company and grants provided by the IDA in both counties in 2018.

**Table A: IDA Ireland site visits to Counties Louth and Meath to date in 2019**

County	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
County	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
Louth	10	9
Meath	1	1

**Table B: List of IDA client companies in County Louth including location and employment ranges**

NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE
EBAY EUROPE SERVICES (DUNDALK)	Xerox Technology Park, Dublin Road, Dundalk Co Louth	50-100
PAYPAL EUROPE SERVICES (DUNDALK)	Xerox Technology Park, Dublin Road Dundalk Co Louth	1100-1200
WARNER CHILCOTT (IRELAND) LIMITED	Building b, Xerox Technology Park Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
BECTON DICKINSON & CO LIMITED	Donore Road, Drogheda Co. Louth	100-200

NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE
DIACEUTICS LIMITED	Creative Sparks, Clontygora Ct, Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
SATIR EUROPE (IRELAND) COMPANY LIMITED	Marleys Business Park, Marleys Lane, Drogheda Co. Louth	50-100
ALMAC PHARMACEUTICALS GROUP (IRELAND) LIMITED	Finnabair Business Park Dundalk, Co. Louth	50-100
WASDELL IRELAND	Dundalk Science and Technology Park Mullagharlin	50 - 100
WUXI BIOLOGICS IRELAND	Unit 3, One Market Square, Dundalk	50-100
CHEMICAL INSPECTION AND REGULATION SERVICE LIMITED	20 Laurence Street, Singleton House Laurence Street Drogheda Co Louth	50-100
RADIO SYSTEMS PET-SAFE EUROPE LIMITED	2nd Floor Elgee Building Market Square Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
GENPACT LIMITED	10 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin	50-100
CARGOTEC	Ardee Road Dundalk Co. Louth	300-400
ABB LIMITED	Finnabair Industrial Park Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
NATIONAL PEN PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS LIMITED	Building D, Xerox Technology Park Dundalk Co. Louth	1100-1200
AMPHENOL TCS IRELAND LIMITED	The Mill Enterprise Hub Newtown Link Road Greenhills, Newtown link Road Drogheda Co. Louth	50-100
ALLARD SUPPORT UK LIMITED	Coes Road, Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
XEROX (EUROPE) LIMITED	Xerox Technology Park, Dublin Road Dundalk Co Louth	250-300
SMT FUND SERVICES (IRELAND) LIMITED	Finnabair Business & Technology Park, Dundalk Co. Louth	50-100
MTI MERCHANDISING TECHNOLOGIES IRELAND LIMITED	9-33 Magdalene street, Ballsgrove Drogheda	50-100
GRAEBEL IRELAND	Ground Floor Building 3 Dundalk	50-100
ARMAC SYSTEMS LTD.	Unit 2 Southgate Centre, Cople Cross Drogheda	50 -100
PCI SERVICES IRELAND (LOUTH)	Unit 4, Donore Road Industrial Estate, Drogheda	50-120
KELLTON TECH IRELAND	The Mill Enterprise centre, Newtown Link Road Drogheda	1 to 50
VESTA PAYMENT SOLUTIONS LIMITED	Vesta Building, Finnabair Business Park Dundalk, Co. Louth	150 -200

NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE
SEACHANGE INTERNATIONAL	Vesta Building, IDA Finnabair Business Park Dundalk, Co. Louth	50 to 100
PROMETRIC IRELAND LIMITED	Building 3, Finnabair Business Park Dundalk Co. Louth	100 - 200
YAPSTONE EUROPE	Mellview House, M1 Retail Park Drogheda Co Louth	100-200

**Table C: List of IDA client companies in County Meath including location and employment ranges**

NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE
PCI Services Ireland (Meath) City north Campus	Block 7, City North Business campus, Stamullen	50 - 100
International Fund Services	IDA Business Park, Drogheda Co. Meath	250-300
ArcRoyal	Virginia Road, Kells Co Meath	250-300
GENERALI LINK	IDA Business Park Navan Co. Meath	150-200
Coca cola International Service	Southgate Drogheda, Co. Meath	150-200
KUM IRELAND LIMITED	IDA Industrial Estate, Athboy Road Trim, Co. Meath	50-100
DOOSAN INFRACORE CO. LIMITED	Block B, Swords Business Campus Swords, Co. Meath	50-100
INTANA ASSIST	IDA business park, Athlumney, Navan Co. Meath	150-200
SAICA IRELAND	Ballybin Road, Ashbourne Co. Meath	150 -200
FRANKLIN PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED	Athboy Road, Trim Co. Meath	50-100
Emerson Automation Solutions (Clonee)	Bracetown Business Park Clonee Co. Meath	50-100
KEMEK LTD	Clonagh, Enfield Co. Meath	50-100
WELCH ALLYN LIMITED	Navan Business Park , Dublin Road Navan Road Co. Dublin	50-100
TRIMFOLD ENVELOPES LIMITED	Duggan Industrial Estate, Trim , Co. Meath	50-100
ALLTECH BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTRE	Sarney, Summerhill Road Dunbouyne Co. Meath	150-200
SHIRE BIOMANUFACTURING	Piercetown, Dunboyne Co. Meath	50-100
MAFIC (BLACK BASALT) IRELAND LIMITED	Kells Technology Park Virginia Road Co. Meath	50-100
GENERALI PAN EUROPE	Navan Business Park , Dublin Road Navan Road Co. Dublin	150 - 200

NAME	ADDRESS	EMPLOYMENT RANGE
IM3 PTY LIMITED	Unit 9 Block 4, City North Business Park Stamullen Co. Meath	50-100

**Table D: Grants provided to IDA client companies in Louth in 2018**

Company	Grant Type	Amount €
Armac Aerospace Ltd	Research, Development and Innovation	136,041
Becton Dickinson and Company Ltd	Employment	306,000
National Pen Promotional Products Ltd	Employment	500,000
Prometric Ireland Ltd	Employment	40,000
Radio Systems Petsafe Europe Ltd	Employment	203,000
Yapstone International Ltd	Employment	243,000
Total		1,428,041

**Table E: Grants provided to IDA client companies in Meath in 2018**

Company	Grant Type	Amount €
Shire Pharmaceuticals Ireland Ltd	Training	23,000
Wellman International Ltd	Training	159,259
Total		182,259

### Skills Development

712. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the increasing incidence of automation in industry; the preparations being made here for same in order to ensure it does not have a deleterious effect on employment and working conditions and on industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34733/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and I are aware of the challenges and opportunities brought by the increasing incidence of automation in industry. A key Pillar of the Government's Future Jobs Ireland strategy is focussed on embracing innovation and technological change in order to ensure that our enterprises and our people are ready to adapt to the workplace of the future.

This Pillar is underpinned by a number of ambitions and key deliverables that will ensure that we are ready for the changes that the future will bring. Amongst these ambitions are the establishment of Top Teams to realise opportunities presented by technological changes and the move to a low carbon economy. Another ambition is focussed on the development of Transition Teams to assist the workers and sectors likely to be most challenged by our changing economy.

Future Jobs Ireland was informed by research my Department has been carried out in this area. In December 2018, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) published ‘Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland’s Workforce’. This study assessed the impact of digitalisation on job roles and sectors across the economy in Ireland and highlighted the opportunities and challenges that this presents.

The report projects strong overall employment growth for the economy from 2018-2023. Whilst the report predicts the number of jobs lost to the adoption of digital technologies will increase steadily over the next decade, it expects that the majority of sectors will employ more people in 2023 than they did in 2018. The report notes that the result of increased digitalisation in the economy will be a slower increase in employment growth of the order of 46,000 jobs over the period.

The report further finds that one in three jobs in Ireland are at high risk of being disrupted by the adoption of digital technologies. Much of the disruption, however, will result in changes to job roles and tasks performed by individuals rather than job losses. This means that lifelong learning will become even more of an imperative and the report finds that there will be opportunities for many people to upskill within their current jobs.

The report highlighted how the Government is already acting to address the challenges and mitigate the negative impacts of automation on job numbers.

The report finds that Ireland has the opportunity to place itself at the forefront of digital technologies through ensuring adequate skills provision and capitalising on Ireland’s significant ICT sector. It finds that existing Government policies and initiatives currently in place provide a solid foundation for response to the expected changes from the increased adoption of digital technologies. Table 1, as provided in the report, demonstrates the various ways in which the Government is acting to mitigate the impact of automation on job numbers.

Table 1 Current Policies and Initiatives in Place Addressing Five Key Areas of Focus

Key Areas	Policies and Initiatives Addressing Areas
Vision	National Digital Strategy
Collaboration	R&D Technology Centres/Gateways Innovation Partnerships SFI Industry Fellowships
Data	National Data Infrastructure
Technology	Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund- Industry 4.0 Strategy
Skills	National Skills Strategy 2025 ICT Action Plan National Digital Strategy for Schools Skills for Growth Initiative Spotlight on Skills Skillnet Ireland Springboard+EXPLORE

### Work Permits Eligibility

713. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if persons (details supplied) can qualify for work permits and-or stamp 4; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34798/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that not enough information has

been provided to determine whether either of the persons (details supplied) qualifies for an employment permit.

In order to work in the State all non-EEA nationals require a valid employment permit unless exempt under permission from the Department of Justice and Equality. In order to apply for an employment permit a non-EEA national must have secured a job offer for an eligible occupation from an Irish registered employer.

The State's general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within Ireland and other EEA countries. Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State or EEA, an employment permit may be sought by an employer to hire a non-EEA national in line with the Employment Permits Acts and associated Regulations, which lay down in legislation the criteria in relation to the application, grant and refusal of an employment permit.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit are available on our website at the following link - <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/>.

My colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, has responsibility for issuing immigration permissions and visas.

### **Work Permits Applications**

714. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if consideration will be given to the application for a work permit by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34799/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that not enough information has been provided to determine whether the person (details supplied) qualifies for an employment permit.

In order to work in the State all non-EEA nationals require a valid employment permit unless exempt under permission from the Department of Justice and Equality. In order to apply for an employment permit a non-EEA national must have secured a job offer for an eligible occupation from an Irish registered employer.

The State's general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within Ireland and other EEA countries. Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State or EEA, an employment permit may be sought by an employer to hire a non-EEA national in line with the Employment Permits Acts and associated Regulations, which lay down in legislation the criteria in relation to the application, grant and refusal of an employment permit.

Any application for an employment permit should comply with all of the legislative requirements for the particular employment permit type, including that the non-EEA national has the required immigration permission at the time of application. Immigration permissions are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, and any such queries should be directed to that Department.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit are available on our website at the following link - <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/>.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Ministerial Advisers Data**

715. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to her and the Minister of State in her Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34839/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, I have employed the services of two Special Advisers, details of whom are available through the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform website, but which are set out as follows for the Deputy's ease of reference.

Name	Role	Salary
Ms Lucy Moylan	Special Adviser (Press)	PO Standard Scale
Mr Pauric Mc Phillips	Special Adviser (Policy)	PO Standard Scale

The pay scale for Special Advisers is the Standard Principal Officer pay scale of which the current starting point is €87,325 with a maximum point of €107,399.

This Department does not employ special advisors for the two Ministers of State.

NB. Due to the fact that Minister Halligan's responsibilities span two departments (this Department and the Department of Education and skills), the Special Adviser to John Halligan is employed by the Department of Education and Skills.

### **Co-operative Sector**

716. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason co-operative organisations are required to file accounts with the Registrar of Friendly Societies within three months of the accounting year end of the co-operative; her views on whether this is unreasonable in view of the amount of work involved in producing year end accounts for a co-operative and the holding of an AGM; her plans to change this deadline; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34874/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1893-2018 provide the statutory regulatory basis in Ireland for the formation and general operation of co-operative societies. The current provisions on the deadlines for filing annual returns by co-operative societies are set out in section 14(2) (c) of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1893 which requires that the annual return be submitted no later than:

- 31 October, where the date of its last published balance sheet falls between 1 January and 30 June, and
- 30 April, where the date of its last published balance sheet falls between 1 July and 31 December (of the preceding year).

These provisions date from 2014 when the Friendly Societies and Industrial and Provident Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014, which amended the 1893 Act, came into force and were introduced on foot of a public consultation held in 2009. It was considered at the time that the pre-2014 system was quite restrictive in that returns had to be made up to a date falling within the five-month period from September to January and all annual returns had to be

submitted by the following 31 March to the Registrar of Friendly Societies. These statutory timing requirements, introduced in 1893 and 1913, caused difficulties for societies whose annual business cycles did not accord with those requirements such as dairy societies, which wished to bring their reporting year into line with the dairy production year ending March or April, depending the part of the country.

The current system allows annual returns to the registrar to be submitted by one of two dates during the year, depending on the date of a society's financial year, which gives societies freedom regarding their choice of year end and extends the timeframe for the submission of the return to between 4 to 10 months depending on the date the last balance sheet was published.

My Department is currently undertaking a root and branch review of the co-operative legislation. The purpose of the comprehensive review is to consolidate into one statute all existing industrial and provident societies legislation and modernise it to eliminate outdated provisions and align it with the realities of the 21st century business and regulatory environment. In this regard the Department conducted a public consultation on the operation and implementation of the co-operative legislation the results of which were published in 2018.

As part of the review the Department will consider, among many others, the annual filing obligations of societies. On foot of the review, I intend to bring forward a General Scheme of Bill consolidating and modernising the co-operative statutory code later this year. When published, stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide further comments on the General Scheme.

## EU Agreements

717. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has received communication from the EU Commission following the Taoiseach's joint letter on the potential agreement on Mercosur. [28211/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As you are aware, the Taoiseach joined the leaders of France, Poland and Belgium on 17 June in writing to Commission President Juncker expressing our concerns regarding the potential inclusion of sensitive agricultural products in the EU-Mercosur negotiations which were, it seemed at the time, coming close to conclusion and which were, in fact, concluded on Friday, 28 June.

The letter outlined a shared Irish, French, Polish and Belgian position that:

- the quotas for sensitive agricultural products would not increase,
- the agreement includes guarantees concerning compliance with sanitary, phytosanitary, animal welfare and environmental standards,
- the certification and control of quotas is imported on the importer's side, and
- the segmentation of quotas between high value beef parts and other beef parts is achieved

The Taoiseach, and other leaders, also sought reassurances that in order to mitigate any possible negative impacts on the agricultural sector, an ad hoc safeguard mechanism would be implemented.

While a written response has not yet been received to this joint letter, I understand from the Commission that a reply is intended to issue in due course. In the meantime, of course, the EU Commission and the Mercosur countries have concluded the negotiations and we continue to

work with the Commission to fully assess the detail in the proposed Agreement.

### **Health and Safety Regulations**

718. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a recent survey by an association (details supplied) found that of a sample of toys purchased from third-party sellers on online marketplaces, 58% were non-compliant with UK toy safety regulations and 22% had significant safety issues; and the steps she is taking to address the potential sale of unsafe toys to consumers here by online sellers. [35077/19]

719. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her role in ensuring that the goods sold to consumers here by online marketplaces meet Irish and EU quality standards. [35078/19]

720. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her role in ensuring that the goods sold to retailers here by online marketplaces meet Irish and EU quality standards. [35079/19]

721. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department or agencies under its aegis conduct inspections of toy retailers to ensure that the toys being sold in shops here meet the standards set out by SI No. 14 of 2011 - European Communities (Safety of Toys) Regulations 2011. [35080/19]

722. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if there have been convictions against or fines on retailers for selling toys that do not meet the standards set out by SI No. 14 of 2011 - European Communities (Safety of Toys) Regulations 2011. [35081/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 718 to 722, inclusive, together.

Directive 2009/48/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the safety of toys, transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 14 of 2011, places the onus on all economic operators (ie manufacturers, distributors, importers) to ensure that only safe toys are placed on the market. If economic operators become aware that toys on the market present a potential hazard, they must take appropriate measures, up to and including a recall of the items, to ensure that the risk is removed. Any action taken by an operator must be notified to the relevant market surveillance authority; in Ireland this is the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC).

Where the CCPC finds unsafe toys on the Irish market, it will act to ensure economic operators remove the toys from the market until they are in compliance with the legislation. The CCPC has confirmed that all measures taken to date involved voluntary actions by the relevant economic operator to bring unsafe toys into compliance or remove them from the market. The CCPC did not consider the initiation of criminal proceedings against these economic operators as proportionate. However, the CCPC retain the right to take criminal proceedings against economic operators that refuse to cooperate with the CCPC with regard to these issues. The CCPC is also part of an EU wide network (known as Safety Gate) that allows for the rapid exchange of information between national market surveillance authorities on any dangerous products found on the EU market.

Section 9 (5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the CCPC

is independent in the performance of its functions, including carrying out investigations of unsafe toys. As investigations and enforcement matters generally are part of the day-to-day operational work of the CCPC, I, as the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation have no direct function in the matter.

Nevertheless, I can confirm that the CCPC is aware of the recent survey by the British Toy and Hobby Association. The CCPC has also informed me that the issues raised by the survey are familiar to the CCPC and these issues have also been found during the CCPC's routine market surveillance activities. For the period between January 2016 and July 2019 the CCPC investigated 259,218 toys to check if they were compliant with S.I. No. 14 of 2011 and approximately 28% were found to be non-compliant. Where the relevant economic operator was not able to bring these products into compliance they were then removed from the market.

The CCPC has also recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Customs Service in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, which will provide for greater cooperation between the two bodies and improve the market surveillance of products entering the Irish market. The CCPC is also currently increasing the number of trained staff in its Product Safety Unit and expects the level of both proactive and reactive market surveillance activity to increase in the future.

In addition, the European Commission has recently agreed and published a new Regulation (Regulation 2019/1020 on the Market Surveillance and Compliance of Products) that will give extra powers to market surveillance authorities, such as the CCPC, to regulate products (including toys) sold online. The Regulation will also ensure closer cooperation between market surveillance authorities and customs services in the EU to address the issue of unsafe products (including toys) being imported from third countries. The Regulation will apply from the 16 July 2021 throughout the EU and officials from my Department are currently engaged in preparing implementing legislation to give full effect to all safety and cooperation aspects of the Regulation.

With regard to ensuring that products sold by online marketplaces meet Irish and EU standards, I can inform the Deputy that all products placed on the EU market must be safe. Where a product sold online originates in a country outside the EU, the economic operator will have to comply with the relevant customs authorities (whether in the State or in another jurisdiction) in relation to legislation covering products at point of entry into the EU.

Should the Deputy have any information in relation to unsafe toys or other products on the Irish market, she should make contact with the CCPC directly to provide any relevant information on these matters.

### **Departmental Funding**

723. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of grant funding or financial assistance her Department and associated agencies have provided to counties Longford and Westmeath in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35135/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and its agencies are working towards ambitious targets to ensure that employment and investment are distributed as evenly as possible across the country. Counties Longford and Westmeath have experienced significant gains in both employment and investment in recent years with a comprehensive range of supports provided to companies by Enterprise Ireland,

IDA Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.

IDA Ireland is authorised by my Department to provide a range of financial supports in the form of employment, capital, research and development, environmental and training grants. These grants are an important means of encouraging companies to invest in Ireland, particularly in regional locations.

Enterprise Ireland supports companies in urban and rural areas to start, innovate and remain competitive in international markets, now and into the future. Enterprise Ireland is actively working with companies with global ambition in Longford and Westmeath to drive competitiveness, innovation and market diversification.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) provide a range of supports for the micro and small business sector. The LEOs act as the “first-stop-shop” for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports to those wishing to start or grow their own business.

The tables below outline the amount of grant funding allocated to client companies in Co. Longford and Co. Westmeath by IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland from 2016 to 2018, and funding allocated by my Department to the Local Enterprise Offices in Co. Longford and Co. Westmeath in the years 2016 to date.

**Table A: Co. Longford**

	IDA Ireland	Enterprise Ireland	Local Enterprise Office
2016	€169,542	€1,004,560	€541,507
2017	€3,297,973	€1,076,148	€668,046
2018	€2,440,323	€4,000,876	€730,034
2019 (to date)	*	*	€657,389

**Table B: Co. Westmeath**

	IDA Ireland	Enterprise Ireland	Local Enterprise Office
2016	€1,768,687	€1,537,281	€980,884
2017	€2,078,588	€1,162,769	€1,107,985
2018	€3,146,661	€1,226,009	€1,109,555
2019 (to date)	*	*	€875,421

\*Information on grant amounts for 2019 will not be available until they have been audited by Comptroller and Auditor General in the second quarter of 2020.

In addition to the above, Enterprise Ireland has approved funding for a number of projects in Co Longford and Co. Westmeath under Calls 1 and 2 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund (REDF).

Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR), a not for profit CLG company that was formed in 2014 with the mission to facilitate significant growth and job creation in the Irish manufacturing sector, was successful under Call 1 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. This received €2,165,280 in 2018.

The Longford Innovation & Digital Hub received €1,284,000 in 2018 under Call 1 of the Regional Enterprise Development Fund. This project approved for funding is part of a joint proposal linked with projects in Cavan and Leitrim.

Furthermore, in 2018, funding of €26.75m was announced for the Enterprise Ireland Technology Gateway Network over the five-year period from 2018-2022. The network consists of 15 individual Gateways, each hosted by an Institute of Technology, including Applied Polymer Technologies and COMAND - Connected Media based in Athlone Institute of Technology.

### Regional Development Funding

724. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of grant funding allocated to counties Westmeath and Longford through the IDA and Enterprise Ireland since 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35137/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Regional development remains a key priority of mine. I understand the importance of achieving the best possible spread of employment and investment across the country and my Department and its Agencies have been working hard towards that goal. Indigenous firms continue to perform well with over 217,000 people now employed in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland, the highest in the history of the Agency. In terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), there are now over 230,000 people working in IDA client firms. Last year saw more IDA-supported jobs added in regional Ireland than at any time over the past 17 years, with 58% of total such employment now located outside of Dublin.

With respect to grants, the IDA is authorised by my Department to provide a range of financial supports in the form of employment, capital, research and development, environmental and training grants. These grants are an important means of encouraging companies to invest in Ireland, particularly in regional locations. Enterprise Ireland also provides grants to companies across Ireland and these financial supports enable indigenous firms to develop, innovate and remain competitive in international markets.

The tables below outline the amount of grant funding allocated to companies in Counties Longford and Westmeath by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland from 2016 to 2018. Information on grant amounts for 2019 will not be available until they have been audited by Comptroller and Auditor General in the second quarter of 2020.

**Table A: Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland grants to companies in County Longford 2016-2018**

Year	Enterprise Ireland	IDA Ireland
2016	€1,004,560	€169,542
2017	€1,076,148	€3,297,973
2018	€4,000,876	€2,440,323
Total	€6,081,584	€5,907,838

**Table B: Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland grants to companies in County Westmeath 2016-2018**

Year	Enterprise Ireland	IDA Ireland
2016	€1,537,281	€1,768,687
2017	€1,162,769	€2,078,588
2018	€1,226,009	€3,146,661
Total	€3,926,059	€6,993,936

## Departmental Expenditure

725. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by her Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by her Department over the next five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35334/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The amount spent by my Department on Lotus Notes license subscription and support renewals since 2009 is as follows:-

2009	€74,715.05
2010	€62,666.46
2011	€60,908.37
2012	€70,257.60
2013	€71,659.80
2014	€57,195.00
2015	€63,040.58
2016	€70,921.80
2017	€63,258.90
2018	€64,845.60
2019	NIL

My Department has been engaged in a program of moving legacy Lotus Notes systems to newer platforms. As a result, it is not intended to renew support for these licences in 2019 or subsequent years.

## Work Permits Applications

726. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if a work permit application or short-term residency status will be extended in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35393/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that not enough information has been provided to determine whether the person (details supplied) qualifies for an employment permit.

In order to work in the State all non-EEA nationals require a valid employment permit unless exempt under permission from the Department of Justice and Equality. In order to apply for an employment permit a non-EEA national must have secured a job offer for an eligible occupation from an Irish registered employer.

The State's general policy is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within Ireland and other EEA countries. Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the

State or EEA, an employment permit may be sought by an employer to hire a non-EEA national in line with the Employment Permits Acts and associated Regulations, which lay down in legislation the criteria in relation to the application, grant and refusal of an employment permit.

Any application for an employment permit should comply with all of the legislative requirements for the particular employment permit type, including that the non-EEA national has the required immigration permission at the time of application.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit are available on our website at the following link - <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/>

My colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, has responsibility for issuing immigration permissions.

### **Brexit Preparations**

727. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the percentage of SMEs that have commenced actively planning for Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35456/19]

728. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the percentage of exporters that have commenced actively planning for Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35457/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 727 and 728 together.

While the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland. That is why my Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to promote the understanding and, where appropriate, to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Over the last two years my Department has worked to raise awareness of the key Brexit challenges which include supply chain, tariffs, customs, regulatory standards, working capital and movement of labour, goods and services; to build business preparedness levels; and to put a comprehensive set of supports in place for businesses. My Department and I have been active in the promotion of schemes and supports through participation in different campaigns, including the whole-of-Government 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' public information campaign. This campaign features workshop events throughout the country, aimed primarily at business and people most impacted by Brexit. In addition to these, Enterprise Ireland has also rolled out a series of Brexit Advisory Clinics to help businesses across the country to better understand their exposure to Brexit and the mitigating actions available to them.

My Department's ongoing engagement and research indicate that the proportion of businesses preparing for Brexit is increasing, particularly among those businesses identified as most exposed to Brexit-related impacts, and that awareness of the key Brexit challenges is also increasing. Almost 60% of Irish SMEs report a good understanding of the likely implications of Brexit impacts that are relevant to their business. The findings of a survey done by B&A on behalf of my Department in February suggest that planning for Brexit is increasing with almost

50% of SMEs reporting having taken some form of active engagement (up from 42% in 2018) in the form of planning or any other mitigating steps.

Among the most impacted businesses, progress is also being made, for example more than half of exporters indicate that they have a Brexit plan while 70% of exporting and importing companies have taken mitigating actions to address possible Brexit challenges. Among Enterprise Ireland clients, 85% have taken action in respect of Brexit.

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), which operates the Brexit Loan Scheme and the Future Growth Loan Scheme, continues to actively promote these schemes, both at its own events and through participation in other Brexit-related events. In 2019, SBCI has also met with over 400 tax advisers through the Institute of Taxation annual road show at which they have promoted the Brexit Loan Scheme.

Enterprise Ireland has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal and communications campaign. This portal also features an online “Brexit SME Scorecard” to help Irish businesses self-assess their exposure to Brexit and an online customs training tool aimed at businesses dealing with customs for the first time.

InterTradeIreland works with SMEs on an all-island basis and is particularly well placed, given its remit to develop cross-border trade, to help SMEs prepare for the particular North-South challenges associated with Brexit. The ITI Brexit Advisory Service serves as a focal point for SMEs working to navigate the changes in cross-border trading relationships arising as a result of Brexit. As part of this service, ITI has organised a series of awareness raising events focused on providing knowledge of customs procedures and identifying actions that can be taken in areas such as logistics and supply chain management. To date, more than 7,000 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

At the beginning of August, I launched, in association with key industry partners, a new support measure named Clear Customs to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK’s departure from the EU, notably under No Deal.

The initiative run by Skillnet in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland is being made available immediately to customs agents, intermediaries and eligible businesses free of charge. It comprises of a custom training programme and a custom financial support payment to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles from Enterprise Ireland. Subject to terms and conditions for eligibility, this payment is up to €6,000 per employee that completes the training programme, up to maximum of 10 employees per company.

While there is little clarity on the means by which the UK will leave the EU in October, my Department and its agencies are working to provide extensive supports to ensure that businesses across the country are prepared for the UK’s exit from the EU, whatever the circumstances of its departure. Evidence now shows a marked increase in the number of impacted businesses preparing for change, which is both encouraging and welcome but I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led some businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK’s exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses and I want businesses to know that my Department and its agencies are here to help.

### **Consultancy Contracts Data**

729. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and

training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35569/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The information is contained in the following table.

Year	Name of External Training Provider	Cost in euro (€)
2018	AllOne Corporate Solutions Limited	€9,300
	*The majority of the training was provided by the Department's internal Data Protection Officer	
2019 (To date:)	*All training to date in 2019 has been provided by the Department's internal Data Protection Officer	Not applicable.

Since the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on 25 May last year, almost 500 staff from across my Department and its Offices have attended specific targeted training on Data Protection and the GDPR. As part of this process, Heads of Business Units were asked to identify key staff requiring this training to ensure that it was targeted effectively.

The training delivered comprised a mixture of general courses delivered by an external training provider (AllOne Corporate Solutions Limited) and tailored training and awareness sessions delivered by our Data Protection Officer (DPO) who has been assigned on a fulltime basis at Assistant Principal Officer level. In addition, several presentations have been made by the DPO at Divisional Days, and to Business Units across my Department and its Offices, with particular focus on those areas that are particularly involved in the processing of Personal Data, including Employment Permits, Human Resources Unit, the Company Registration Office, the Register of Beneficial Ownership and the Patents Office. The DPO has also made presentations on the GDPR at management meetings and to Agency Liaison Units. In addition, a dedicated GDPR/Data Protection Module has also been incorporated into our Induction Training Programme for all new entrants to the Department and its Offices.

The DPO continues to work actively with managers and other staff in Business Units across my Department and its Offices to support them to ensure compliance with the GDPR, and to assist them with queries through providing assistance and practical advice.

The provision of GDPR training in my Department's agencies is a matter for those agencies.

### Departmental Customer Charters

730. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of complaints her Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if her attention has been drawn to issues and-or problems in having complaints registered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35637/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Customers who wish to complain about the quality of customer service provided by my Department

can submit a complaint under the Department's complaint procedures. These procedures, along with the Department's Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan, were updated recently in accordance with the customer service actions outlined for implementation in "Our Public Service 2020". In keeping with best practice, the Department's complaint procedures provide an accessible, transparent and user - friendly system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service received which are available on the Department's website. These complaint procedures do not, however, provide for complaints relating to business decisions taken by the Department e.g. the non granting of an employment permit. Appropriate appeal mechanisms are available for these situations.

Complaints made about the quality of customer service provided by the Offices of my Department fall to be dealt with under the complaint procedures developed by each Office having regard to their business needs. These offices also have appropriate appeal mechanisms to deal with business decisions taken in relation to their activities.

Over the period 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, there were 9 complaints received by my Department and its Offices under the complaint procedures relating to the quality of customer service provided. No issues or problems were raised in relation to having those complaints registered.

### **Workplace Relations Services Data**

731. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of workplace relations inspectors employed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35657/19]

732. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of workplace relations inspections that took place in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35658/19]

733. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of breaches of employment law identified by workplace relations inspectors in 2018, by offence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35659/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 731 to 733, inclusive, together.

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is an independent, statutory body under the aegis of my Department, established on 1st October 2015 under the Workplace Relations Act 2015. The WRC's core services include the inspection of employment rights compliance, the provision of information, adjudicating on complaints under employment protection, equality and industrial relations legislation and the provision of mediation, conciliation, facilitation and advisory services.

The Inspectorate Division of the WRC carries out inspections of employer records with a view to determining compliance with employment rights legislations. These inspections arise:

- In response to complaints received of alleged non-compliance with relevant employment rights legislation;
- As part of compliance campaigns which focus on compliance in specific sectors or specific pieces of legislation; or

- From routine inspections (announced and unannounced) which act as an overall control measure.

The WRC Inspectorate is staffed by civil servants of my department. As at 21 August 2019, there are a total of 57 WRC Labour Inspectors. Table 1 provides details of the grade, number and regional location of the inspectors.

The aim of the WRC Inspectorate is to achieve voluntary compliance with employment law through the provision of education and awareness, inspection of employers' employment records and enforcement where necessary. While every effort is made to secure compliance, some employers either refuse or fail to rectify the breaches identified and/or pay money due to their employees. These cases are referred for prosecution. Table 2 lists the numbers of employers inspected by the WRC Inspectors and the number of employers where breaches were detected in 2018. Please note that an employer may be in breach in more than one category.

Table 3 lists the number of inspections carried out by the WRC Inspectorate, by sector, in 2018.

**Table 1 Number of WRC Inspectors as at 21 August 2019:**

Region	Number of HEO Inspectors	Number of EO Inspectors	Total Number of Inspectors
Dublin	2	16	18
Shannon	1	8	9
Cork	1	6	7
Carlow	2	14	16
Sligo	1	6	7
Overall Total	7	50	57

**Table 2 lists the numbers of employers inspected by the WRC and the number of employers where breaches were detected in 2018. Please note that an employer may be in breach in more than one category.**

Sector	Cases	No in Breach	Incidence of Breach %	National Minimum Wage Issues	Sunday Premium	Statutory Employment Records	Employment Permits	Protection of Young Persons	Annual Leave and Public Holidays	Agency Licences	Terms and Conditions of Employment
AGRICULTURE	106	46	43%	6	5	34	5	1	14	0	2
CONSTRUCTION	81	37	46%	12	1	32	1	0	12	0	1
CONTRACT CLEANING	22	8	36%	2	1	4	0	0	4	0	1
DOMESTIC WORKER	5	1	20%	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ELECTRICAL	11	7	64%	1	1	6	1	0	3	0	0
EQUINE	45	38	84%	7	10	34	2	0	16	0	5
FISHERIES	40	27	68%	2	4	26	3	0	4	0	0
FOOD & DRINK	656	439	67%	56	142	331	99	2	208	0	5

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Sector	Cases	No in Breach	Incidence of Breach %	National Minimum Wage Issues	Sunday Premium	Statutory Employment Records	Employment Permits	Protection of Young Persons	Annual Leave and Public Holidays	Agency Licences	Terms and Conditions of Employment
HAIR AND BEAUTY	121	75	62%	16	3	59	7	1	25	0	3
HEALTH NURSING AND CHILD-CARE	69	35	51%	11	4	18	1	0	17	0	4
HOTEL	64	37	58%	12	12	24	6	0	19	0	2
MANUFACTURING	48	19	40%	8	1	15	0	0	9	0	4
OTHER	236	144	61%	28	24	117	11	1	40	1	7
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	218	83	38%	21	8	61	7	0	24	0	6
SECURITY	18	9	50%	5	3	4	0	0	3	0	1
TRANSPORT	71	43	61%	13	4	33	2	0	14	1	2
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL	363	216	60%	37	51	166	18	0	78	0	14
TOTALS	2,174	1,264	58%	238	274	964	163	5	490	2	57
UNANNOUNCED VISITS	3,579	1,284	36%	265	0	997	285	10	0	0	0
GRAND TOTAL	5,753	2,548	44%	503	274	1,961	448	15	490	2	57

**Table 3 lists the number of WRC Inspections by sector in 2018.**

Sector	Cases
AGRICULTURE	106
CONSTRUCTION	81
CONTRACT CLEANING	22
DOMESTIC WORKER	5
ELECTRICAL	11
EQUINE	45
FISHERIES	40
FOOD & DRINK	656
HAIR AND BEAUTY	121
HEALTH NURSING AND CHILDCARE	69
HOTEL	64
MANUFACTURING	48
OTHER	236
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	218
SECURITY	18
TRANSPORT	71
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL	363

TOTALS	2,174
UNANNOUNCED VISITS	3,579
GRAND TOTAL	5,753

### Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Staff

734. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number and role of persons employed by the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35663/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The total number of staff assigned to the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) on the 02 September 2019 was 37 staff in total (34.4 full time equivalent). The breakdown by grade is set out in the following table.

Title	Director	Enforcement Portfolio Manager	Digital Forensic Specialist	Enforcement Lawyer	Solicitor	Forensic Accountant	Principal Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	Higher Executive Officer	Executive Officer	Clerical Officer	Total
No of staff	1	2	1	2	1	5	1	4	8	5	7	37
Full time equivalents.	1	2	1	2	1	5	1	4	7	4.6	5.8	34.4

The number of Gardaí assigned to the ODCE on 02 September 2019 was 7.

There were no appointments to the ODCE to date in 2019. There are currently five vacancies, one at Corporate Compliance Manager, two Forensic Accountants, one Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer.

In relation to the post of Corporate Compliance Manager, the current Director is considering this as part of a significant restructuring of the ODCE that he has undertaken to better reflect the organisation's needs in the context of both its strategic shift towards deploying resources towards more serious indications of wrongdoing and the increasingly complex environment within which the ODCE operates.

That restructuring has included the recruitment of a number of additional professional staff, including eight accounting professionals (one of whom was promoted to Enforcement Portfolio Manager), two Enforcement Portfolio Managers, two Enforcement Lawyers and a Digital Forensics Specialist, together with significant investment in a digital forensics laboratory, training and development. The recruitment and assimilation of a large number of new professional staff into a multi-disciplinary organisation that undertakes complex work in a fast-moving environment is a project that requires careful management. As such, the Director is of the view that it is preferable to allow that process to fully bed down before filling the Corporate Compliance manager vacancy. The Director is further conscious of the fact that the transition of the ODCE to an independent Agency will give rise to additional expertise requirements and, as such, is of the view that it is prudent that those considerations should be factored into developing the role, and associated skill set, required of the appointee.

## **Work Permits Applications**

735. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of a work permit for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35700/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department informs me that this application for a General Employment Permit was reached for processing on 21/08/2019 and that the employment permit issued on 22/08/2019.

## **Departmental Internships**

736. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in her Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if her Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36141/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department has welcomed one unpaid Intern, for a period of six weeks, in each of the years 2014 to 2019. The Intern has come from Fordham University, USA, to gain experience and contribute to the work of the Intellectual Property Unit. This arrangement has been beneficial to both organisations.

My Department will continue to offer unpaid internships which we believe are beneficial to both parties.

My Department also facilitates short-term unpaid work experience opportunities for students to develop their skills, subject to business needs.

## **Departmental Operations**

737. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if her Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36221/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department has a dedicated, professionally trained staff member with responsibility for information and cyber security. This role is supplemented by other staff members who have also had professional training in this area. While staff members do not hold current certifications, their role is supplemented by fully certified external contractors specialising in cyber security as needed. My Department is not currently recruiting cyber security specialists.

My Department maintains a register of information security incidents which require investigation and follow up. It has deployed a Security Incident and Event Management (SIEM) solution to collect logs from core Departmental systems and report on any potential anomalies. Alerts from this system are actively monitored and reviewed and any such alerts are logged and investigated.

## Departmental Operations

738. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36237/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department has a business continuity plan which identifies actions to be taken to mitigate the loss of significant resources such as buildings or systems. My Department also maintains disaster recovery procedures and protocols for computer systems to mitigate the loss of significant systems. There are two separate data centres for Departmental systems, located in separate Departmental buildings, and data and systems are replicated between the two locations. In the event of issues with one site, services can be switched over to the second site.

## Job Creation

739. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason for the delay in the creation of jobs by a company (details supplied) since they were first announced in September 2016; if the jobs announced will materialise; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36259/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The firm in question announced its intention to establish a European headquarters, manufacturing and operations centre in Newcastle West in 2016. The company – a biomaterial and polymer technology firm which serves the life sciences industry – has indicated that this project will create up to 110 skilled engineering and science jobs in the region over the next several years.

IDA Ireland continues to work closely with the company, both locally in Ireland and in the US, in support of this investment. I understand that the firm remains fully committed to the project, with progress expected this year.

## IDA Ireland Data

740. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA Ireland visits that have taken place in each county in 2018 and to date in 2019; and the number of jobs that resulted from each visit in each county in tabular form. [36282/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As Minister, my objective is to create the best possible environment for enterprise, entrepreneurship, innovation and investment. Ireland continues to perform very strongly in terms of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and encouraging further investment from multinational companies is a major priority of mine. There are now over 229,000 people employed in IDA Ireland client companies here, the highest in the State's history.

Whilst site visits remain an important tool in helping showcase regional locations to investors, it is important to remember - as I have made clear before - 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 or job creation, as a significant proportion of all new FDI comes from existing IDA clients already present in the country. My Department's Annual Employment Survey will provide a more complete picture of IDA jobs created

by county for 2019 and these results will be available in January 2020. The Agency performed well in 2018 with 14,040 net new jobs created by IDA client companies and every region experiencing FDI-driven employment gains.

Creating more jobs in the regions remains a priority for both the IDA and my Department as we seek to build on the progress made over the last number of years. Since the IDA Ireland's 'Winning' Strategy was launched in 2015, 455 Investments have been won for the regions with almost 27,000 net new jobs created in locations outside Dublin. We are focused on increasing those numbers further in the time ahead.

The following tables detail the number of IDA site visits per county from 2018 until the second quarter of 2019 and the number of IDA jobs by County in 2017 and 2018.

**Table A: IDA Site Visits by County, 2018-Q2 2019**

County	2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019
Carlow	7	3	3
Cavan	2	1	3
Clare	13	5	12
Cork	61	17	23
Donegal	8	1	1
Dublin	269	56	90
Galway	54	9	17
Kerry	10	0	2
Kildare	8	3	1
Kilkenny	5	5	2
Laois	10	2	1
Leitrim	6	0	1
Limerick	35	12	22
Longford	5	0	1
Louth	20	10	9
Mayo	10	2	0
Meath	6	1	1
Monaghan	3	1	1
Offaly	5	1	1
Roscommon	3	0	1
Sligo	15	8	9
Tipperary	5	3	2
Waterford	21	8	3
Westmeath	22	6	5
Wexford	3	1	1
Wicklow	1	4	1
Total	607	159	213

**Table B: IDA jobs by County 2017-2018**

County	2017	2018
Cavan	1,155	1,096

County	2017	2018
Donegal	3,392	3,564
Leitrim	884	909
Louth	3,764	3,903
Monaghan	150	162
Sligo	2,238	2,251
Dublin	90,529	96,760
Kildare	8,452	8,838
Meath	1,565	1,632
Wicklow	2,230	2,618
Laois	134	122
Longford	745	900
Offaly	1,167	1,232
Westmeath	2,973	3,466
Clare	7,006	6,948
Limerick	10,607	11,796
Tipperary North Riding	335	204
Carlow	875	1,150
Kilkenny	716	711
Tipperary South Riding	3,330	3,516
Waterford	6,690	7,064
Wexford	2,987	3,139
Cork	36,780	38,867
Kerry	2,187	2,241
Galway	18,503	19,969
Mayo	4,484	4,828
Roscommon	1,139	1,171
Total	215,017	229,057

### Consumer Protection

741. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on correspondence (details supplied); the statutory and consumer rights available to customers that seek to reclaim costs after cancelling flights within a 24 or 48 hour period; if there is a cooling-off period available to consumers that purchase airline tickets; and the proposals at EU level to cover this area. [36313/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The right to cancel certain specified online, other distance and off-premises contracts within a fourteen-day period afforded by Directive 2011/83/EU on Consumer Rights does not apply to contracts for air and other passenger transport services. This right did not apply similarly to passenger transport contracts under Directive 97/7/EC on distance contracts which first gave consumers a right to cancel certain online and other distance contracts. Two main reasons are commonly put forward for the exclusion of these contracts from the right of cancellation. First, the principal rationale for the right to cancel online contracts, namely that the consumer is unable to see the goods or ascertain the nature of the service prior to the conclusion of the contract, does not essentially apply to contracts for air travel given the standard and well understood

nature of the service provided under such contracts. Secondly, the view has been taken that contracts which provide for the performance of a service on a specified date involve the setting aside of capacity that businesses might find difficult to resell if consumers had the right to cancel such contracts. I sympathise with the position of the consumer cited in the details supplied by the Deputy and with the argument that a right of cancellation within a 24-hour or 48-hour period would be fairer to consumers in such cases. As the Consumer Rights Directive is a maximum harmonisation measure, it is not open to me however to provide in national law for the extension of the right of cancellation to contracts excluded from that right under the Directive. The amendments to the Directive recently agreed by the European Council and the European Parliament moreover did not include an extension of the right of cancellation to online air and other passenger transport contracts.

### **IDA Ireland Site Visits**

742. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA Ireland visits that have taken place in County Mayo from 1 January 2019 to date; the number scheduled to take place by the end of 2019 by location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36332/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Regional development remains a key priority of mine as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Together with my Department and its enterprise Agencies, I am committed to strengthening investment and job creation all over the country. That collective focus on regional development is producing results. In 2018, for example, 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.

County Mayo hosted two site visits in the first half of 2019. Data on site visits for the third quarter of this year will be released at the end of October. For commercial sensitivity reasons, IDA Ireland can only make available data on site visits that have already taken place.

Whilst site visits remain an important tool in helping showcase regional locations to investors, it is important to remember - as I have made clear before - 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 or job creation, as a significant proportion of all new foreign direct investment (FDI) comes from existing IDA clients already present in the country.

Mayo has experienced annual increases in employment by IDA client companies since 2013 and the pipeline for FDI there remains positive. There were, for example, 344 net new jobs added by IDA client companies in 2018, an increase of 7.5% compared to the previous year. Earlier this year, Meissner Filtration Products announced that it will expand manufacturing operations by establishing a facility in Castlebar. Meissner will occupy the Advanced Technology Building that was constructed by the IDA as part of its Regional Property Programme and their expansion will create up to 150 jobs over the next five years.

Progress has been made in creating new economic opportunities in Mayo but we are determined to achieve more. That is why my Department's enterprise agencies will continue to focus on regional development and to explore how we can drive further job creation in the County and the surrounding areas.

## **Brexit Supports**

743. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports being provided to the retail sector to prepare for Brexit in view of the difficulties that may arise for the retail supply chain; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36490/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As part of the whole of Government response to Brexit, I and my Department officials are working to support the grocery retail and distribution sector in its efforts to prepare for Brexit.

Indeed, my Department has had ongoing engagement with the retail sector in relation to Brexit since 2016, principally through the Retail Consultation Forum (RCF) which I chair. Membership of the RCF includes retail associations such as Retail Ireland, Retail Excellence, CSNA, RGDATA, other bodies such as ISME, SFA and Chambers Ireland, a number of retailers, the City and County Managers Association (CCMA), and a number of relevant Government Departments.

Also, I have convened a number of roundtable discussions with the main Retail Grocery and Distribution players to better understand the contingency planning that is ongoing within that sector to provide for continued food supplies. [13 December 2018, 24 January 2019, 19 February 2019, 26 March 2019, 11th July 2019].

For these discussions with the industry players, I have also included the relevant State authorities: Revenue; Department of Agriculture and the Marine; Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; Food Safety Authority of Ireland; and Dublin Port. At these meetings the retailers and distributors have had the opportunity to raise issues and seek clarifications/advice from the relevant Departments and Agencies. In turn, the Departments and agencies have been able to share key messages and necessary actions to take with the retailers and distributors directly.

More broadly, my Department and its agencies have been working to prepare Irish businesses including retailers, for the potential challenges posed by Brexit by helping them to assess their preparedness and helping them to implement practical action plans in areas such as customs, supply chain and sourcing, and financial management. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The Government's suite of Brexit supports include preparedness vouchers, consultancy and mentoring supports, tariff advisory services, research on new markets and innovation supports through Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and InterTrade Ireland. Supports and advice is also available from the National Standards Authority of Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority, IDA Ireland, Revenue, Skillnet Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, Bord Bia and Failte Ireland.

The most immediate consequences of a hard Brexit are likely to be currency movements, supply chain constraints, delays, duties and tariffs. In the first instance, there will be a strain on the working capital position of businesses.

Of the Government's suite of supports, the €300m Brexit Loan Scheme is designed to address working capital challenges brought about by Brexit. Under the Scheme, loans of up to €1.5 million are available at a rate of 4% or less, with loans of up to €500,000 available on an unsecured basis. Similarly, the €300m Future Growth Loan Scheme is designed to support strategic long-term investment in SMEs in a post-Brexit environment.

InterTrade Ireland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

In August, ITI launched a new advertising campaign and a new online resource to encourage and assist firms in preparing for Brexit. The online "Bitesize Brexit" resource is a one-stop-shop for cross-border traders, presenting information in easily digestible segments and includes specific actions businesses should take in preparing for Brexit.

The Irish Government, in association with key industry partners, also launched a new support measure to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK's departure from the EU. The new initiative called Clear Customs comprises of a training programme and a customs financial support to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles.

In addition, the Government has held over 100 Brexit information seminars and events since last September. Furthermore, my Department has engaged with enterprises through the Brexit Consultation Forum and continues to host a series of Brexit information meetings in the Border Region in collaboration with the Accountancy Bodies of Ireland.

I will continue to engage with the retail sector on preparatory actions.

### **International Conventions**

744. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason Ireland failed to ratify ILO Convention 129 on Labour Inspections in Agriculture (1969); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36502/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Convention 129 on Labour Inspection in Agriculture was not ratified at the time of its adoption by the ILO International Labour Conference in 1969 as the view was taken that it would require the establishment of a single labour inspectorate for agriculture to include Occupational Safety and Health. This would have required significant changes to the existing administrative structures. As part of the ILO's Centenary Ratification Campaign, Convention 129 is being examined this year with a view to establishing whether Ireland may be in a position to ratify it. The review of Convention 129 is being done in line with our standard approach to the ratification of international instruments. Ireland does not ratify international conventions until any necessary amendments to domestic legislation have been identified and effected. If, following the review of the Convention, it is decided that Ireland is in a position to ratify it a stakeholder consultation will take place.

In the interim, it is important to note that the remit of both the WRC, and its predecessors, and the HSA extends to all sectors, including agriculture.

### **Trade Agreements**

745. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has raised at recent European Council meetings Irish concerns on a proposed Mercosur deal and its adverse effects on the beef, poultry and pig meat sectors; the stage the assessment of the proposed trade deal being undertaken by her Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is at; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36547/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** On 28 June, the EU concluded negotiations for an Association Agreement with the Mercosur countries after nearly 20 years and 40 rounds of talks. This marks the EU's largest trade deal to date and is four times the size of the trade agreement with Japan.

Irish exporters have been subject to trade tariffs, barriers and restrictions when exporting to Mercosur. This Agreement will see a significant reduction, or elimination, of tariffs and barriers to trade which will allow an increased flow of trade and investment between Ireland, the EU and the Mercosur region. The EU-Mercosur Agreement should make exports from Ireland more attractive, and potentially increase the demand for Irish products.

As with every Free Trade Agreement, Ireland – like all Member States – has defensive as well as offensive interests. The Agreement with Mercosur presents sectorial opportunities for Ireland in areas such as software and services in telecoms, financial services, digital content and travel, engineering products and services, life sciences, food and beverages, and education services. On the other hand, I was always keenly aware of the potential impact that this Agreement could present to the EU's and Ireland's agricultural sector. In that regard, Ireland, along with a number of other Member States, asserted early on in the negotiations that agricultural sensitivities - and beef in particular - must be fully considered in the negotiations.

Ireland has also continually highlighted the cumulative impact of agricultural market access across a range of products, including those identified by the Deputy, in relation to all EU trade agreements. Our concerns have been raised at all political levels, including by myself and my officials raising the issues with counterparts, both at Trade Council of Ministers deliberations and bilaterally with the EU Commission, and with my Member State counterparts. For example, I wrote to the EU Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, as recently as 31st May this year to restate my views, which I had previously articulated at European Trade Council meetings, as well as directly with the Trade Commissioner, regarding the current challenges facing the beef sector. I had sought assurances from the Commission that the final offer on beef – an offensive demand from the Mercosur side – would ensure that:

- the tariff rate quota for beef was low,
- that phasing-in periods were designed to allow sufficient time for Irish and EU industry to adjust,
- the Commission continually monitor quota levels taking into account domestic market conditions,
- the composition of beef imports from the region would be limited in relation to fresh chilled beef, and

- robust checks would be established and monitored at points of import to the EU to ensure animal health and welfare standards have been maintained.

As I am sure the Deputy is also aware, An Taoiseach joined the leaders of France, Poland and Belgium on 17 June, in writing to Commission President Juncker expressing our concerns on the inclusion of sensitive agricultural products in the negotiations, and stating that the current quotas for such products were not to be increased.

Following the conclusion of negotiations for the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, the Government committed to undertake full economic and environmental sustainability assessments of the political agreement. My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, is commissioning the studies.

These assessments will consider the impact the Agreement will have on the Irish economy and on jobs, as well as the environmental implications of the deal. It will also consider how the EU-Mercosur Agreement might mitigate/exacerbate the likely impact of Brexit for our economy. This assessment will help to inform our future actions in relation to the EU-Mercosur Agreement.

### **Startup Funding**

746. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding provided for start-up support. [36660/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has been continually supporting and encouraging start-up enterprises and entrepreneurs nationally through the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) and Enterprise Ireland (EI) with both agencies contributing to the economic success of the country. They are central to the continued growth of small and medium business and the success of future start up enterprises and entrepreneurs.

The LEOs, located in the Local Authorities nationwide provide a ‘first-stop-shop’ for advice, guidance, financial assistance and other supports for entrepreneurs intending to start or grow a business.

LEO grant support schemes for start-ups include Priming Grants, which are available to micro enterprises within the first 18 months of start-up and may be paid to buy new equipment and assist with direct business costs such as salary, rent, utilities, marketing and consultancy. In 2018, the LEOs approved 273 applications to the value of €6,379,733.

The LEOs may also offer a Feasibility Study Grant, the aim of which is to assist start-ups with the cost of researching a new business idea to establish viability and sustainability. In 2018 the LEOs approved 165 applications to the value of €1,491,230.

The LEOs can work with clients on their applications to Microfinance Ireland (MFI) for small business loans of between €2,000 and €25,000 (unsecured). Loans for commercially viable proposals can be used to help fund start-up costs, working capital or business expansion. By applying for an MFI small business loan through a Local Enterprise Office, clients can avail of a 1% reduction in the interest rate charged.

In addition, the LEOs run Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur Programme with an investment fund of €2 million, which is open to people between the ages of 18 and 35 with an innovative business idea, new start-up or established business.

Furthermore, the Agile Innovation Fund has been developed by Enterprise Ireland to support product, service and process innovation to build competitive advantage. The key benefit of this support is that it allows for a simple application process and delivers a faster response time from application to approval. The new Agile Innovation Fund is also open to eligible Local Enterprise Office clients and it allows companies to access up to 50% in support towards innovation projects with a total cost of up to €300,000.

Additionally, Enterprise Ireland actively works with High Potential Start-Ups, companies with the potential to develop an innovative product or service for sale in international markets and the potential to create 10 jobs and €1m in sales within 3 to 4 years of starting up. In 2018, Enterprise Ireland supported 82 HPSUs within the Class of 2018 with equity investment.

In 2018, Enterprise Ireland approved 50 new early stage businesses investments of up to €50,000 each through a series of Competitive Start Fund calls to support companies to reach key technical and commercial milestones.

The LEOs and Enterprise Ireland are an outstanding resource available to businesses and their variety of clients in such a diversity of sectors is a demonstration of the expertise available through these Agencies. Businesses that work closely with benefit significantly from the supports, mentoring and training they provide. My Department will ensure that the enterprise agencies continue to get the resources they need to create jobs and allow start-up enterprises to flourish throughout all regions.

### **Research and Development Funding**

747. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding provided for research and development. [36661/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Government Budget Allocations for R&D (GBARD) was €739.3m in 2017. It is estimated to have been €751.7m in 2018. These figures are compiled based on the R&D Budget survey undertaken each year of 30 Government Departments and agencies that spend money on R&D. 2017 is the most recently available data from the R&D budget. More information can be found in the R&D Budget 2017-2018 report available at the following link:

*<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/The-R-D-Budget-2017-2018.html>*.

The R&D Budget Survey for 2018-2019 is currently in the field with results expected to be published in late October 2019.

### **Company Registration**

748. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount collected in search fees by the Companies Registration Office in 2018; and the cost of eradicating search fees on its datasets. [36662/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Companies Registration Office (CRO), which is independent in the exercise of its statutory functions, is the central repository of public statutory company law related information on Irish companies. Its main functions are the provision of information to the public, the incorporation of companies and the registration of company post-incorporation documentation.

In 2018, the CRO received €909,873 in search fees. The average amount received in search fees over the past 5 years from 2014 - 2018 was €843,344 per year. The cost of abolishing search fees could result in an annual loss to the exchequer of approximately €843,344. There would also be a small direct cost to the exchequer related to the IT work necessary to remove the fees function from the Company Search Facility.

### **Brexit Supports**

749. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of food businesses that have applied for working capital under the Brexit loan scheme which opened in March 2018; the number of such businesses that have been sanctioned financing to date; and the value of same. [36821/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Brexit Loan Scheme provides affordable working capital to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees that are or will be Brexit impacted and which meet the scheme criteria. The €23 million exchequer funding (€14 million from my Department and €9 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) has been leveraged to provide a fund of up to €300 million over the lifetime of the scheme.

The scheme features a two-stage application process. First, businesses must apply to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to confirm their eligibility for the scheme. Businesses can use guidelines provided on the SBCI website to determine if they are eligible, and if so, to complete the eligibility form. As part of the process, businesses must submit a business plan, demonstrating the means by which they intend to innovate, change or adapt to meet their Brexit challenges. The SBCI assesses the applications and successful applicants receive an eligibility reference number.

Successful applicants can then apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers using their eligibility reference number. Participating finance providers are the Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and Allied Irish Bank. Approval of loans is subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

As at 30 August, there had been 764 applications for eligibility under the scheme. To date, SBCI has approved 691 applications of which 127 have come from food businesses. 179 successful applications have progressed to sanction at bank level, to a total value of €39.79 million. 33 of the applications progressed to sanction at bank level have been from food businesses, to a total value of €8.61 million.

### **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission**

750. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the progress to date by the CCPC regarding enforcement of the grocery goods regulations and monitoring compliance; the number of investigations undertaken in response to complaints under grocery goods regulations; the number of enforcement actions made; the number of cases which concluded with fines issued; the amount and value of fines issued; and the number of collected and uncollected fines. [36831/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the statutory independent body responsible for the enforcement of the grocery goods regulations. Section 9 (5) of the Compe-

tion and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the Commission is independent in the performance of its statutory functions. As investigation and enforcement matters are part of the day-to-day operational work of the Commission, I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, have no direct function in these matters.

Part 6, section 63 C of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 mandates the Commission to monitor the compliance of relevant grocery goods undertakings (RGGUs) with the regulations which seek to regulate certain practices in the grocery goods sector. S.I. No. 35 of 2016 entered into force on 30 April 2016. The regulations apply to relevant grocery goods undertakings with an annual worldwide turnover of greater than €50 million and they apply to written supply contracts which RGGUs have with their direct suppliers. The regulations require RGGUs to have agreed written contracts with their suppliers which include all the terms and conditions of the agreed contract, expressed in clear intelligible language and signed by both parties to the contract. The regulations specify those commercial practices which are prohibited unless the parties mutually agree them in writing in the contract. The regulations specify the ways in which RGGUs must comply with the regulations including filing their annual compliance reports and maintaining relevant documentation for examination by the CCPC for 6 years after the end of the financial year in which the grocery goods contract was signed by the parties.

Since the Regulations entered into force, the CCPC has indicated to suppliers that it is available and willing to meet with them if they have concerns about their trading relationships with RGGUs under the terms of the Regulations.

I am advised by the CCPC that to date no complaints have been received from suppliers about alleged breaches of the regulations and, consequently, the question of cases which concluded with fines issued, the amount and value of such fines or those that were collected or went uncollected does not arise.

## **Brexit Supports**

751. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applicants and participants in Brexit schemes and supports provided by her Department or agencies under her remit in tabular form; and the amount allocated and expended to each such scheme in each year since being established. [36842/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, which means Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland, one which cannot be underestimated. That is why my Department and its agencies have put in place extensive supports, schemes and advisory resources to ensure that to ensure that businesses around the country are prepared for Brexit.

While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

For example, I allocated an additional €5m to the network of Local Enterprise Offices, €3m to Enterprise Ireland, €2m to IDA Ireland and €1m to InterTradeIreland to help businesses prepare for Brexit, together with funding for the longer-term Future Growth Loan Scheme and the IDA Regional Property Programme. I also provided extra staff for the regulatory bodies of my Department to ensure they are properly resourced to address the additional demands that Brexit will create.

The Local Enterprise Offices [LEOs] are the first-stop-shop for anyone seeking guidance and support on starting or growing their business. The LEOs have organised various events to enable companies to learn about the potential impacts and opportunities of Brexit.

In addition, 702 LEO clients have received one-to-one mentoring solely focused on Brexit. Technical Assistance Grants for Micro Export are offered as an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities. 691 LEO clients have been approved for the Technical Assistance Grant.

The Local Enterprise Office interactive one-day Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post-Brexit environment. 613 Participants have so far attended this Customs Training.

InterTrade Ireland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,300 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,770 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which over 1,500 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

The Brexit Loan Scheme, launched in March of 2018, provides relatively short-term working capital, 1 to 3 years, to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees to help them to innovate, change or adapt to mitigate their Brexit challenges. Businesses can confirm their eligibility with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and, if deemed eligible, can apply to one of the participating finance providers for a loan under the scheme.

As at 2 September, there have been 764 applications for eligibility under the scheme. Of the total number of applications, 691 have been approved to date by SBCI while 179 of those applications have progressed to sanction at bank value, to a total value of €32.93 million.

The Future Growth Loan Scheme makes up to €300 million of loans available with a term of 8-10 years. This scheme is available to eligible businesses in Ireland and the primary agriculture (farmers) and seafood sectors to support strategic long-term investment. The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, the scheme operator, opened for eligibility applications on 17th April and up to 30 August it received 1044 eligibility applications and issued 987 eligibility letters.

Enterprise Ireland has established a Prepare for Brexit online portal and communications campaign, as well as an online "Brexit SME Scorecard" to help Irish businesses self-assess their exposure to Brexit and a "Be Prepared Grant" to support SME clients in planning to mitigate risks arising from Brexit. It has also launched a new Eurozone Strategy to help SMEs broaden their export footprint beyond the UK.

Over 6,100 business have used Enterprise Ireland's Brexit Scorecard to date and 85% of EI client firms have a plan in place, while 211 applications for the Be Prepared grant have been

approved. 272 EI clients have received funding under its “Act On” programme, which supports the engagement of a consultant to help clients identify weaknesses and improve resilience. EI has also hosted 16 Brexit Advisory Clinics.

EI also launched a Customs Insights Online course at the beginning of the year. This is a new online training support to help all businesses understand how customs work including the documentation and process required to operate and succeed post Brexit. The Customs Insights course explains in clear and simple terms the main customs rules and included the key actions companies can take to prepare for customs after Brexit and the options from Revenue that are available to make the customs process more efficient. This will be available for any company to use whether they are importers or exporters and also whether they are agency clients or not. There have been over 1,500 Customs Insights Course participants.

The Irish Government, in association with key industry partners, also launched a new support measure to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK’s departure from the EU. The new initiative is called Clear Customs, and it comprises of a free customs training programme provided through Skillnet and a financial support payment from Enterprise Ireland to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning staff to customs roles in addition to necessary customs it requirements.

While I have seen a very positive uptake of the supports available, I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK’s exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses. I want businesses to know that my Department and its agencies are here to help. The existing supports, schemes and advice are in place to ensure that businesses are prepared for any Brexit scenario.

IDA total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €33.7 million when compared with 2018.

Enterprise Ireland total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €6.8 million when compared with 2018.

LEOs total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €5 million when compared with 2018.

ITI total allocation (current and capital) for 2019 increased by €1 million when compared with 2018.

Scheme	Expenditure/Cost
Brexit Loan Scheme	The scheme will cost the Exchequer €23 million (€14 million provide by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and €9 million provided by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine).
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	€304,553 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	€443,786 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	€736,105 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	€265,341 to 16/05/2019

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Scheme	Expenditure/Cost
Enterprise Ireland Brexit “Act On Programme” – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	€480,000 to 16/05/2019
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	€1,373,218 to 16/05/2019
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	2018 Expenditure€560,2751 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€124,607
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	2018 Expenditure€951,1291 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€127,121
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	There isn't a specific budget allocation for LEO Brexit mentoring. It is included in the LEOs overall Measure 2 allocation.
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/ Events	2018 Expenditure€128,6011 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€33,181
The Prepare Your Business for Customs workshop helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to succeed in a post-Brexit world.	2018 Expendituren/a1 Jan to 31st March 2019 Expenditure€24,600
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	InterTradeIreland offer two Brexit Vouchers – a planning voucher which provides 100% financial support towards professional advice to help Businesses identify Brexit exposures and to plan. The second “implementation” voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625, which allows businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship post-Brexit. InterTradeIreland pay 50% of the cost of this voucher. Expenditure to date in 2019: £860,000.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	Eleven retailers were awarded funding in March 2019 as part of the new €1.25m fund, with €625,000 available under the first competitive call to support retail businesses to strengthen their online offering. There will be a second competitive call in 2019 with a fund of €625,000.

**Brexit preparedness supports - uptake of available schemes**

Scheme	Uptake (30 August 2019)
	764 applications received, 691 approved by SBCI, 179 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €39.797 million.
	Of the approved applications to date, 145 were reapplications as eligibility expires after four months.
Brexit Loan Scheme	(Uptake as of 2 September)
	1044 applications received, 987 approved by SBCI, 168 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €27.38 million.
Future Growth Loan Scheme	(Uptake as of 2 September)
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	6,116 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 1413 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	211 Be Prepared Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	186 companies have been approved under this initiative[1]
Enterprise Ireland Prepare to Export Scorecard	4,350 Prepare to Export Scorecards have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Customs Insights Online Course	1,565 Customs Insights Course participants
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	60 Agile Innovation projects have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	16 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with over 1,200 in attendance
Enterprise Ireland Brexit “Act On Programme” – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	272 “Act on” Plans have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	1,086 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	691 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	370 LEO clients have participated in the programme

Scheme	Uptake (30 August 2019)
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	702 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/ Events	4,975 Participants at the Brexit Information events
Customs Training Participants	613 Participants attended Customs Training
Clear Customs Training	93 applications have been made to access financial support through the scheme
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	3,390 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2019. This is in addition to the 4,175 engagements in 2018.
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 1,770 applications, with 1,526 approved and 21 still pending assessment.
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	11 retailers were awarded funding in March 2019. A second call of the Scheme opened on 19 June and closed on the 31 July 2019. Applications are currently under assessment.

[1] The Market Discovery Fund figure listed is lower than that of the end of February document figure of 251. The updated figure refers to the number of businesses approved, while the earlier number of 251 referred to the number of projects approved. This is now how it is reported to the Board, where projects was used previously.

### Departmental Staff Recruitment

752. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 414 of 11 July 2019, the number for all new hires and replacement staff over the three year period; and if she will provide the latest figures for new hires in each relevant agency and in her Department up to the end of August 2019. [36843/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** With regard to my own Department, and further to Parliamentary Question No. 414 of 11 July 2019, there have been no additional staff appointed to Brexit-related positions since July 2019. The total number of staff in my Department is currently 926.

I have set out in the table below the number of additional staff appointed to Brexit-related positions in my Department and in the Agencies under its remit during 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019. In relation to the second part of the Deputy's question, it is not possible to provide the numbers for all new hires over the three-year period in the time allotted. However, I have supplied the total headcount for my Department and each of the relevant agencies in the following table for further information.

Department/ Agency	2017	2018	2019	Headcount (end Q2 2019)
Department	5	3	4	915
NSAI	0	4	4	150
HSA	0	6	4	179

Department/ Agency	2017	2018	2019	Headcount (end Q2 2019)
SFI	2	3	0	61
Enterprise Ire- land*	27	20	7	624
IDA Ireland	10	17	0	313

\*Enterprise Ireland have 3 Brexit posts remaining to be filled.

While there are eight Agencies under the remit of my Department, the 5 listed above are the agencies in receipt of funding for additional Brexit-related posts.

### Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

753. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of prepare your business for customs initial workshops that have taken place up to 31 August 2019; the approximate number of persons and businesses that have taken part; and the customs awareness and higher-level customs clearance training and advice for third country trading in place for SMEs by county in tabular form. [36844/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In relation to customs preparations, the “Prepare your business for customs” one-day interactive workshop is run regionally by the Local Enterprise Offices. These customs workshops educate business on the potential impacts, formalities and procedures firms need to adopt when trading with a country which is outside the Single Market and Customs Union (‘Third Country’). The workshops are open to businesses from all sectors. These workshops cover areas such as export and import procedures, tariffs and how to correctly classify goods in that regard.

The Local Enterprise Office customs awareness training has been ongoing since February of this year. To date there have been 44 workshops, with 675 participants. Furthermore, there are 27 further events currently planned. Details of LEO customs awareness training, the numbers participating at each event, and planned events to end of year are attached. Businesses can book their place on the up coming workshops by contacting their Local Enterprise Office at [www.localenterprise.ie/Brexit](http://www.localenterprise.ie/Brexit).

Enterprise Ireland also run an online Customs Insights course which helps businesses understand the key customs concepts, documentation and processes required to move goods from, to and through the UK. The course provides learners with a firm understanding of the customs implications for their business and the options from Revenue to make this process more efficient. As of 30 August 2019, there were 1,565 participants on the Customs Insights Course.

In addition, my Department and the Department of Education and Skills, through a joint initiative by Skillnet and EI launched a new €5m customs recruitment and training initiative, Clear Customs. This initiative will boost the number of specialists by 500 in customs agents and businesses. The initiative offers a free customs training programme provided through Skillnet and a financial support payment from Enterprise Ireland to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning staff to customs roles in addition to necessary Customs IT requirements.

The following table refers to the LEO customs workshops that have taken place up to the 31st August 2019.

Questions - Written Answers

	Local Enterprise Office	Trainer	Date	No of Participants
1	Cavan	BDO	25-Feb-19	25
2	Cork	BDO	08-Mar-19	14
3	Dublin	BDO	13-Mar-19	22
4	Portlaoise	BDO	21-Mar-19	12
5	Donegal	BDO	27-Mar-19	32
6	Meath	Export Edge	09-Apr-19	26
7	Donegal	BDO	16-Apr-19	16
8	Monaghan	BDO	23-Apr-19	18
9	South Dublin	BDO	24-Apr-19	10
10	DLR	Export Edge	25-Apr-19	8
11	Westmeath	Export Edge	29-Apr-19	14
12	Cork City	Export Edge	01-May-19	8
13	Donegal	BDO	01-May-19	12
14	Kilkenny	BDO	02-May-19	Postponed to June 21st
15	Wexford	Export Edge	03-May-19	14
16	Westmeath	BDO	07-May-19	12
17	Offaly	Export Edge	09-May-19	9
18	Mayo & Roscommon	Export Edge	10-May-19	13
19	Wicklow	BDO	13-May-19	22
20	Limerick & Clare	BDO	14-May-19	12
21	Longford	Export Edge	16-May-19	11
22	Kildare	Export Edge	17-May-19	13
23	Meath	BDO	20-May-19	4
24	Fingal	KGH	21-May-19	18
25	Leitrim	Export Edge	21-May-19	15
26	Carlow	BDO	22-May-19	11
27	Dublin City	Export Edge	22-May-19	4
28	Kerry	BDO	23-May-19	19
29	Sligo	BDO	24-May-19	6
30	Fingal	Export Edge	30-May-19	17
31	Mayo	KGH	30-May-19	13
32	Carlow	Export Edge	06-Jun-19	Postponed
33	Galway	Export Edge	11-Jun-19	16
34	Louth	BDO	12-Jun-19	17
35	Meath	BDO	18-Jun-19	23
36	Monaghan	Export Edge	18-Jun-19	24
37	Kilkenny	BDO	21-Jun-19	14
38	Wicklow	BDO	26-Jun-19	17
39	Cavan	BDO	16-Jul-19	24
40	Meath	BDO	17-Jul-19	13

	Local Enterprise Office	Trainer	Date	No of Participants
41	Monaghan	KGH	23-Jul-19	35
42	Cavan	BDO	15-Aug-19	22
43	Meath	BDO	20-Aug-19	22
44	Longford	BDO	20-Aug-19	18
45	Louth	Export Edge	03-Sep-19	
46	Monaghan	KGH	03-Sep-19	
47	Westmeath	KGH	04-Sep-19	
48	Kildare	Export Edge	05-Sep-19	
49	Fingal		06-Sep-19	
50	Cavan	BDO	09-Sep-19	
51	Sligo	KGH	10-Sep-19	
52	Wicklow		11-Sep-19	
53	Waterford	Export Edge	13-Sep-19	
54	Waterford	Export Edge	13-Sep-19	
55	Mayo	BDO	20-Sep-19	
56	Carlow	Export Edge	23-Sep-19	
57	Donegal	Export Edge	25-Sep-19	
58	Longford	BDO	26-Sep-19	
59	DLR	Export Edge	30-Sep-19	
60	Cork City	BDO	04-Oct-19	
61	Fingal	Export Edge	04-Oct-19	
62	Leitrim	Export Edge	08-Oct-19	
63	Tipperary	KGH	08-Oct-19	
64	Louth	KGH	09-Oct-19	
65	Wicklow		09-Oct-19	
66	Mayo	BDO	10-Oct-19	
67	Fingal	Export Edge	11-Oct-19	
68	Cork North & West	Export Edge	25-Oct-19	
69	Cork North & West	Export Edge	30-Oct-19	
70	Cork North & West	Export Edge	06-Nov-19	
71	Cork North & West	Export Edge	11-Nov-19	

### Personal Injuries Assessment Board

754. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide data (details supplied) in relation to each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [36847/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The total number of claims received by the Personal Injury Assessment Board (PIAB) and awards made, where consent to assessment has been given, are set out in Table 1.

The number of awards made, where consent to assessment has been given, by category is set out in Table 2.

**Table 1: PIAB Claims received and Awards made 2011 to 2018**

Year	Total claims received	Total number of awards made*	Accepted awards	Rejected awards
2019 (Jan-Mar)	8483**	2910	1021	1013 (876 cases pending)
2018	33371	12112	6206	5906
2017	33114	12663	6788	5875
2016	34056	12966	7071	5895
2015	33561	11734	6716	5018
2014	31576	12420	7519	4901
2013	31311	10656	6476	4180
2012	29603	10136	6124	4012
2011	27669	9833	5875	3958

\* Where consent to assessment was given

\*\* figures subject to some revision due to retrospective keying

**Table 2: PIAB Awards by Category**

Year	Total number of awards made	Motor	Public Liability	Employer Liability
2019 (Jan-Mar)	2910	Not available	Not available	Not available
2018	12112	8529	2188	1395
2017	12663	9142	2305	1216
2016	12966	9564	2244	1158
2015	11734	8815	1995	924
2014	12420	9328	2151	941
2013	10656	8062	1768	826
2012	10136	7622	1707	807
2011	9833	7521	1482	830

### Personal Injuries Assessment Board

755. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the 2018 PIAB annual report; if she is considering taking actions arising from the report; and if so, the details of same. [36848/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Section 83 of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board Act 2003 provides that the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) shall submit an annual report of its activities to the Minister for Business Enterprise and Innovation, and that the Minister shall ensure that this report is laid before each House of the Oireachtas. PIAB's Annual Report for 2018 was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 15 July 2019 and outlines the activities of PIAB during the course of the year.

The PIAB Annual Report 2018 shows that PIAB continues to deliver on its mission of processing personal injury claims for public place, workplace and motor accidents in a fair, ef-

ficient and transparent manner.

In 2018, a total of 33,371 claims were received by PIAB. The Board made 12,112 awards to the value of €298.55 million, of which 6,206 awards to the value of €153.6 million were accepted.

During 2018, PIAB actively participated in two Government led initiatives, namely the Cost of Insurance Working Group chaired by Minister of State D'Arcy and the Personal Injuries Commission chaired by Mr Justice Nicholas Kearns.

### **Consumer Protection**

756. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the consumer regulations in place to enable consumers to leave a service provider contract for a mobile phone or utility provider over the phone as opposed to in writing. [36849/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** None of the consumer protection enactments for which my Department has responsibility regulate the switching of mobile phone or utility providers by consumers. I understand that the Commission for Communications Regulations has established rules and procedures for the switching of mobile phone, home phone and internet providers. I understand also that the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities provides advice to consumers on switching energy providers. Questions about the procedures for switching mobile phone or utility providers should be addressed accordingly to my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

### **Company Law**

757. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the areas flagged in a summary by an organisation (details supplied) of the potential impact of Brexit for company law here; and if she is considering further regulatory changes in this field to safeguard small businesses trading with the UK. [36851/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In March 2019, the Oireachtas passed the omnibus Act (Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019) containing the legislative changes consequential to the UK withdrawal from the European Union (EU).

I currently have no plans for regulatory changes in the area of company law arising from the UK withdrawal from the EU.

### **Work Permits Applications Data**

758. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications for work permits received in each month to date in 2019; the number of applications fully processed at the end of each month; and the number that were not fully processed by the end of each month in tabular form. [36852/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The statistics requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

2019	Applications Re-ceived	Total Decisions	Total Number of applica-tions in processing queue at end of each month not fully processed.
End of Jan	1,172	1,738	2,183 (includes 398 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Feb	1,358	1,399	2,167 (includes 441 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Mar	1,213	1,437	1,928 (includes 419 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Apr	1,575	1,272	2,264 (includes 458 applications at various stages of processing)
End of May	2,047	1,539	2,666 (includes 542 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Jun	1,741	1,755	2,754 (includes 669 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Jul	1,680	1,839	2,591 (includes 541 applications at various stages of processing)
End of Aug	1,485	1,709	2,343 (includes 540 applications at various stages of processing)

### Departmental Policy Functions

759. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the policy with respect to remote working; the remote working office hubs that are under the remit of her Department or a State agency under her remit that has such office hubs by county; and if all empty office space and State lands under the jurisdiction of State agencies under the remit of her Department that could facilitate remote office working for local starts-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs have been analysed. [36853/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** DBEI is currently leading on a new piece of research on remote working under Future Jobs Ireland 2019. To deliver on ambition 4.2(i) of this strategy the research will examine the prevalence and types of remote working arrangements within the Irish workforce, and the attitudes towards such working arrangements, as well as the factors which inhibit employers and employees from partaking in these arrangements.

To guide this work, an Interdepartmental Steering Group has been formed with representatives from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Justice and Equality, and the Department of An Taoiseach. The research will include desk research,

identification of key data sources and one-on-one consultation with key stakeholders. To further inform this research a Remote Working Consultation Forum was held on July 18th, 2019 in Cavan Digital Hub.

The end result of this project will be a cohesive research paper on the prevalence of remote work in Ireland that fulfils the deliverable as stated above. This will be completed in Q4 2019 and will be published shortly thereafter. When completed, this work will be considered in the context of the Department's own remote working arrangements.

My own Department including its Offices has 5 staff engaged in formal remote working arrangements at work patterns of between 1 and 4 days per week. In addition, my Department's ICT Unit provides remote working ICT facilities to any staff whose role requires them to work away from their office on a regular basis. Currently, 230 staff in the Department and its Offices are assigned laptops or tablets for use whenever they require to work away from the office. In addition, a pool of loan laptops or tablets is available to other staff to work remotely where business needs allow.

My Department's Agencies' remote working arrangements are outlined below.

### **Enterprise Ireland**

Enterprise Ireland has an e-working policy that supports and encourages remote working (e-working) among its employees. Applications are invited from staff once a year and arrangements are put in place to facilitate e-working, typically one day per week for a 12 month period.

Enterprise Ireland supports companies throughout the country to start, scale and succeed in international markets. As part of this, Enterprise Ireland has supported the establishment of enterprise centres that can support remote working throughout the country. Competitive funding to support this has been awarded under the following schemes:

**Community Enterprise Centres:** Enterprise Ireland has co-funded, with local enterprise development groups, 157 Community Enterprise Centres across the country totaling €64 million. There is now a Community Enterprise Centre located in every county. The agency has also provided €2m, via competitive competition, to support the role of a 46 Business Development Function/Manager in Community Enterprise Centres. These centers collectively employ approximately 6,000 people across 1,200 companies and are key hubs of enterprise activity in many areas. Many of these centres provide remote working facilities.

**Regional Enterprise Development Fund:** Enterprise Ireland has approved €60 million to 42 projects throughout the country to support enterprise. Of this, approximately 20 projects will provide remote working facilities.

Enterprise Ireland's regional plan 'Powering the Regions' is seeking to support the growth of remote working throughout the country. As part of this, Enterprise Ireland will launch a new work smart challenge to support 10,000 co-working and incubation spaces in regional locations throughout the country.

### **The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)**

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) has no formal policy with respect to remote working for employees. The CCPC do not have remote working office hubs or empty office space/land that could facilitate remote office working for local starts-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **Health and Safety Authority (HSA)**

The HSA has in place a Voluntary Remote Access (VRA) scheme which allows, on an agreed basis, a HSA staff member to carry out administrative functions from their home or other location using their HSA issued laptop. Administrative staff can work a maximum of 2 days/20% of the week out of the office if approved by their line manager. The HSA's field inspectors spend up to 90% of their time out of the office remote working or inspecting workplaces. Most of their administrative and data entry work is carried out from home with attendance in the office usually only required once a week. The HSA does not have any office space that could be used to facilitate remote office working for local start-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA)**

All IAASA staff are provided with laptop devices which can facilitate remote working. Audit Inspection staff spend the majority of their time in PIE audit firms. All other staff are primarily office-based. IAASA allows flexibility to work remotely but does not require remote working. IAASA does not own any property. It currently sub-lets its premises from OPW. Furthermore it does not control any vacant buildings or lands.

### **IDA Ireland**

IDA Ireland's formal home working policy came into effect from 1st September 2019 to allow staff to apply to work from home, up to one day per week, subject to business requirements and management approval, and the approval of the Staff Resources Committee. Each application is considered on a case by case basis and reviewed on an ongoing basis vis a vis business delivery. Each application is approved for a period of one year, following which the staff member must re-apply for a further year. At this point in time, and given the early date in September, IDA Ireland's HR Department has not received any formal applications for home working but expects to do so in the coming weeks, prior to their consideration at the next meeting of the Staff Resources Committee at the end of the month.

### **National Standards Authority of Ireland**

In NSAI e-working is an approved arrangement by which employees work part of the week at home using approved internet and telecoms. E-working is limited to a maximum of 2 days per week and must be combined with core office-based hours/days each week. The number of people in NSAI currently availing of a formal e-working arrangement is 22. NSAI do not have a space/hub for working for use by local start-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **Personal injuries Assessment Board**

PIAB do not offer remote working to their staff. PIAB is not a dedicated office hub for remote workers and PIAB would not be in a position to facilitate a space/hub for working for local start-ups, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

### **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)**

SFI currently offers remote working where, subject to certain conditions, employees may work from home for up to 2 days per month. 9 employees are currently availing of the working from home option. SFI does not have remote working hubs in Ireland. All SFI staff in Ireland are based at the organisation Headquarters at Wilton Park House. SFI has one international officer based at IDA offices in Mountain View California. SFI has no vacant office premises and have no state lands under their jurisdiction.

## **Ministerial Appointments**

760. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the selection process for the recent three ministerial appointments made to the National Competitiveness Council; the number of applications received to be members of the board; and the number of members that represent small business. [36855/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** On 10 May, a call for Expressions of Interest for members to fill a number of vacancies on the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) was advertised on the State Boards website by the Public Appointments Commission (and on my Department's and the NCC websites).

The following criteria were listed as desirable in the call for Expressions of Interest Booklet:

- Demonstrated understanding of the factors that affect the competitiveness of the Irish economy and the policies that can influence productivity levels in the economy
- Experience of effective leadership at a senior level in an applicant's area of expertise
- Demonstrated understanding of the policy development process
- Critical thinking skills with a proven ability to grasp the detail of a wide range of issues
- Experience of participation on similar committees or groups.

By the closing date on 7 June, 18 applications were received from candidates with diverse backgrounds and with wide-ranging experience.

A selection panel made up by the outgoing Chair of the NCC, a senior official from my Department, and an independent representative was formed. This panel submitted a shortlist from which to appoint new Council members to me. From this shortlist, I appointed three highly qualified people to the Council on 26 June 2019.

Consistent with the Council's Terms of Reference, representatives from two employer bodies, IBEC and Chambers Ireland, currently serve on the Council. These bodies represent the views of all business (including SMEs and small business).

## **Employment Rights**

761. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the plans being developed by her officials as per a news article (details supplied) regarding the rules on the right to disconnect from work and to encompass a more flexible working approach and work life balance. [36857/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and I understand the importance of promoting a good work-life balance for employees. This is addressed under Pillar 4 of our Future Jobs Ireland strategy. Pillar 4 is focussed on increasing participation in the labour force as this will lead to the more equitable, balanced and sustainable development of Ireland's workforce.

Pillar 4 of Future Jobs Ireland outlines a number of key ambitions and deliverables to help to increase participation in the labour force. A number of these ambitions are centred on flexible working solutions which offer benefits for employers, employees and wider society in general. Flexible working encompasses a wide range of practices including part-time, compressed hours, job sharing, home-working and remote working. Such solutions allow for tangible benefits for employees including improving their work life balance. It also provides solutions for

those who would otherwise take unpaid parental leave but cannot afford to do so.

There are a number of key deliverables under Pillar 4 with the objective of fostering participation in the labour force through flexible working solutions. These include deliverables such as holding a national consultation on flexible working options, the development of guidance for employers on family-friendly working options, and the extension of unpaid Parental Leave.

A further deliverable under this Pillar is the completion of research on remote working. My Department is currently leading on this research which focusses on understanding the prevalence and types of remote working arrangements within the Irish workforce and the attitudes towards such arrangements. The research will also identify the influencing factors for both employers and employees partaking in remote working.

This research will include the identification of key data sources, desk research and one-on-one consultation with key stakeholders. A key input to the study will be the results arising from a Remote Working Consultation Forum which was held on July 18th to gain insights for the research. The research will also include an international policy review which will consider related policies abroad, such as the 'right to disconnect' in France, in order to understand the impacts of this on remote working. The research is expected to be completed in the final quarter of this year and will outline the relevant policy implications of remote working for Ireland.

### **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission Reports**

762. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of her request to the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission to undertake a study of the public liability insurance market; and the reason this decision was taken now. [36858/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In August I requested that the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) undertake a study into how the public liability insurance market operates, and, in particular how competition works in the market and whether any practice or method of competition affects the pricing levels within that market. This request was made under with Section 10 of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014.

I requested the CCPC to undertake this study as I have concerns about the increased cost of public liability insurance on business, which has the potential to pose a systemic threat to the very existence of many businesses.

Should the Deputy have any information on anti-competitive practices occurring in the sector, I would suggest that he contact the CCPC directly – [publicliability@ccpc.ie](mailto:publicliability@ccpc.ie).

### **Brexit Preparations**

763. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on a recent InterTradeIreland report (details supplied) which found that just 6% of traders were prepared for cashflow and liquidity issues in the event of a no-deal Brexit and only 6% have examined the possible legal implications on business contracts if the UK leaves the EU on 31 October 2019 without a deal; and the measures being deployed for cross-Border businesses to increase contingency planning for a hard Brexit by the 31 October 2019 deadline. [36860/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** While

the nature of the UK's departure from the EU still remains to be determined, Brexit continues to represent a significant challenge for businesses in Ireland, one which cannot be underestimated. Notwithstanding the ongoing uncertainty, however, there are several areas in which businesses can take immediate action to prepare.

Since 2016, my Department and its agencies have been working to prepare Irish businesses for the potential challenges posed by Brexit by helping them to assess their preparedness and to implement practical action plans in areas such as customs, supply chain and sourcing, and financial management. We cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, but these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and developing practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The Government's suite of Brexit supports includes preparedness vouchers, consultancy and mentoring supports, tariff advisory services, research on new markets and innovation supports through Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and InterTrade Ireland. Supports and advice are also available from the National Standards Authority of Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority, IDA Ireland, Revenue, Skillnet Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, Bord Bia and Failte Ireland.

The most immediate consequences of a hard Brexit are likely to be currency movements, supply chain constraints, delays, duties and tariffs. In the first instance, there will be a strain on the working capital position of businesses.

Of the Government's suite of supports, the €300m Brexit Loan Scheme is designed to address working capital challenges brought about by Brexit. Under the Scheme, loans of up to €1.5 million are available at a rate of 4% or less, with loans of up to €500,000 available on an unsecured basis. Similarly, the €300m Future Growth Loan Scheme is designed to support strategic long-term investment in SMEs in a post-Brexit environment.

InterTradeIreland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers Brexit Planning Voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enable businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the EU. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI's Brexit Planning Vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. The new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

In August, ITI launched a new advertising campaign and a new online resource to encourage and assist firms in preparing for Brexit. The web-based "Bitesize Brexit" resource is a one-stop-shop for cross-border traders, presenting information in easily digestible segments and including specific actions businesses should take in preparing for Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland also recently revealed 12 'Brexit Essential' questions aimed at helping exporting businesses further prepare and take action ahead of the UK's impending withdrawal from the EU. The Brexit Essentials campaign highlights the key questions and documentation that businesses need to address in order to trade successfully with the UK post 31 October.

The Irish Government, in association with key industry partners, also launched a new support measure to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK's departure from the EU. The new initiative called Clear Customs comprises of a training programme and a customs financial support to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles.

In addition, the Government has held over 100 Brexit information seminars and events since last September. I also have been convening regular roundtable discussions with the main retail grocery and distribution players since December to better understand contingency planning within the sector on food supply. Revenue, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Dublin Port and relevant Government Departments also attend these meetings. Furthermore, my Department has engaged with enterprises through the Brexit Consultation Forum and continues to host a series of Brexit information meetings in the Border Region in collaboration with the Accountancy Bodies of Ireland.

While I have seen a very positive uptake of the supports available, I am conscious that the delays to Brexit may have led businesses to defer their immediate planning. However, the UK's exit from the EU will mean changes for Irish businesses. With around 8 weeks to go to Brexit, I urge businesses to accelerate their preparations and avail of the wide range of State supports on offer. By taking the necessary practical steps, businesses will be better placed to address the challenges they may face and in doing so, they can help future proof their businesses and continue to trade with the UK and other EU Member States.

### **Brexit Preparations**

764. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the statement by the head of an organisation (details supplied) that supermarket shelves here could start to run bare within two days of a hard Brexit; and the supports and resources being provided by her Department and agencies under her remit for haulage firms to take immediate steps to improve supply chains. [36861/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Brexit of any kind means change, and we have to be as well prepared as possible for this unprecedented challenge. While Government can assist in supporting businesses in the face of a hard Brexit, businesses must, of course, also prepare themselves despite what I know to be very difficult circumstances.

As part of the whole of Government response to Brexit, I and my Department officials are working to support the grocery retail and distribution sector in its efforts to prepare for Brexit. Indeed, my Department has had ongoing engagement with the retail sector in relation to Brexit since 2016, principally through the Retail Consultation Forum (RCF) which I chair.

Membership of the RCF includes retail associations such as Retail Ireland, Retail Excellence, CSNA, RGDATA, other bodies such as ISME, SFA and Chambers Ireland, a number of retailers, the City and County Managers Association (CCMA), and a number of relevant Government Departments.

Also, I have convened a number of roundtable discussions with the main Retail Grocery and Distribution players to better understand the contingency planning that is ongoing within that sector to provide for continued food supplies. [13 December 2018, 24 January 2019, 19 February 2019, 26 March 2019, 11th July 2019]. The February meeting adopted an interactive workshop format and attendees included representatives from the haulage sector. For these dis-

cussions with the industry players, I have also included the relevant State authorities: Revenue; Department of Agriculture and the Marine; Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; Food Safety Authority of Ireland; and Dublin Port.

There has been very constructive engagement through these meetings, and we will continue to work together to ensure that the processes being put in place operate as efficiently as possible to minimise the disruption for businesses, supply chains, and the consumer. Through the dialogue we are facilitating with the Retail Consultation Forum and other roundtables, retailers and distributors have given assurances that they are intensively making preparations for Brexit.

For example, they are examining their own supply chains and seeing what adjustments need to be made, they are availing of advice and information from the various State authorities that they will need to engage with and they are engaging with their suppliers down the line.

More broadly, my Department and its agencies have been working to prepare Irish businesses, including retailer and haulier businesses, for the potential challenges posed by Brexit by helping them to assess their preparedness and helping them to implement practical action plans in areas such as customs, supply chain and sourcing, and financial management. While we cannot yet know the form that Brexit will take, these measures aim to assist businesses in identifying and managing key risk areas and develop practical preparatory actions regardless of the circumstances of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The Government's suite of Brexit supports include preparedness vouchers, consultancy and mentoring supports, tariff advisory services, research on new markets and innovation supports through Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and InterTrade Ireland. Supports and advice are also available from the National Standards Authority of Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority, IDA Ireland, Revenue, Skillnet Ireland, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland, Bord Bia and Failte Ireland.

The most immediate consequences of a hard Brexit are likely to be currency movements, supply chain constraints, delays, duties and tariffs. In the first instance, there will be a strain on the working capital position of businesses.

Of the Government's suite of supports, the €300m Brexit Loan Scheme is designed to address working capital challenges brought about by Brexit. Under the Scheme, loans of up to €1.5 million are available at a rate of 4% or less, with loans of up to €500,000 available on an unsecured basis. Similarly, the €300m Future Growth Loan Scheme is designed to support strategic long-term investment in SMEs in a post-Brexit environment.

InterTrade Ireland also plays a major role as part of Ireland's Brexit response and offers Brexit-related advisory services to eligible businesses. So far this year, more than 3,200 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service.

ITI offers a Brexit Start to Plan voucher and Brexit Implementation Voucher schemes, which enables businesses to get professional advice on how best to plan, prepare and implement for the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. These supports help businesses obtain advice on specific areas such as tariffs, currency management, regulatory and customs issues and movement of labour, goods and services.

ITI Brexit Start to Plan vouchers are worth up to €2,250 (inclusive of VAT) each. 1,613 businesses have applied for a Brexit Start to Plan voucher, of which 1,405 have been approved. ITI new Brexit Implementation Voucher provides financial support up to £5,000/€5,625 (inclusive of VAT), with InterTradeIreland paying 50%. This will allow businesses to implement critical changes making them better prepared to deal with a new trading relationship.

In August, ITI launched a new advertising campaign and a new online resource to encourage and assist firms in preparing for Brexit. The online “Bitesize Brexit” resource is a one-stop-shop for cross-border traders, presenting information in easily digestible segments and includes specific actions businesses should take in preparing for Brexit.

The Irish Government, in association with key industry partners, also launched a new support measure to help customs agents, intermediaries and affected Irish businesses develop the capacity to deal with the additional customs requirements due to the UK’s departure from the EU. The new initiative called Clear Customs comprises of a training programme and a customs financial support to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to customs roles.

In addition, the Government has held over 100 Brexit information seminars and events since last September. Furthermore, my Department has engaged with enterprises through the Brexit Consultation Forum and continues to host a series of Brexit information meetings in the Border Region in collaboration with the Accountancy Bodies of Ireland.

We are confident that we are as ready as we can be, but it is important that businesses do what they need to do to be ready. As Chair of the Retail Consultation Forum I will continue to engage with the retail grocery and distribution sector on preparatory actions.

### **Brexit Staff**

765. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of full and part-time staff in the dedicated Brexit unit within her Department by staff grade in tabular form. [36866/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The number of staff in the dedicated Brexit Unit of my Department is provided below in Tabular form.

#### **Staff Assigned to Brexit Unit as at 4 September 2019.**

Grade	Staff No’s
Principal Officer	1
Assistant Principal Officer	3
Higher Executive Officer	2
Clerical Officer	1
Total	7

### **Departmental Reports**

766. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the work being carried out by the expert group on future skills needs including published reports on skills and labour shortages in the economy. [36867/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises Government on projected skills requirements in the economy and makes recommendations on how existing education and training systems and delivery mechanisms can be improved. The Group also advises on any skills requirements that cannot be met from within the Irish economy and so must be met through inward migration. Ensuring that the relevant authorities progress implementation plans is also

central to the Group's work.

The EGFSN is an independent non-statutory body with membership from Government Departments (Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, Department of Education & Skills); Enterprise Development Agencies (Enterprise Ireland, Industrial Development Authority), Business, Unions, Further Education and Training (SOLAS), and the Higher Education Authority. The secretariat is based in the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, which provides the EGFSN with research and analysis support; the work is funded by the National Training Fund.

The Group undertakes a combination of both sectoral and thematic research studies. These are overseen by Steering Groups made up of stakeholders from enterprise and the education and training sectors. The Group also draws on the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU), based in Solas, for statistical analysis.

In 2018, the EGFSN published five reports: an Audit of Hospitality Courses in Further and Higher Education; a report on Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Trade Implications of Brexit; a report of the Hospitality Skills Oversight Group; a report on Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce; and the EGFSN Annual Activity Statement for 2017.

So far in 2019, the Group has published a High-Level ICT Demand Forecast for the period 2017-2022 – which underpinned Technology Skills 2022: Ireland's Third ICT Skills Action Plan, published by the Department of Education and Skills – and the EGFSN Annual Activity Statement for 2018. The reports are available online at [www.skillsireland.ie](http://www.skillsireland.ie).

Currently, the EGFSN secretariat is working on skills studies relating to the Construction Industry, SME Management Practices, and a follow-on study into enterprise demand for Design Skills. Additionally, the Group continues to monitor implementation of actions under, in particular, Technology Skills 2022, the Brexit Skills report, and the Winning by Design study (published in 2017).

## **Brexit Preparations**

767. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the studies or reports being carried out by her Department or commissioned by her regarding Brexit; the organisation commissioned for each such report; and the cost and publication date in tabular form. [36868/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government's recently updated contingency planning continues to be firmly grounded in the extensive work and outreach that has already been undertaken by individual Departments and agencies, as well as by stakeholder organisations, academics and others.

My Department has conducted a number of research projects to build an understanding of the possible implications of Brexit on Ireland for enterprise and our trading relations. These studies provide an evidence base to inform Ireland's policy positions as part of the wider negotiation on the UK's future relationship with the EU and have further inform our domestic policy response to Brexit. The details of the Brexit related research undertaken by my Department is as follows:

Questions - Written Answers

Title	Summary	Cost	Research by	Publication Date
B & A Survey – Brexit the Views of Irish SMEs	DBEI has commissioned Behaviour and Attitudes (B&A) to conduct a series of surveys on Irish SMEs and Brexit. The surveys were conducted between January 2017, and March 2019. The surveys examined the overall impact Brexit is having and could have on Irish SMEs. B & A is scheduled to conduct another survey in September 2019.	Expenditure to date: 2017 €97,017.50 2018 €30,742.85 2019 49,556.70 Total of €177,318.05 (All figures are inclusive of VAT)	Behaviour and Attitudes Ltd.	22 January 2018 14 September 2018
Intermediate Goods Inputs & the UK Content of Irish Goods Export Study	This report examined the reliance of Irish imports on the UK and identified the extent of exposure to potential disruptions post-Brexit.	€30,000 (inclusive of VAT)	Economic and Social research Institute	6 July 2018
Irish-UK Services Trade and Brexit Study	This report estimated the contribution of EU membership to services trade flows and examined the exposure of Irish services sectors to potential disruptions post-Brexit.	€10,000 (inclusive of VAT)	Economic and Social research Institute	6 July 2018

Title	Summary	Cost	Research by	Publication Date
Firm Level Impact of Brexit on Most Exposed Sectors	This research examines the firm level implications of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union for Ireland's most exposed enterprise sectors.	€69,000 (excluding VAT)	DBEI and Deloitte	13 June 2018
Addressing the Skills Needs Arising from the Potential Implications of Brexit (EGFSN)	This study examines the skills challenges arising from Brexit's potential trade implications, and how they might best be addressed.	€55,510 (excluding VAT)	AECOM	14 June 2018
Ireland and the Impacts of Brexit: Strategic Implications for Ireland arising from changing EU-UK Trading patterns.	Profile trade and investment to highlight dependence at sectoral level; Quantify impact of various scenarios on trade and investment; Develop policy options for Ireland – negotiations and enterprise (mitigation) policies.	€174,000 (excluding VAT)	Copenhagen Economics	13 February 2018

In addition, InterTrade Ireland – a Cross-Border Body that receives funding from my Department - has published reports on Cross-Border Trade and Supply Chain Linkages; Export Participation and Performance of Firms on the Island of Ireland; Shock Absorption Capacity of Firms in Ireland and Northern Ireland; and Potential Impact of WTO Tariffs on Cross-Border Trade. Also, InterTrade Ireland is due to publish a report on the Analysis of the UK “No Deal” Tariff Schedule in the Context of Cross-Border Trade soon.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission – which is under the remit of my Department - has just published a new survey related to Brexit and Online Shopping with the UK. It had previously published a report (2018) on the Potential Impact of Brexit on Consumer Prices.

## Trade Agreements

768. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the studies or reports being carried out by her Department or commissioned by her regarding trade deals; the organisation commissioned for each such report; and the cost and publication date in tabular form. [36869/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department, through an open tender process, commissioned Copenhagen Economics to undertake a report on the combined impacts of a portfolio of recently concluded and prospective EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) for Ireland. The aim of the report is to identify the opportunities and challenges for Ireland from FTAs and to develop recommendations to maximise gains and mitigate the challenges that can arise. The primary research for the report has been completed with preliminary findings and results subject to further review by the authors.

In light of the political agreement reached and announced by the Commission on 28 June last of an EU-Mercosur Agreement, the Government committed to full economic and environmental sustainability assessments on the EU-Mercosur deal on the basis of the more detailed information which was now available. This element will be commissioned shortly by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine but it is too early to provide an outline of the timeframe or the resource requirements until the definitive terms of reference for the two studies are agreed. Therefore, the current position on FTA studies, as requested by the Deputy, is set out in the following table:

Study or Report (trade deals)	Organisation Commissioned	Cost	Publication Date
Report on the impacts of EU Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) on Ireland	Copenhagen Economics (CE)	€261,000	Report work ongoing, publication date not yet agreed
Economic and Environmental Sustainability assessments of the EU-Mercosur deal	To be commissioned shortly	Not yet determined	It is too early to provide an estimate of the timeframe

### Brexit Preparations

769. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she remains satisfied that all possible actions have been taken by her Department in anticipation of a UK crash-out from the EU; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36915/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Regrettably, the UK is leaving the EU on 31 October 2019 and this will mean change. Detailed work is ongoing to prepare for the UK's exit, in parallel with work in Brussels. As a responsible Government, preparedness for different types of Brexit is well underway.

Given the stance of the UK Government, the risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October is significant, and the Government is taking this very seriously. Since the start of this year, our preparations have been geared towards such an outcome, including with our EU partners, to seek to mitigate as much as possible its risks.

The consequences of a no deal Brexit will be profound, including macro-economic, trade

and sectorial challenges. It will also have implications for trade on the island of Ireland, North South cooperation and will pose risks for the Good Friday Agreement and political stability. It could have lasting societal impacts for Northern Ireland.

While the Government's extensive preparedness and contingency efforts will help mitigate the negative effects of Brexit, a no deal Brexit will be highly disruptive. In such a scenario, it will be impossible for the UK to maintain the current seamless arrangements with the EU across the full range of sectors and this will have consequences for Ireland.

The Government has already taken actions to get Ireland Brexit ready, with dedicated measures announced in Budgets 2017, 2018 and 2019. Budget 2019 also included an allocation of over €110m for Brexit measures across a number of Departments, including a €25m allocation for essential customs requirements.

The Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update – published in July - reflects the extensive whole-of-Government and EU level work which has already taken place, as well as the additional work that will happen between now and 31 October. This plan emphasises the need for stepped up preparedness measures, by exposed businesses in particular. Citizens and businesses cannot assume that because a no deal Brexit was averted in March and April that the same will happen in October – the need for prudent preparations is more pressing than ever. Key areas for continued work will include preparing for Budget 2020, additional infrastructure for ports and airports, and a new phase of the Government's Brexit communications including an intensified engagement programme by Revenue, focussed on individual businesses and including targeted letters and follow-up phone calls.

Within my own Department, through our enterprise agencies, we have put in place a full range of supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses across the country are prepared for the UK's exit from the EU. These measures aim to assist businesses in identifying the key risk areas and practical preparatory actions to be taken over the coming weeks and months. In a No Deal Brexit, our key focus will be to assist 'vulnerable but viable' firms.

Key supports include a range of assistance available through the Local Enterprise Offices including Technical Assistance for Micro-Enterprises; the Lean for Micro Programme; the Innovation and Investment Fund; and a Brexit Mentoring Programme. The LEOs also provide Customs Training Workshops that provide businesses with a better understanding of the potential impacts, formalities and procedures to be adopted when trading with a country which is outside the Single Market and Custom Unions.

InterTradeIreland helps companies to prepare for a UK exit from the EU through a range of supports and services suited to all businesses no matter what stage they are at with their Brexit plans. Key measures include Brexit Planning Vouchers, Implementation Vouchers and a range of Brexit advisory services.

Enterprise Ireland are key providers of support – through their SME Scorecard, the Be Prepared Grant, the Act on Programme and Market Discovery Fund, amongst other supports.

The Department, working with other key stakeholders has also put in place a range of Brexit specific measures to enhance access to finance through, for example, the Brexit Loan Scheme (which provides affordable working capital to firms impacted by Brexit); the Future Growth Loan Scheme which provides a longer-term facility to support capital investment; and the Rescue and Restructuring Scheme which is available to provide restructuring support to undertakings in severe financial difficulties as a result of Brexit.

In addition, to respond to the needs of enterprises trading with the UK, the recently launched

Clear Customs initiative offers eligible customs agents, customs intermediaries and affected businesses a free training programme to build capacity in the customs sector. Additional support of €6,000 per trainee will be available to participating eligible companies to assist with the costs of recruiting and assigning new staff to undertake training and take up new customs roles.

The Department is leading negotiations with the European Commission DG Competition, together with DAFM and other colleagues, on relevant State Aid issues.

We continue to enhance the resources of the Department's regulatory agencies, to ensure that they are sufficiently resources to fulfil their mandates, which are vital to the efficient functioning of the economy and which are essential to the maintenance of the Single Market.

Of course, there are specific actions that firms must take themselves. With just 8 weeks until 31 October, there are 9 steps that businesses, large and small, should do now:

These steps are elaborated upon in the "Getting Your Business Brexit Ready: Practical Steps" booklet which I launched this week in conjunction with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney TD, and Minister for European Affairs Helen McEntee TD. The booklet provides a comprehensive overview for businesses on the core steps they should take to prepare for Brexit.

To further assist firms, my Department has developed a checklist of the key actions for businesses to consider to be Brexit prepared. This guidance acts as a one stop shop with the essential actions set out and includes links to the relevant Agencies who can provide further guidance in specific areas. The checklist is available on the Department's website.

To enhance awareness of and access to all of these supports, the Department, its Agencies and indeed, the whole-of-Government are engaged in an extensive communications campaign. This includes a series of workshops targeted at those enterprises most adversely impacted by Brexit. These efforts will continue and intensify in the run up to 31 October.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

**770. Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if the decision to reduce the care hours provided for a person (details supplied) will be reconsidered, which have been reduced from ten to seven hours per week. [35068/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

**771. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if additional funding in relation to the nursing home support scheme will be proved in budget 2020; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [35541/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Estimates process for 2020 is ongoing and includes an examination of all service areas. The 2020 budget for the NHSS will be determined through the normal budgetary and National Service Planning process.

Over the last two years, an additional €45 million has been provided to NHSS budget for the continued provision of services in line with pricing and demand.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

772. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if the decision to end the availability of the rehabilitative training bonus will be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35696/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### National Dementia Strategy

773. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if the call of an organisation (details supplied) for investment will be included in budget 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36156/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The implementation of the 2014 National Dementia Strategy is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE, which has made substantial progress in developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia. Actions are being implemented progressively as resources allow and Dormant Accounts funding is allowing a number of key projects to proceed. The HSE is working with key partners, including the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, to implement specific elements of the Strategy, including the *Understand Together* awareness campaign and the attendant community activation programme.

With regard to the specific pre-budget submission referred to by the Deputy, the level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2019 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

### Primary Medical Certificates Applications

774. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a primary medical certificate application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36382/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Assisted Human Reproduction Legislation

775. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health when Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be fully commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34986/19]

776. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health when Parts 2 and 3 of the Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36068/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 775 and 776 together.

I intend to commence Parts 2 and 3 of The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 on 5th May 2020. When commenced it will regulate aspects of assisted reproduction involving donated gametes and embryos. Parts 2 and 3 are specifically concerned with parentage rules for children born through donor assisted human reproduction (DAHR) procedures, obligations applying to facilities providing such procedures and the establishment of the National Donor-Conceived Person Register. This commencement date allows time for individuals or couples to plan to use donor gametes that they have already purchased and stored.

### **Prescriptions Charges**

777. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 205 of 4 May 2017, the consideration being given to the issue raised (details supplied); his views on whether urgent action is required to address the issue; the timeframe for recommendations to be made in relation to the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34686/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware of the issue arising where a prescribed dosage requiring different medication strengths results in separate prescription charges. I am advised by the HSE that this is due to technical issues in relation to the pharmacy claiming process and that a solution will be considered in the context of IT developments in this area.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

778. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an angiogram appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34687/19]

**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.

### **Maternity Services**

779. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the services provided in a clinic (details supplied); if his attention has been further drawn to the ownership of the clinic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34689/19]

780. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn

to a service agreement between Holles Street Maternity Hospital and a clinic (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34690/19]

781. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to or if he has requested information from Holles Street Maternity Hospital on shared services that may be provided to a clinic (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34691/19]

979. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if clinics (details supplied) are different entities or the same entity; if there are differences, the nature of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35588/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 779 to 781, inclusive, and 979 together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to operational matters, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

### **Hospital Services**

782. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if procedures and operations for persons over 60 years of age are being carried out in Cavan General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34692/19]

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

### **Hospitals Building Programme**

783. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of capital expenditure for a new wing to Cavan General Hospital and a 14-bed ward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34693/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Drug Treatment Programmes Data**

784. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health if costs are determined by costs per treatment episode; the number of episodes in each of the years since 2012 by medical detoxification unit, community based residential detoxification beds and adolescent community based residential detoxification beds in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34694/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Protected Disclosures**

785. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if other Departments have been notified of the receipt of protected disclosures submitted to the National Maternity Hospital; the number of protected disclosures submitted to the hospital of which he has been notified; if he has been notified of protected disclosures submitted to other maternity hospitals here; and if he has been notified of protected disclosures that have referred to the reduction of genetic expertise in foetal healthcare at the hospital. [34695/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Any protected disclosures submitted to the National Maternity Hospital or any other maternity hospital, or notified to any Department, are a matter for that organisation.

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires each public body to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). Information regarding the number of any protected disclosures received by the National Maternity Hospital can be accessed through the hospital's website - <http://www.nmh.ie/home/freedom-of-information.13646.html>.

### **Hospital Services**

786. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been refused access to genetic testing that was recommended by their treating physician. [34696/19]

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

### **Healthcare Infrastructure Provision**

787. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the status of the construction of the national forensic mental health service facility in Portrane, County Dublin; the completion date for same; if the project will be delivered on time and within budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34709/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Mental Health Services**

788. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the actions taken during 2018 to improve outcomes for persons with comorbid severe mental illness and substance misuse problems. [34710/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Mental Health Services**

789. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health the status of developing a no wrong door policy to address dual diagnosis in mental health; and the funding provided in future for services to adapt. [34711/19]

**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.

### **Diabetes Strategy**

790. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make flash glucose monitoring technology available for persons with type 1 diabetes regardless of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34717/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Drugs Payment Scheme**

791. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for a drugs payment card by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34718/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

792. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [34724/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

## HSE Agency Staff Expenditure

793. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff in the health service to date in 2019 and for the same period in 2018, by occupation, hospital and community healthcare organisation in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34729/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

## Hospital Appointments Status

794. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if St. James's Hospital, Dublin will review the case of a person (details supplied) to determine if an earlier appointment than 14 October 2019 can be arranged; and if they will be considered for cancellations that might arise. [34731/19]

**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.

## Treatment Abroad Scheme

795. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 181 of 15 May 2019, if a referral under the treatment abroad scheme will be expedited and approved for a person (details supplied). [34732/19]

**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.

## Departmental Correspondence

796. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if a copy of all correspondence will be provided between his Department and a person (details supplied). [34734/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the Deputy's recent request under Freedom of Information legislation for these records, I understand that records up to the date of 25 July were issued to the Deputy on 29 August last.

I can advise the Deputy that my Department is arranging for the retrieval and collation of any additional records which may have been created since that date. This will necessarily involve a process of review, having regard to the Department's other legal obligations including in respect of data protection.

### **HSE Waiting Lists**

797. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if there are major issues with referrals to ear, nose and throat, ENT, care for children (details supplied). [34739/19]

**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.

### **Dental Services Data**

798. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the number of appointments under the school dental service in Cork city in each of the past 15 years by child. [34741/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Dental Services Data**

799. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Health the average age at which children had their first appointment under the school dental service in each of the past 15 years. [34742/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

800. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is still waiting for an operation in view of the fact their condition was diagnosed over three years ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34747/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

801. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of women waiting for colposcopy appointments by hospital on 19 July 2019, in tabular form. [34758/19]

832. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times in each colposcopy clinic in each month since January 2018; and if the waiting times committed to for CIN 1 and CIN 3 women are being kept to in each month since January 2018, in tabular form. [34919/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 801 and 832 together.

CervicalCheck has established a network of quality assured colposcopy clinics for women requiring further investigation following a smear test. A woman can be referred to one of 15 colposcopy clinics located nationwide.

The HSE has advised that time taken in a clinical setting is considerably longer to facilitate answering queries and putting women at ease. The HSE advises that extra clinical sessions have been added to reduce waiting lists, and extra efforts are being made when appointments are cancelled to fill the vacant slot to further reduce waiting lists, and to ensure the increased referrals are categorised promptly. Notwithstanding these efforts, clinics have been experiencing service pressures, and my Department and the HSE have been engaging closely in relation to resources to alleviate pressures.

In relation to the specific data requested, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

802. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health if a vitamin B12 injection supplied by a general practitioner is covered under the full medical card; if the patient is charged for this service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34760/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with ‘all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of

a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.” There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for medical services provided under the contract.

It is a matter for the treating GP to determine in the case of each individual patient what is proper and necessary care. In circumstances where a GP, in the exercise of his/her clinical judgement, determines that a particular treatment or service requested by a patient is not clinically necessary, but the patient still wishes to receive same, it is at the GP’s discretion whether he/she imposes a charge for providing the service/treatment in question.

Consultation fees charged by GPs outside the terms of the GMS contracts are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and their patients. My Department has no role in relation to such fees.

In line with the criteria under Section 3 of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, only products that are generally prescribed by a medical practitioner are on the HSE reimbursement list. Vitamins and minerals do not generally need a prescription. However, there is a limited range of products that were historically available on the GMS reimbursement list. Injectable Vitamin B 12 is one such product on the reimbursement list and, subject to the statutory prescription charge, is available to medical card holders without charge.

### **Hospital Investigations**

803. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he and his officials have considered requesting HIQA to review the circumstances in relation to a recent termination (details supplied) in Holles Street Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34765/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the House will be aware, a termination took place at the National Maternity Hospital in March of this year on the grounds that a condition incompatible with life was present. It has subsequently emerged that the circumstances surrounding the decision to terminate may require review.

I would firstly like to stress the need to respect the privacy of the family at the centre of this case. My overriding concern as Minister for Health is for the couple involved and ensuring their questions are appropriately answered.

Section 11 of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 sets out the law on access to termination of pregnancy in cases where there is a condition present affecting the foetus that is likely to lead to the death of the foetus before or within 28 days of birth.

Section 9 of the Health Act 2007 sets out that the Minister for Health may require the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to undertake an investigation into HSE services if they have reasonable grounds to believe that there is a risk to the health or welfare of a person receiving those services, and the risk is the result of any act, failure to act or negligence on the part of the HSE or a service provider.

There is full agreement between the Department, the National Maternity Hospital and the family that an independent and external review into this case is required. I have been advised that the National Maternity Hospital is making arrangements to organise such a review of this case. I have also recently met with the family to hear directly of their concerns.

It is of vital importance that all parties are confident in both the independence of the review panel and its capacity to provide the requisite expertise to fulfil its remit, in line with the HIQA/

Mental Health Commission's National Standards for the Conduct of Reviews of Patient Safety Incidents and the HSE Incident Management Framework. It is imperative that the review is now progressed so as to provide answers to the family and identify any learnings that may be applicable for the maternity services as a whole. I will also examine the findings of the review closely in order to consider any further actions that may be necessary.

### **Abortion Services Provision**

804. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the assurances he has received from Holles Street Hospital regarding the ongoing safety of termination services at the hospital; if this included practices at a clinic (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34766/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** With regard to the ongoing safety of termination of pregnancy services at the National Maternity Hospital, my Department sought, and received, assurances from the Hospital that the termination of pregnancy legislation is being correctly implemented by the Hospital and that appropriate policies, practices and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with that legislation. I met recently with the Master and these assurances were offered to me in person.

As the clinic in question is a private one, it falls outside the remit of the HSE and my Department. The Deputy may however wish to note that a Patient Safety Licensing Bill, which underwent pre-legislative scrutiny in 2018, will introduce a licensing requirement for all public and private hospitals, as well as clinics and facilities engaged in certain designated high-risk activities.

### **Health Services Appeals**

805. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34771/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

806. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34773/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for sched-

uled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

807. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting for spinal fusion operations; the steps he will take to ensure there is more access to operating theatres for such children including clearer pathways to facilities in Cappagh Hospital for adolescents in need of spinal fusion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34776/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I sincerely regret that children can experience a long waiting time for treatment for scoliosis, and I am conscious of the burden that this places on them and their families.

I have met regularly with the Senior Management of the HSE and the CEO of Children’s Health Ireland to discuss their short term and long-term plans to provide a better service for patients and their families.

Children’s Health Ireland (CHI) published the update on the Scoliosis 10-Point Action Plan on 12th July. This marks the second update to the plan, following an interim progress report which issued in October 2018. The plan, which was co-designed by clinicians and managers in paediatric orthopaedics and with the three scoliosis advocacy groups - Scoliosis Advocacy Network Group (SANG), Scoliosis Support and Awareness Ireland, and Scoliosis Ireland - sets out how additional funding provided by the HSE is invested to support children and young people with scoliosis. The July publication provides an update on the progress made to date up against the 10 action points and demonstrates the completion of four of the actions with a commitment to implementing the remaining six actions this year.

CHI advise that their priority for 2019 is to ensure that capacity is available to schedule patients that require surgery based on clinical priority. The addition of a new orthopaedic consultant post and the extension of theatre opening hours will continue to support the management of general orthopaedic waiting lists and enable consultants to better manage both spinal referral patients, and general orthopaedics, in order to reduce the number of patients waiting for a surgical procedure.

CHI further advise that as part of the Action Plan, additional Multidisciplinary Team staff appointments have been made across CHI increasing support to the service. In this regard, 88% of HSE funded posts, as per the 2019 National Service Plan, are in place, with the remaining posts at various stages of the recruitment process.

In terms of activity, across CHI a total of 418 scoliosis-related surgical procedures were performed in 2018, compared with 371 in 2017 and 224 in 2016. To date this year, CHI have carried out 251 such procedures.

In relation to the particular query raised regarding the number of children waiting for spinal fusion operations, and pathways to facilities in Cappagh Hospital for adolescents in need of spinal fusion operations, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Vaccination Programme Data**

808. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the breakdown of vaccine rates in County Wicklow by town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34781/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive collects and maintains vaccination records, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

809. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if an outpatient appointment for a person (details supplied) who has been on the waiting list for two years will be expedited. [34782/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Medical Card Applications**

810. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34784/19]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Provision**

811. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when speech therapy will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34785/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Applications**

812. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will be provided in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34786/19]

**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.

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

813. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding cancer drugs (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34803/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Health insurance providers operate in a competitive market and are free to design products with a range of differing benefits, providing they comply with minimum benefit regulations. As Minister for Health I have no role in the commercial decisions of any health insurer and am therefore not in a position to determine or direct insurers to provide cover for any particular procedure or service, or indeed how that cover is provided, other than those outlined in the regulations.

Access to the drug the Deputy names is not provided for under minimum benefit regulations. Any insurer is free to make a commercial decision to provide for a differing level of service so long as it does not go below what is provided for in minimum benefit regulations.

It should be noted that in the public setting, the HSE at all times ensures that the systems that it has in place are designed to provide equitable access to all medicines across all therapeutic areas, cancer and non-cancer, from the resources provided to it.

### **Mental Health Services**

814. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy to house patients who have mental health problems in communities (details supplied). [34805/19]

**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.

### **Thalidomide Victims Compensation**

815. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the issues facing persons with thalidomide-related injuries, both those acknowledged by the State and those who remained unacknowledged, in view of the fact they have sustained significant adverse injury consequences. [34808/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Following an Irish Government Decision in January 1975, the Government granted an ex-gratia sum equivalent to 4 times the German lump-sum and an ex-gratia monthly allowance for life equal to the German monthly allowance, to each of the Irish children found to have thalidomide related injuries. There are currently 29 Irish people in receipt of ex-gratia monthly payments from my Department and all are now in their late 50s.

The German monthly payments are made by the Contergan Foundation, which is established under German legislation. From 01 August 2013, the Foundation substantially increased its monthly payments to thalidomide survivors, including Irish survivors. Both the German payments and the Irish ex-gratia payments made to the survivors are exempt from tax, including DIRT and are not reckonable as means for the purpose of Social Welfare payments. The rate of payment is related to the survivors' level of thalidomide related injury.

In addition to the initial lump sum and the monthly payments for life, the supports provided to each Irish survivor include a medical card on an administrative basis regardless of means, provision of appliances, artificial limbs, equipment, housing adaptations, and access to a full range of primary care, hospital and personal social services. There is a designated senior manager in the Health Service Executive to act as a liaison with regard to the ongoing health and personal social service needs of Irish survivors.

The Contergan Foundation has confirmed that since 2013, it is accepting applications from individuals for compensation for thalidomide related injury. It is open to any Irish person to apply to the Foundation for assessment of their disability as being attributable to thalidomide. Any Irish person who establishes that their injury is attributable to thalidomide, will be offered appropriate supports by the Irish Government commensurate with those currently provided to Irish thalidomide survivors, outlined above.

Work is underway in the Department to bring forward Heads of a Bill to provide on a statutory basis for health and personal social services for the Irish survivors of thalidomide.

### **Hospitals Capital Programme**

816. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of the 80-bed community hospital in Ballyshannon, County Donegal; if the estimated €25 million has been put in place to carry out the work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34813/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021, outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period. The Capital Plan provides for €220m capital funding to the Community Nursing Unit programme over the period 2019 to 2021 and also sets out the current status of all projects within the programme, including new CNU in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal.

The Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects and has advised that the tender for the new South Donegal CNU in Ballyshannon was issued to contractors in April 2019. Subject to approval of the tender, it is intended to proceed to construction later this year with completion due in early 2021.

The delivery of capital projects is a dynamic process and is subject to the successful completion of the various approval stages, in line with the Public Spending Code, which can impact on the timeline for delivery.

## **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

817. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the FreeStyle Libre glucose monitor will be added to both the medical card cover and long-term illness card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34818/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Home Help Service Provision**

818. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of home help for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34819/19]

**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.

## **Emergency Departments Data**

819. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Health the year-on-year change in the number of patients attending the emergency department of Tallaght University Hospital in comparison to the year-on-year change in the number of patients on trolleys; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34830/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** This is a very busy period for our health services, with many hospitals reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. For the first seven months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) increased by 3.3%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 2.3% compared to the same period last year.

In the first six months of 2019, our health services managed better and the numbers of patients waiting on trolleys nationally were 4.7% lower than for the same period last year despite the significant increase in demand.

Tallaght University Hospital was identified as one of the nine focus sites requiring additional investment and support during the winter period 2018/2019. This included additional home support packages, transitional care beds, and bed capacity.

An independent expert review aimed at identifying the specific factors that contributed to performance over the winter period is now under way. The group will carry out a comparative analysis of unscheduled care performance across the nine hospital sites and the relevant Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) that were the subject of specific focused support through Winter 2018/2019. This will include TUH and CHO 7. My Department and the HSE will receive the report of the independent review group and its recommendations in due course.

In relation to the comparison between the year on year change in attendances and the number of patients on trolleys at Tallaght University Hospital, I have asked the HSE to provide a response to the Deputy directly.

## Primary Care Centres Provision

820. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the progress in acquiring a site for the Knocklyon and Rathfarnham primary healthcare centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34831/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

## Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

821. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health the funding to be allocated to drugs and alcohol local task forces in Dublin 24; if additional funding is being allocated in 2019; if so, the amount of additional funding; the timeline and criteria for its allocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34833/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Drug and alcohol task forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of substance misuse in their areas, and in supporting community responses, as part of a coordinated approach involving all sectors at local and regional levels.

Task forces were allocated in the region of €28 million in funding for 2019. Tallaght Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force, which is responsible for the Dublin 24 area, was allocated €1,234,952 of this funding.

On 06 March 2019, I announced additional funding of €1 million for the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy; *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*. This funding, which will be provided on a recurring, multi-annual basis, will address the priorities set down in the Strategy including early harm reduction responses, emerging trends in substance misuse, and improving services for at-risk groups.

Following consideration of the outcome of a consultation process with task forces and the HSE, I approved a three-strand funding model for this additional funding. Task forces were notified of this funding model on 18 May.

Strand 1 involves the allocation of €20,000 to each task force in 2019, which includes €10,000 provided on a recurring annual basis. This additional funding can be used to enhance local drug and alcohol services. The funding has been transferred to the HSE for distribution to the task forces.

Strand 2 provides funding for 12 strategic health initiatives on a regional basis, for a total of €190,000 over three years.

Strand 3 will support a strategic initiative on drug-related violence and intimidation.

The selection of the strategic initiatives will be based on a number of guiding principles, with a particular focus on actions which address emerging trends and patterns of drug use and improve drug and alcohol services for people with complex needs. An assessment committee is currently reviewing the applications and the results of this process will be announced shortly.

The additional funding reflects the Government’s commitment to implementing an integrated public health response to substance misuse. I look forward to working in partnership

with task forces, CHOs and other organisations to achieve the maximum impact from these resources.

### Medical Card Eligibility

822. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the assistance which can be provided to a person (details supplied) in need of a medical card due to impending surgery for pancreatic cancer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34837/19]

**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.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

823. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Ministers of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34848/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the following table:

Adviser Name	Minister / Minister of State	Salary Scale(1 September, 2019)
Sarah Bardon	Simon Harris, T.D.	€87,325 - €107,399 (PPC)
Joanne Lonergan	Simon Harris, T.D.	€83,090 - €102,159
Gerard Maguire	Finian McGrath, T.D.	€83,090 - €102,159
Damien O'Farrell	Finian McGrath, T.D.	€87,325 - €107,399 (PPC)
Nicola Clavin	Catherine Byrne, T.D.	€67,659 - €83,740 (PPC)
Darren Hourihane	Jim Daly, T.D.	€67,659 - €83,740 (PPC)

In accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform instructions to Personnel Officers on Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, the salary scale applicable to my advisers and those of Minister of State Finian McGrath, T.D. (who sits at Cabinet), is the standard scale for the grade of Principal Officer in the Civil Service as of 1 September 2019. The salary scale applicable to the special advisers appointed to Ministers of State Jim Daly, T.D. and Catherine Byrne, T.D. is the standard scale for the grade of Assistant Principal Officer in the Civil Service as of 1 September 2019.

### Pharmacy Services

824. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the official HSE policy with regard to the filling of blister packs by pharmacists; if this process will incur a charge for patients; if the costs involved can be waived for medical card patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34854/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## Medicinal Products

825. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when medicine will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34872/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## Home Care Packages Data

826. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of home care provision being provided to persons under 65 years of age, aged 65 and over and 75 years of age and over; the smallest and largest number, respectively; the most commonly provided number of hours of service for persons aged 65 years of age and over in CHO 8; the number of persons in acute hospitals whose discharge is delayed while they await provision of a home care package; when the pilot for the single assessment tool information system commenced; and when it will be fully operational. [34875/19]

**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 Recruitment

827. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason there is no clinical psychologist at a centre (details supplied); when it is expected one will be hired; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34886/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

## Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

828. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when a device (details supplied) will be made available for free to type 1 diabetics; the qualifying criteria for same; if patients on the earlier 640g model will be entitled to upgrade to the new 670g model automatically for free; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34893/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the

community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Transport Support Scheme**

829. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in replacing the mobility allowance and the motorised transport scheme with new schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34904/19]

1169. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the progress regarding the introduction of a scheme to replace the previous mobility transport allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36049/19]

1335. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of the transport support scheme. [36711/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 829, 1169 and 1335 together.

The Deputies may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Health, and I brought a Memorandum to Government on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the Cabinet Agenda at that time. We 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 Support Payment Scheme.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

The Deputies may wish to note that the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., recently announced CLÁR funding of €890,632 to 20 voluntary community organisations. This funding will support the purchase and/or fit out of vehicles to provide transport for people in rural areas with mobility issues. It will support voluntary organisations that provide:

- Transport for people with significant mobility issues, including those requiring specialised wheelchair accessible vehicles, to day-care or other medical, therapeutic or respite services; or
- Transport to/from designated cancer treatment hospitals/centres under the National Cancer Care Programme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

830. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a medical appointment. [34915/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Overcrowding**

831. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding overcrowding in hospitals, particularly in University Hospital Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34918/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 832 answered with Question No. 801.*

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

833. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34920/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Respite Care Services**

834. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a matter will be addressed with regard to travel to and from respite care (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34938/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

835. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties regarding accessing the drug Sativex here even when prescribed by a consultant neurologist; the status and prescription protocol in relation to the drug; the changes planned in the prescription of and access to the drug in the aftermath of the introduction of the medicinal cannabis access programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34939/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

On 11 July 2014, the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1988 were amended to allow for certain cannabis-based medicinal products to be used in Ireland. The Health Products Regulatory Authority subsequently granted a marketing authorisation for the cannabis-based medicinal product Sativex to be marketed in this State. It was then open to the holder of that authorisation to make the product available for prescribing in Ireland.

A rapid review by the NCPE was completed on 3 April 2018 for Sativex and a full pharmacoeconomic assessment was recommended to assess the clinical and cost effectiveness of Sativex compared with the current standard of care.

A full pharmacoeconomic assessment was commissioned by the HSE on 20 April 2018. The NCPE had a pre submission consultation with the applicant in September 2018. However, the NCPE was unable to continue with the HTA assessment at this time due to the dossier not being submitted by the applicant. The NCPE received the required submission from the manufacturer on 12 August 2019.

I am advised that this assessment is currently in process.

### **Hospital Services**

836. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34946/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan includes the provision of an MRI at Regional Hospital Mullingar along with the development of a new ambulance base.

The Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects and has advised that the provision of a new MRI at Regional Hospital Mullingar is included in the proposed new extension of the radiology department at the hospital. A design team has been engaged and planning permission has been granted for the proposed extension to the radiology department. The development requires the decant of the existing ambulance base on the hospital site and a planning application for a new ambulance base in Mullingar has been submitted recently.

It is important to note that all proposals must progress through a number of approval stages, in line with the Public Spending Code, which can impact on the timeline for delivery.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

837. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is still waiting for heart surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34948/19]

**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.

### **Disability Services Provision**

838. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for residential care by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34949/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Dental Services Provision**

839. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a child (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34950/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Healthcare Infrastructure Provision**

840. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 244 of 3 July 2019, if he will provide the evidence of compliance for the site requested (details supplied); and if he cannot provide evidence, if he will investigate the issue and address same. [34956/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am having the matter investigated at present and have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to you in relation to this matter, as the HSE is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

841. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home help hours for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34958/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

842. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive hearing aids; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34959/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### Medical Card Applications

843. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will address issues (details supplied) regarding the medical card application process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34961/19]

**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.

### Home Help Service

844. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason arrangements with respect to the provision of home help support for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal have been changed with regard to service times, hours of care and so on; if his attention has been drawn to the impact these changes are having on the welfare of the person in addition to the ability of the service provider to ensure continuity of care for the person; if the provider will reconsider these changes with the view to reinstating the previous timetable and service arrangements formally allocated to the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34962/19]

**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.

### Nursing Homes Support Scheme

845. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding charges in a nursing home for a person (details supplied). [34963/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as *A Fair Deal*, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

The NHSS covers the cost of the standard components of long-term residential care which are:

- Nursing and personal care appropriate to the level of care needs of the person;
  - Bed and board;
  - Basic aids and appliances necessary to assist a person with the activities of daily living;
- and
- Laundry service.

A person's eligibility for other schemes, such as the medical card scheme or the drugs payment scheme, is unaffected by participation in the NHSS or residence in a nursing home. Al-

though the NHSS covers core living expenses, residents can still incur some costs in a nursing home, such as social programmes, newspapers, or hairdressing just as they would if they were being cared for at home. Transport to and from medical appointments is not covered under the Scheme.

In recognition of this, anyone in receipt of financial support under the NHSS retains at least 20% of their income. The minimum amount that is retained is the equivalent of 20% of the State Pension (Non-Contributory). An operator should not seek payment from residents for items which are covered by the NHSS, the medical card or any other existing scheme.

Part 7 of the Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013 stipulates that the registered provider of the nursing home must agree a contract in writing with each resident on their admission to the nursing home. This contract must include details of the services to be provided to that resident and the fees to be charged. Residents should never be charged fees which are not set out in the contract. The Department of Health and the HSE are not a party to such contracts which are concluded between each resident and their nursing home.

Registered providers of nursing home care are obliged to provide an accessible and effective complaints procedure. Concerns about additional charges should in the first instance be taken up with the nursing home provider. The Office of the Ombudsman can examine complaints about the actions of a range of public bodies and complaints relating to the administrative actions of private nursing homes. The Office of the Ombudsman normally only deals with a complaint once the individual has already gone through the complaints procedure of the private nursing home concerned.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is an independent statutory body with a dual mandate to enforce competition and consumer protection law in Ireland. CCPC's mission is to promote competition and enhance consumer welfare. The CCPC has just published consumer protection guidelines for contracts of care in long-term residential care services for older people. The guidelines set out the obligations and responsibilities that providers must adhere to under consumer protection law and are aimed at providing greater transparency, clarity and certainty for consumers.

The Guidelines also set out requirements in relation to transparency regarding additional charges and the variation of charges.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

846. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) who has been waiting for over four years for an appointment with an orthopaedic consultant at Naas General Hospital will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34967/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed

national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

847. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal had appointments for a procedure in Galway University Hospital cancelled on four occasions; when a new date for the procedure will be offered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34974/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals. I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled, particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

While every effort is made to avoid cancellation or postponement of planned procedures, the HSE advise that planned procedures and operations can be postponed or cancelled for a variety of reasons, including capacity issues due to increased scheduled and unscheduled care demand, medical reasons, and patient choice.

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

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

848. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a neck and head support will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34981/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

849. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34982/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has

been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

850. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the productivity levels of cytoscanners working on behalf of CervicalCheck before and after the judgment in a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34991/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters, and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

851. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of cytoscanners working on behalf of CervicalCheck before and after the judgment in a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34992/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters, and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

852. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health the reason immunotherapy treatment is not being provided to cancer patients in public hospitals despite being recommended by oncologists; and if he will review this decision. [34995/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** A standard assessment process is in place in the HSE for the approval of the reimbursement of new drugs and new indications for existing drugs. This is underpinned by the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines (2016) and the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. This process is intended to arrive at decisions on the funding of drugs that are clinically appropriate, fair, consistent and sustainable.

New drugs are licensed for use centrally by the European Medicines Agency. Once a drug is licensed the company may apply for HSE reimbursement using the standard process. All cancer drugs approved for reimbursement since 2012 have gone through this process.

The following immunotherapy agents have been approved for reimbursement by the HSE:

- Atezolizumab;
- Avelumab;
- Ipilimumab;

- Nivolumab;
- Nivolumab Ipilimumab; and,
- Pembrolizumab.

The complete list of cancer drugs, including immunotherapies, approved for reimbursement can be found on the HSE website at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/profinfo/medonc/cdmp/new.html>.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

853. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding respite hours for a person (details supplied). [35001/19]

**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.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

854. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for cross-Border funding by a person (details supplied). [35002/19]

**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 Appointments Status**

855. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment. [35012/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Administration**

856. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if he will address concerns (details supplied); if there is a concerted effort by the HSE to keep down referral numbers to consultants at smaller hospitals by issuing such directives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35014/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services**

857. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if he will address concerns regarding neurology day services and consultant clinics in counties Cavan and Monaghan; the location and days they take place; his plans to reduce such services in the counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35015/19]

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

### **Hospital Beds Data**

858. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the number of stepdown beds available at a hospital (details supplied); if the additional six promised for the unit in 2018 have opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35016/19]

**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.

### **National Dementia Strategy Implementation**

859. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health his plans to expand the dementia adviser service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35017/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Dementia Strategy requires the HSE to consider the provision of dementia advisers, based on the experience of demonstrator sites. In this context, an evaluation of the Dementia Adviser Service, which was published in September 2018, recommends the continuation and expansion of the service to ensure equity of access countrywide.

The Dementia Adviser Service, established by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland in 2014, covers 12 counties: Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Limerick, parts of Clare, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Dublin.

Seven ASI Dementia Adviser posts have been funded by the HSE since 2016, with €400,000 allocated by the HSE in each of the last 3 years towards the cost of the service. A commitment has been made to continue this funding in 2019 and in future years.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2020 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE, including any plans to expand the Dementia Adviser service, will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

### **HSE Properties**

860. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if the sale of the old St. Felim's hospital building and grounds in Cavan town has been agreed or completed; his views on the decision of the HSE to proceed with the sale despite requests from community and elected representatives for meetings to express their concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35019/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive (HSE) is re-

sponsible for the management of the public healthcare property estate. Details of properties which have been vacated or are due to be vacated are captured as part of the annual service planning strategy. These properties are reviewed for future use and suitability. They may be refurbished immediately, retained for future use or sold.

The HSE operates a protocol for the disposal of surplus property assets, in accordance with Government Policy for Disposal of Surplus Property . This protocol sets out three options:

- 1 Transfer to another public body or State agency;
- 2 Open market sale, subject to favourable market conditions;
- 3 Other uses such as community / voluntary use will be considered only if points 1 and 2 above do not materialise.

Any proposals for the disposal of surplus property assets must be considered in the context of the capital funding available to Health and the Government's Reform Plan relating to the State's property asset use and management. In this context, the HSE is required to obtain value for money when disposing of surplus property assets. These proceeds will be re-invested in delivering much needed health care infrastructure.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to the current status of this property.

### **Home Help Service**

861. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the concerns raised by a person (details supplied) regarding the provision of carer's and home help will be reviewed; if the shut down of home help in counties Cavan and Monaghan is connected to the overspend at the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35020/19]

**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**

862. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of the 20-week anomaly scan in Cavan General Hospital; if it is open to all women; the days on which it operates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35021/19]

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

### **Emergency Departments**

863. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of works planned for the refurbishment of the emergency department at Cavan General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35022/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The establishment of Hospital Groups has

enabled a better configuration of hospital services with benefits relating to safety, quality, access, cost and sustainable medical staffing. The structure ensures that Hospitals working together in a Group will be able to support each other, providing a stronger role for smaller hospitals in delivering less complex care, and ensuring that those who require emergency or complex planned care are managed safely in larger hospitals.

The Smaller Hospitals Framework focuses in particular on the future role of smaller hospitals and outlines the wide range of services that can be provided within these smaller hospitals. The Department of Health is committed to securing and further developing the role of our smaller hospitals, including Model 3 hospitals such as Cavan Hospital, with the expansion of services delivered in these hospitals, especially in services such as day surgery; ambulatory care; medical services and diagnostics.

Future investment in Cavan General Hospital will be considered within the overall acute hospital infrastructure programme, the prioritised needs of the hospital groups and within the overall capital envelope available to the health service.

Project Ireland 2040 provides €10.9 billion for Health capital developments across the country, including both national programmes and individual projects, across acute, primary and social care. Health capital projects and programmes currently underway will continue. As to be expected with such a plan, many proposals are at an early stage and will require to progress through appraisal, planning design and tender before a firm timeline or funding required can be established.

The planning and management of future health expenditure is considered as part of the annual estimates and budgetary process which seeks to balance available funding across all service areas to achieve the best possible outcomes for the greatest number of service users and prioritise areas of greatest need.

As this is an operational matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

### **Emergency Departments Data**

864. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the number of attendances at the emergency department in Cavan General Hospital in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35023/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** This is a very busy period for our health services, with many hospitals reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. For the first seven months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital EDs increased by 3.3%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 2.3% compared to the same period last year.

In the first six months of 2019, our health services managed better and the numbers of patients waiting on trolleys nationally were 4.7% lower than for the same period last year despite the significant increase in demand.

However, TrolleyGAR figures show 8,671 people were counted on trolleys in the month of July, which was 21.8% higher than last month (7,120) and 42.5% higher than July 2018 (6,086). Trolley numbers for the year to date from January to July were 62,413, compared to 62,468 for the same period last year.

With regard to the specific question the Deputy has asked, I have asked the HSE to respond

directly with the information requested.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

865. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if the terms of fair deal will be extended retrospectively in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35025/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The Department of Health agree a set level of funding for the NHSS with the HSE each year having regard for the demand for the Scheme and the overall fiscal position. The 2019 budget for the NHSS is €985.8m. State support can only be paid once a financial assessment has been completed and authorised.

The National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the NHSS provide that State Support and the Nursing Home Loan should be paid in respect of qualified applicants from either the date that the application is approved, or date of admission to the nursing home whichever is the later. Therefore in the case where an applicant is already residing in a nursing home when they apply for State support through NHSS this support will be paid from the date that the application is approved and cannot be backdated to the admission date. This is an important governance and control mechanism for the operation of the Scheme.

This provision enables the HSE to manage the budget and commitments under the Scheme over a 12 month period, ensuring that long-term residential care remains accessible and affordable for those that require it.

### **HSE Reports**

866. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will address matters regarding a Comptroller and Auditor General report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35026/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The gross cost of acute hospital care as set out in the HSE Annual Report and Financial Statements 2017 incorporates expenditure in relation to all hospital services including emergency departments, inpatient, day case, outpatient services and training programmes for doctors and nurses.

The private patient income reported in the annual financial statements only relates to income invoiced by statutory hospitals. Voluntary hospitals are funded on a net expenditure grant basis by the HSE. The voluntary hospitals only receive funding for expenditure after all income, including private patient income, is taken into account.

There are no private charges by any hospitals in relation to emergency department attendances or out-patient services. In 2017 per the HSE's published December 2017 Management Data Report there were 1.4m emergency presentations and 3.3m outpatient attendances in the acute hospital system.

The public/private patient split referenced in the C&AG ‘Report on the Accounts of the Public Service 2017’ refers to the 1.7 million inpatient and day case patients discharged from all acute hospitals (statutory and voluntary) in 2017 as reported in the Healthcare Pricing Office 2017 Annual Report. One million of these discharges related to day case patients and 0.6m related to in-patients. Varying costs are applicable in relation to these different patient categories as reflected in the rate levels applied under the Health (Amendment) Act 2013 as set out below.

Hospital Category	Single Occupancy Rate	Multi Occupancy Rate	Day Case
Hospital specified in the 5th schedule of the Act	€1,000	€813	€407
Hospital specified in the 6th schedule of the Act	€800	€659	€329

These private in-patient charges take account of all the services which a public hospital provides, for example, accommodation, nursing, diagnostics (such as X-rays, CT scans, MRI, etc.) and other overheads and maintenance costs.

The rates currently applied were set for the introduction of the legislation in 2014 and reflected the ‘fully absorbed’ economic cost.

### Medicinal Products Reimbursement

867. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Health his plans or the plans of the HSE to provide or reimburse ocrelizumab for primary progressive multiple sclerosis patients in view of the decision of the UK (details supplied) [35029/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### Infectious Diseases

868. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if the rules governing public health and exemptions from attendance at court in the case of infectious diseases apply to the family courts; if not, the rationale for same; if he will consider a revision (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35030/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** This relates to a matter that arose during a case in the Family Courts. While Section 30 of the Health Act 1947 does impose certain obligations on persons or probable sources of infection of infectious diseases, decisions regarding attendance at the Court is a matter for the Court to make.

Policy responsibility regarding Court Services is a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality.

## Hospital Appointments Status

869. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for an assessment in respect of a scoliosis procedure will be offered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35031/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

## Health Services

870. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE plans to include bowel cleansing services within the public health system for diverticulitis sufferers here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35041/19]

**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.

## Pension Provisions

871. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35044/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

## Hospital Staff Recruitment

872. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 123 of 16 May 2019, the status of services as outlined in the reply (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35055/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly as soon as possible.

## HSE Properties

873. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of the sale of a site (details supplied); if it can be retained in public ownership due to its historical significance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35056/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for the management of the public healthcare property estate. Details of properties which have been vacated or are due to be vacated are captured as part of the annual service planning strategy. These properties are reviewed for future use and suitability. They may be refurbished immediately, retained for future use or sold.

The HSE operates a protocol for the disposal of surplus property assets, in accordance with Government Policy for Disposal of Surplus Property . This protocol sets out three options:

1 Transfer to another public body or State agency;

2 Open market sale, subject to favourable market conditions;

3 Other uses such as community / voluntary use will be considered only if points 1 and 2 above do not materialise.

Any proposals for the disposal of surplus property assets must be considered in the context of the capital funding available to Health and the Government's Reform Plan relating to the State's property asset use and management. In this context, the HSE is required to obtain value for money when disposing of surplus property assets. These proceeds will be re-invested in delivering much needed health care infrastructure.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the current status of this property.

### **First Aid Training**

874. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding costs of first aid course certificates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35063/19]

876. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason the PHECC increased the cost of first aid certificates by up to €25. [35065/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 874 and 876 together.

The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is an independent statutory body with responsibility for professional regulation in the area of pre-hospital emergency care including the recognition of professional qualifications.

Accordingly, the Deputy's queries have been referred to PHECC for direct response.

### **Health Services**

875. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35064/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service

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matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 876 answered with Question No. 874.*

### **First-Aid Training**

877. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason first-aid trainers do not have proper representation on the PHECC council. [35066/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The composition of the PHECC Council is provided for under Section 5 of SI No.109 of 2000. While I acknowledge that the legislation does not provide for specific representation on the Council for first aid trainers, the Deputy may wish to note that under Section 5(1)(h), I may appoint three persons

with a special interest in pre-hospital emergency care.

While currently there are no vacancies on the PHECC Council, a number of vacancies will arise in 2020, some of which will be filled through a Public Appointment Service process. It will be open to first aid trainers to make an application for Council membership at that stage, and I would certainly welcome any such application. I expect the Public Appointment Service to commence early in 2020.

### **Maternity Services**

878. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by each maternity hospital in the past five years to date on infant feed formula, teats and bottles by hospital, amount and year; if hospitals are permitted to accept infant feed formula and related products without charge from suppliers for distribution to patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35071/19]

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

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

879. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a place in a home for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35073/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

880. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hearing aid application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35086/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

881. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of funding for a bus service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35095/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

882. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to raise the eligibility threshold for the over 70 medical card in view of increases in costs of living. [35096/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple. While there are no plans at present to revise the income thresholds for medical cards, it is vitally important that the medical card system is responsive and sensitive to people's needs.

In that regard my Department keeps medical card issues, including existing thresholds under constant review. The gross medical card income limits for the over 70's are reviewed annually in line with the Consumer Price Index. Any new policy measures regarding income thresholds for either medical cards or GP visit cards to be incorporated into the forthcoming Budget will be considered by Government as part of the 2020 Estimates process.

It is important to note that if a person's sole income is derived from a social welfare payment, even where this payment is in excess of the current income thresholds, the persons will be awarded a medical card. In addition, the Deputy may be aware, that from August 2015 all persons aged 70 or over qualify for a GP visit card, regardless of income.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Applications**

883. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a new wheelchair will

be provided for a child (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35100/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Ambulance Service Data**

884. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the HSE procurement framework for private ambulances that is being operated; when the framework was established; the period covered by the framework; when the framework expired; the value of payments under the framework in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; if these payments are in line with procurement rules in the HSE; the reason the current tendering for the framework for private ambulances has not progressed in view of the fact that the HSE is examining whether to continue or restart that process and its plans to pay for private ambulances outside of an approved procurement process; when he expects a new procurement framework for private ambulances to be in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35110/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is an operational matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Agency Staff Expenditure**

885. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency staff in each HSE hospital for January to July 2019, by month and hospital in tabular form. [35111/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Dental Services**

886. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the refurbishment and reopening of the HSE children's dental service (details supplied) in Celbridge, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35117/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Assisted Human Reproduction**

887. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of funding for IVF (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35121/19]

912. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health the status of the IVF funding set aside (details supplied). [35210/19]

1175. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the financial assistance established for families that need to undergo IVF treatment as in the case of a person (details supplied). [36067/19]

1208. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if and when funding will be provided for patients who wish to undergo a course of IVF treatment here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36285/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 887, 912, 1175 and 1208 together.

In October 2017, the Government approved the drafting of a bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research, based on the published General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health published the report of its review of the General Scheme on 11 July 2019, as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January 2018. The Committee makes 11 main recommendations, which include proposals both related to broad policy objectives and more technical amendments. Given the comprehensive scope of the legislation and the ethical, legal and social issues which arise from AHR practices, it is anticipated that certain areas of the General Scheme will require further consideration and refinement during the ongoing process of drafting the bill. The Joint Committee's Report and its recommendations will be considered as part of this process.

Interlinked with the legislation, officials in my Department, in conjunction with the HSE, are developing a model of care for infertility and an associated public fund for AHR. This work includes developing proposals on the allocation of the €1 million fund for use in relation to AHR which was announced in December 2018.

Accordingly, options in relation to the parameters of any potential public funding model, including what eligibility criteria may be included, are still under consideration, and an announcement will be forthcoming once the relevant decisions have been finalised.

It should be noted that while AHR treatment is not currently funded by the Irish Public Health Service, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Arrangements administered by the HSE. Medicines covered by the High Tech Arrangements must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and authorised for supply to the client's nominated community pharmacy by the High Tech Hub managed by the Primary Care Reimbursement Service. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the client's eligibility, i.e., Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme.

I understand that the impact on the total cost of AHR treatment for individuals who avail of these schemes is not insignificant.

In addition, there is other support available in that patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme.

Overall, the development of a model of care for infertility will help to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

888. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive respite care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35125/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as

possible.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

889. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when treatment for cataracts will be offered to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35130/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Medical Card Applications**

890. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will be considered in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35131/19]

**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.

### **Medical Card Drugs Availability**

891. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include vitamin injections as part of medical card cover when the injections are prescribed by a doctor for medical reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35133/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Blind Welfare Allowance Applications**

892. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when the blind welfare allowance will be fully restored to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35134/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Funding**

893. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding his Department has allocated to services (details supplied) in counties Longford and Westmeath since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35142/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly, as soon as possible.

### **Commencement of Legislation**

894. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health when Part 8 of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35154/19]

914. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the four year delay in commencing Part 8 of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015; the planned date of commencement for the Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35301/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 894 and 914 together.

Part 8 of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives (AHDs). An AHD is a statement made by a person with capacity setting out his or her will and preferences regarding treatment decisions that may arise in the future when he or she no longer has capacity. On 17 October 2016 the Minister for Health established a multidisciplinary working group to prepare a detailed series of recommendations for the Director of the Decision Support Service (DSS), in relation to the code of practice under section 91(2) of the Act. In anticipation of the completion of that process, the Minister for Health commenced the remainder of section 91 on 17 December 2018 [S.I. No. 527 of 2018]. This enabled the Director of the DSS to progress the preparation of the code of practice on the AHD provisions, based on the working group's recommendations, and in accordance with the specific process outlined in the Act. The multidisciplinary working group submitted its recommendations on the code of practice to the Director of the DSS on 21 December 2018.

The Director of the DSS will go out to consultation of the recommendations and once completed the final code of practice can be published by the Director with the Minister's consent. It is not possible to give a timeline for implementation of Part 8 of the Act at this time but work is ongoing to address the various requirements of this Part before commencement.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

895. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an assessment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35160/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

896. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if the respite needs of a person (details supplied) will be addressed. [35164/19]

**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.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

897. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the ages of women having their first BreastCheck appointment; the number of women offered subsequent appointments at two year intervals; the geographical participation levels in BreastCheck; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35166/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** BreastCheck, the National Breast Screening Programme, currently offers routine breast screening to women aged 50 to 67 every two years. The programme is being extended on a phases basis to all eligible women aged 50 to 69 and this extension will be completed by the end of 2021.

The following table (from the latest programme report for BreastCheck 2016-2017), shows the number of women screened by age group for those attending BreastCheck for the first time in 2016.

Screening Age	Number of Women
50-54	22,075
55-59	1,238
60-64	616
65+	104

The programme report also indicates that over 50% of women were re-invited for subsequent screening within 24 months of invitation at previous round, while 80% were re-invited within 27 months.

As indicated in the following table, uptake rates in all counties surpassed the standard of 70% during the period of the report.

Uptake Rate	Counties
70% to &lt;80%	Carlow, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Mayo, Meath, Offaly, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath
80% to &lt;90%	Cavan, Louth, Monaghan, Roscommon, Wexford, Wicklow
90%+	Kilkenny

### Meals-on-Wheels Services

898. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the funding available for projects (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35171/19]

**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.

### Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments

899. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the decision to cut the rehabilitative training allowance will be reviewed with a view to fully reinstating same; the reason for the decision to cut the allowance; if his attention has been drawn to a national petition (details supplied) regarding the allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35179/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Applications**

900. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of footwear for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35185/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Consultant Contracts**

901. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health his plans to restore pay equality for hospital consultants appointed post-2012; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that health authorities are unable to secure sufficient numbers of senior staff and that many posts are not filled on a permanent basis as a result of this issue; if a process will be put in place to deal with the problem in consultation with an organisation (details supplied) and other relevant bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35187/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Resolving this issue will require engagement with the IMO reflecting the recommendation of the Public Service Pay Commission that the parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement jointly consider what further measures could be taken over time to address this difficulty, beyond the incremental steps introduced generally for new entrants in 2018.

I published the Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals on the 26 August 2019. The Recommendations of the Group have implications for the contracts under which consultants working in the health service would be employed. When the Report was launched, I committed to consulting with key stakeholders and with my colleagues in Government to examine the implications in more detail. Engagement with the consultants representative bodies will arise following on from the decisions of the Government on the Report's recommendations.

While there are significant recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in certain spe-

cialties and less attractive locations, the number of consultants employed (whole time equivalents) has continued to increase on an annual basis, typically by over 100 each year.

It is my view a process should be commenced with the various bodies in the near future. However, any solution has to be realistic and affordable.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

902. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if consideration is being given to abolishing the training allowance paid to persons who have a disability and are enrolled in training programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35190/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service re-

quirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Eating Disorders**

903. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35191/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

904. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Health if a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied). [35192/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

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The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

905. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a supplier of hair pieces and wigs (details supplied) is not listed on the information pack of approved suppliers which is given to patients at Letterkenny University Hospital who wish to avail of the dedicated scheme of the HSE for wigs and hair pieces and which is available for certain patients experiencing medical hair loss; if this omission is an oversight; if so, when the supplier will be added to the list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35197/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Newborn Screening Cards**

906. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the level of access a company has to Guthrie cards in the archives of Temple Street Hospital; if he has granted the company access and-or view and-or use of Guthrie cards for purposes in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; if so, the name of the companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35198/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The policy for the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme requires parental consent for the primary use of screening (a baby) for 8 rare conditions. Any secondary use (including research) requires explicit parental consent for that secondary use.

Commercial companies are not given access to Guthrie cards.

### **Newborn Screening Cards**

907. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered the options paper supplied to him by his officials in the context of the newborn screening card archive forum 2016; the policy decision he has taken since 2017 in this regard based on the options paper; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35199/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Following a complaint made to the Data Protection Commissioner in 2009, the State was found to be in breach of both EU and national data protection legislation in relation to the retention of newborn screening cards without consent.

A policy was developed to review and address the legal and ethical requirements arising for

the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme. This came into operation in July 2011.

Specifically this policy requires parental consent for the primary use of screening (a baby) for 8 rare conditions. The policy also allows the card to be retained for a specific period of 10 years. Any secondary use (including research) requires explicit parental consent for that secondary use.

A decision in relation to the archive of blood spot screening cards retained without consent (1984-June 2011) is well advanced and I expect this to be finalised in the coming months.

### **Disability Services Provision**

908. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the regulations regarding the administration of medicines by carers assigned by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35202/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

909. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to restore the rehabilitative training allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35206/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass

No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Nursing Staff Recruitment**

910. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the reason pre-registration nurses who trained at considerable expense to the State in Galway University Hospital are not automatically being offered positions in the hospital or in the Saolta group in view of the shortage of nurses in the system and the number being hired on contract at this time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35208/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

911. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment with the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin. [35209/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals

are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

*Question No. 912 answered with Question No. 887.*

### **Autism Support Services**

913. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the decision to move a person (details supplied) to a centre further away from the person's locality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35300/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 914 answered with Question No. 894.*

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

915. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the reason Duodopa which is very beneficial to Parkinson's sufferers was recently withdrawn by the HSE; if he will engage with a charity (details supplied) on the matter and review the decision made by the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35302/19]

932. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that patients who have Parkinson's disease can continue to receive a medication (details supplied) which is no longer available to them despite having been provided to those who have an advanced stage of the condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35373/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 915 and 932 together.

Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

916. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35309/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

917. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of braces for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35311/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

918. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35312/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

919. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of braces for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35313/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

920. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of orthodontic treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35314/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services**

921. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of braces for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35315/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Dental Services Provision**

922. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of dental treat-

ment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35316/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

923. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35343/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has spent €384,000 excluding VAT for the renewal of these licenses since 2009.

The Department of Health ICT Unit provides shared services to a number of external agencies including the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Ombudsman for Children's Office. The figure includes renewals for the Department and all supported agencies during this period.

It is expected that the level of shared service provision will reduce in the future as external agencies make other provisions. The cost for the next five years is expected to be approximately €175,000 and relates in the main to the Department of Health.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

924. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the reason the rehabilitative training allowance has been abolished for new applicants with disabilities from 1 September 2019; the estimated saving that will accrue to the HSE as a result in 2019 and 2020, respectively; the reason for this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35351/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July

2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 million over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **General Practitioner Contracts**

925. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35356/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients with ‘‘all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.’’ There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition.

The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient’s symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that some GPs are charging GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient should report the matter to their HSE Local Health Office.

As the persons concerned in this instance have already reported the matter, I have arranged for the HSE to provide an update on this case by direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

926. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regrading issues in University Hospital Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35357/19]

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

927. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of procedures for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35361/19]

**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.

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme**

928. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the estimated average annual cost of operating the various supports such as medical cards that were extended under the Redress for Women in Certain Institutions Act 2015 since the inception of the scheme. [35365/19]

**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.

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme Data**

929. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that accessed the various supports such as medical cards that were extended under the Redress for Women in Certain Institutions Act 2015 since its inception. [35366/19]

**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.

### **Parliamentary Questions**

930. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether a response from the HSE (details supplied) to a Parliamentary Question is appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35367/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

931. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if further details of the environmental support needs referred to in correspondence from a service provider in relation to a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35368/19]

**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.

*Question No. 932 answered with Question No. 915.*

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

933. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a medical procedure will be carried out on a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35377/19]

**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.

### **Ambulance Service Provision**

934. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal was not provided with ambulance transport back to the county following an operation at Galway University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35378/19]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

935. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35380/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Home Care Packages**

936. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if alternative arrangements can be made to provide a homecare package in the case of a person (details supplied); if the matter will be examined with a view to resolution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35403/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

937. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if the decision by the HSE to discontinue the rehabilitative training allowance due to be abolished from 1 September 2019 will be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35406/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 million over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

938. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35414/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists**

939. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the waiting list for occupational therapy in south central areas of Dublin city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35416/19]

**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.

### **Psychological Services Waiting Lists**

940. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the waiting list for psychology services in south central areas of Dublin city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35417/19]

**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 Complaints Procedures**

941. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the reason a complaint must go through an internal review with the HSE before it can go to the Ombudsman; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35418/19]

**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.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

942. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health if additional home help will be expedited for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35437/19]

**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 a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be

referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

943. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect to be called for an appointment for knee replacement surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35442/19]

**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.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

944. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the cost of the cross border initiative in each year since 2014; the geographical breakdown of the amount paid in each of the years; the payments in respect of Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35443/19]

**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.

### **Home Care Packages Administration**

945. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his plans to place home support services on a statutory basis (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35446/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** Work is on-going to determine the optimal approach to the development of the statutory scheme within the broader context of the Sláintecare reforms. The Department's Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the statutory scheme in 2021.

In 2019 work is focused on the design of the scheme and the options for regulation. As part of this work a review of the operation, management and funding of existing home support services is currently being undertaken.

## Speech and Language Therapy Provision

946. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered the implications of not having the speech and language therapy on a statutory basis and the neglect that can arise to persons with a clear need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35447/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The work to improve services for children with disabilities is focused on two key developments, the reorganisation and improvement of service delivery, and increased resources for therapy delivery.

The HSE is working with its partner organisations to implement ‘Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People’ Programme. The ‘Progressing Disability Services’ programme is about forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form local Children’s Disability Network Teams who will provide services for all children with a disability, regardless of what their disability is or where they live or go to school.

I acknowledge that access to speech and language therapy intervention for children with disabilities is variable and that waiting lists in some parts of the country are unacceptably long. I also recognise the distress this can cause families and I want to emphasise that the provision of improved services for children with disabilities and additional needs remains a priority

As Minister for Disabilities, I want to ensure that children everywhere in the country will have access to the same timely and high quality services. Funding for an additional 100 therapy posts was secured as part of Budget 2019 in order to reduce waiting times for children for the Assessment of Needs process and also to improve access to therapy provision.

The HSE is actively drawing from panels across the various Community Healthcare Areas throughout the country with a view to filling these posts as soon as possible.

Because of the actions outlined above which I believe will deliver improved access to children’s disability services including speech and language therapy intervention I do not consider it necessary to provide speech and language therapy services to children on a statutory basis.

## Cross-Border Health Services Provision

947. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if a medical procedure that was carried out in a private clinic can be reimbursed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35449/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Where a person has met the terms of the Cross-Border Directive, and has received treatment in either a public or private institution of another EU\EEA Member State, they may seek reimbursement of the lesser of either the cost of such treatment in the Member State where it is received, or the cost that would have applied for the treatment in the public health system of their Member State of Affiliation. Reimbursement is not permitted where the treatment is received in the person’s own Member State of Affiliation. Therefore, there is no reimbursement for procedures carried out in private hospitals in Ireland for Irish patients.

## Speech and Language Therapy Provision

948. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his views on placing speech and language therapy services on a statutory basis as part of the early intervention service (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35467/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The work to improve services for children with disabilities is focused on two key developments, the reorganisation and improvement of service delivery, and increased resources for therapy delivery.

The HSE is working with its partner organisations to implement ‘Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People’ Programme. The ‘Progressing Disability Services’ programme is about forming partnerships between all the disability organisations in an area and pooling their staff with expertise in the different types of disabilities to form local Children’s Disability Network Teams who will provide services for all children with a disability, regardless of what their disability is or where they live or go to school.

I acknowledge that access to speech and language therapy intervention for children with disabilities is variable and that waiting lists in some parts of the country are unacceptably long. I also recognise the distress this can cause families and I want to emphasise that the provision of improved services for children with disabilities and additional needs remains a priority.

As Minister for Disabilities, I want to ensure that children everywhere in the country will have access to the same timely and high quality services. Funding for an additional 100 therapy posts was secured as part of Budget 2019 in order to reduce waiting times for children for the Assessment of Needs process and also to improve access to therapy provision.

The HSE is actively drawing from panels across the various Community Healthcare Areas throughout the country with a view to filling these posts as soon as possible.

Because of the actions outlined above which I believe will deliver improved access to children’s disability services including speech and language therapy intervention I do not consider it necessary to provide speech and language therapy services to children on a statutory basis.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

949. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if approval will be given to allow a person (details supplied) who is wheelchair bound to avail of a bed or place locally; if so, when funding will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35472/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** 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.

### **Brexit Preparations**

950. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the engagement his Department has undertaken since 25 July 2019 with the pharmaceutical and medical devices industries to

adapt supply chains to minimise potential disruption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35474/19]

951. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if monitoring to ensure that adequate stocks of medicines are routinely built into the medicine supply chain here has been increased since 25 July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35475/19]

952. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether a no-deal Brexit will not have an immediate impact on the supply of medicines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35476/19]

956. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the further assessments that have taken place since 25 July 2019 of the extent to which Brexit may cause those with a small share of a particular medicine market to consider the ongoing viability of supply here; and the measures that have been put in place in relation to same. [35483/19]

957. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the engagement his Department and the Health Products Regulatory Authority, HPRA, have had since 25 July 2019 with the European Commission to identify the most appropriate means to mitigate the risk to the supply of medical devices posed by a no-deal Brexit. [35485/19]

959. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if monitoring to ensure that adequate stocks of medicines are routinely built into the medicine supply chain has been stepped up since 25 July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35493/19]

960. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the established multi-stakeholder procedures that are in place to anticipate and manage medicine shortages in the context of a no-deal Brexit. [35497/19]

1034. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health the amount of additional funding required to be provided to the HSE in order to enable it to continue the purchasing of a safe level of drugs and medicines for the health service since the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in 2016; the effects this decision has had on the ability of Ireland to purchase cheaper medicines globally; the measures being undertaken to ensure there is no major shortage of medicines here due to the UK's exit from the EU; if this will lead to larger budgets for the HSE to purchase drugs due to demand peaking in the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35792/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 950 to 952, inclusive, 956, 957, 959, 960 and 1034 together.

As part of the whole-of-government response to Brexit, the Department of Health has established dedicated structures to manage the approach to preparing for the UK's exit from the EU. The Department, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and the Health Service Executive (HSE), with the full support of stakeholders, are implementing a comprehensive and coordinated set of preparations to ensure continuity of health services and continued supply of medicines and medical devices in a 'no deal' Brexit.

Chapter 24 of the Government's Contingency Action Plan for Brexit, updated in July 2019, details work underway in this area as outlined in <https://www.dfa.ie/brexit/getting-ireland-brexit-ready/governmentcontingencyactionplan/>

The preparations include developing contingency plans to mitigate potential supply problems arising from Brexit. The Department, the HSE and the HPRA have facilitated ongoing engagements with manufacturers and suppliers of medicines and medical devices, to ensure

that they are Brexit-ready, to discuss any potential issues that could affect supply to Ireland and to identify solutions to maintain supply to the market.

As a result of measures undertaken at industry, national and EU level, Brexit is not expected to have an immediate impact on the supply of medicines in Ireland. Pharmaceutical manufacturers and wholesalers have provided assurances that there will be sufficient stocks to bridge any initial issues at ports, should they occur. However, given the size of our market, Brexit may cause those with a small share of a particular medicine market to consider the ongoing viability of supply to Ireland. However, it is considered that any such products are unlikely to be critical to continuity of care, as there are and will be alternative suppliers or therapeutic alternatives available.

Medicine shortages are a feature of modern health systems, but Ireland has a multi-stakeholder system in place to prevent and manage shortages when they occur. Any shortages currently affecting the Irish market are not directly attributable to Brexit.

The HPRA has worked with stakeholders, including the HSE, to develop an effective approach to the management of medicine shortages in Ireland. In 2018 the HPRA launched the “Medicine Shortages Framework”, which is built in a pragmatic and collaborative approach involving the wide range of stakeholders within the medicine supply chain. The HPRA coordinates all stakeholders to share information in order to prevent or mitigate the impact of medicine shortages when they occur. The health system is therefore well placed to anticipate and respond to any additional shortages, should they arise because of Brexit.

As an additional safeguard, consideration continues to be given to those categories of medicines which are considered most essential to public health. The HSE and HPRA are continuing to undertake criticality assessments, seeking additional and updated assurances from stakeholders, including pharmaceutical manufacturers, wholesalers and healthcare professionals, to verify contingency planning to date and, where necessary, identify clinically appropriate alternatives for those products most critical to public health with potential to be vulnerable to supply issues.

Manufacturers and suppliers of medicines and medical devices have been asked to further review their supply chain for products that travel from or through the UK, determine any products or services that are certified for compliance with EU standards by a UK body and communicate any potential vulnerabilities to the Department of Health, HPRA or HSE.

Work on this will continue up to, and in the months following, Brexit. This will include ongoing monitoring of supplies in Ireland and engagement with industry to adapt supply chains, where necessary, to minimise any potential disruption.

The Department of Health and the HPRA will also continue to engage with the European Commission, the Brexit Preparedness Group and Task Force 50 to identify the most appropriate means to mitigate any remaining risks to the supply of medicines and medical devices posed by a no-deal Brexit. However, it remains vital that industry continues to prepare for a no-deal Brexit.

It is important to note that there are already additional stocks of medicines and medical devices routinely built into the Irish medicine supply chain. This is a different supply model to that which operates in the UK. The pharmaceutical industry and wholesalers have provided assurance that they are confident they will have sufficient stocks to bridge any initial issues at ports, should they occur. The key message to emphasise to citizens and patients is that there is no need for hospitals, pharmacists or patients to order extra quantities of medicines, or for doctors to issue additional prescriptions, as doing so could disrupt existing stock levels and hamper

the supply of medicines for other patients.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

953. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an operation at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35477/19]

**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.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

954. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to be reimbursed for treatment carried out under the cross border directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35478/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Brexit Preparations**

955. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of times the Brexit operations team in his Department has met since 25 July 2019. [35482/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government published the Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update in July, reflecting the extensive work which has taken place at EU level and on a whole-of-Government basis, to prepare for a no deal Brexit, and setting out the steps to be taken between now and 31 October.

The Department of Health, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has been engaged in extensive Brexit planning and action to ensure that the health sector is prepared, to the greatest extent possible, for any adverse impacts as a result of Brexit.

As part of the whole-of-government response to Brexit, the Department of Health has established dedicated structures to manage the approach to preparing for the UK's exit from the EU.

From an early stage, Brexit has been regularly discussed at Management Board Level within the Department including Ministerial Management Board meetings. A Management Board Subcommittee on Brexit was established to review the Department's preparedness.

A high-level group chaired by the Secretary General and comprising the heads of the HSE, HPRA, FSAI and senior officials was established to ensure alignment, cooperation and focus on Brexit preparedness and contingency planning across the health sector. Since January, this group has met frequently to review progress at a high level, to consider the on-going political uncertainties in the UK and to provide direction to the Brexit Operations Team.

The Operations Team chaired by a Deputy Secretary General and comprising of senior officials from the Department of Health, the HSE, HPRA and the FSAI was established to identify and resolve issues and to escalate them to the high-level group if necessary. The Team provides a strategic focus on the Department and the Health Sector's preparations for Brexit, through providing a joined-up approach to Brexit related tasks, building on significant work done to date, providing a central point for agencies to contribute, and feed into central Government's coordinated response as well as coordinating liaison with health stakeholders and developing communication strategies for the health sector. The team focus is on implementing mitigating measures drawing on expertise from across the Department and the sector.

The Department's Brexit Operations Team has met 23 times since the start of January, including three times over the short period referred to by the Deputy. Collaboration on individual tasks arising is dealt with on an on-going basis.

The Brexit Operations Team has also established two work streams to identify critical medicines and medical devices that may be vulnerable to supply distribution as a result of Brexit. These work streams are undertaking criticality assessment exercises on potentially vulnerable medicines and medical devices and focusing their contingency planning efforts accordingly. They comprise officials from the Department, the HSE and the HPRA.

Officials from the Department have also participated fully in a range of interdepartmental groups established to support preparations for Brexit including the Secretary Generals' Group, the Assistant Secretaries' Group, and the Senior Official Group on Legislation, the Brexit Coordinators' Group and the Brexit Communications' Group. The Department has also attended meetings with the EU Commission on Brexit.

*Questions Nos. 956 and 957 answered with Question No. 950.*

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

958. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an urgent appointment for surgery for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35486/19]

**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.

*Questions Nos. 959 and 960 answered with Question No. 950.*

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

961. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reverse his decision to abolish the rehabilitative training allowance from 1 September 2019 for persons with disabilities that are applying to do a rehabilitative training programme in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35500/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative / Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

962. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the way in which a person (details supplied) can access treatment they require. [35503/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

963. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if approval will be given to allow a person (details supplied) with an intellectual disability return to support and respite services locally; if so, when the funding will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35510/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services**

964. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the lack of specialist consultants for myalgic encephalomyelitis, ME, patients; and his views on whether ME is a multi-system disease involving many areas with many debilitating symptoms which require patients to see many consultants and incur large costs. [35519/19]

965. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will be instructed to develop a clear pathway of care for ME patients with prompt access to specialists and treatments. [35520/19]

966. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if he will designate ME as a reportable health condition in order to obtain robust official collection of data on the number of chil-

dren, young persons and adults with the condition and the degrees of severity of the condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35521/19]

967. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the criteria used here to diagnose ME as described under G.93.3 WHO International classification of diseases, 10th provision (ICD/10); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35523/19]

968. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to develop guidelines for ME relevant to Ireland; and if contemporary research will be referenced rather than leaving it to the United Kingdom. [35524/19]

969. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will be requested to commence implementing the international consensus criteria for ME in order that persons with the condition can receive a clear diagnosis as quickly as possible. [35525/19]

970. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will update its diagnostic and treatment procedures for persons suffering with ME to reflect best international practice; if the lack of specialist support within the HSE will be addressed for those with the condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35526/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 964 to 970, inclusive, 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.

In order to allow for the timely access to services for patients, work is 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. Consideration is also being given to condition specific referral forms. This work should see significant improvements with respect to access to appropriate services.

There are two general categories of disease as “reportable health conditions” – Infectious Diseases and Cancer. There are no plans to add this condition to the list. However, any patient is eligible to apply to the Drugs Payment Scheme or to apply for a Medical Card. In addition, under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €124 a month towards

the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals with ongoing expenditure on medicines.

People who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card or other state financial supports. In the assessment process, the HSE can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family.

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

The Canadian Consensus Guideline outlines that for consideration of a diagnosis of ME, a person should have a number of symptoms. There are assessments/tests that can be carried out in primary care setting by the General Practitioner. Specialised tests may be required when considering differential diagnoses.

The Health Service Executive does not rely entirely on research from the UK for this or any other condition. Every effort is made to access relevant evidence based research as it becomes available. The HSE prioritises the development of guidelines based clinical need and in the context of available resources.

I have asked the HSE to consider the service matters raised by the Deputy and to respond directly to him.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

971. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for MRIs in UHK by age, group and waiting time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35529/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE advise that a pilot project commenced in 2016 by the HSE Acute Hospitals Division to progress the collection of national radiology waiting list data. The project has been supported by the Radiology Clinical Care Programme and has involved key stakeholders across the system including the National Integrated Medical Imaging System Team, Hospital Groups, and the support of the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) for data collection and data management expertise. The information is collected quarterly, with the most recent validated data available for the end of quarter 1 2019.

The HSE further advise that the waiting list data provided should be reviewed in light of the caveats below, and in this context that data should not be quoted or circulated without these caveats:

- Data contains urgent, routine and surveillance/planned activity which is currently not broken down in detail, as such this includes surveillance/planned activity which may not be exceeding planned date
- Data is still undergoing validation at Hospital and Hospital Group level
- Data does not take into account local nuances at site level (Site profile developed to support understanding of same)
- The purpose of this aggregate data is to provide a National Level overview of the number of patients waiting for modalities of CT, MR and US.

- This report is not intended to be used for the active management of hospital diagnostics waiting list, local reports and mechanisms should continue to be used for the management of diagnostics waiting lists at hospital level.

MRI waiting times at University Hospital Kerry - The following figures represent the position as of 1 April 2019

0-3 mths	3-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12-15 mths	15-18 mths	18+ mths	Total
363	262	200	134	146	129	520	1754

### Services for People with Disabilities

972. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position with regard to the roll-out of individualised budgeting for persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35535/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** My Department is responsible for the formulation and development of policy in respect of the provision of healthcare and support services; responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services rests with the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The HSE has now been tasked with implementing the recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on Personalised Budgets in relation to setting up Demonstration Projects. I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy regarding the roll out of the Personalised Budgets Demonstration Projects.

### Services for People with Disabilities

973. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a place in a home in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35542/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

974. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when shoes will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35545/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

975. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); if the appointment will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35551/19]

**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.

## **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data**

976. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 720 of 8 May 2019 (details supplied), if the loan referred to of €144,657 million is recouped by the HSE from the Revenue Commissioners or if it is the case that the HSE remains out of pocket for this loan amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35558/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as A Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

Where a resident under NHSS has assets including land or property, they may defer their contribution to care based on such assets under Ancillary State support (also known as Nursing Home Loan). This contribution becomes payable on their death.

NHSS is underpinned by primary legislation by way of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act (2009). The legislation sets out that collection and recovery of repayable amounts of the Ancillary State support is a function of the Revenue Commissioners, acting as a collecting agent for the HSE. These monies collected by Revenue Commissioners are paid into the Central Fund.

The exchequer directly funds the NHSS, outside of the assessed contribution paid by nursing home residents. The NHSS budget, which covers all State support for the Scheme, including Ancillary State Support, is allocated on an annual basis based on projected needs and costs.

## **Legislative Programme**

977. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the progress of the human tissue (transplantation, post-mortem, anatomical examination and public display) Bill; and his plans to progress it in the Houses of the Oireachtas. [35561/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill on the 1st May 2019.

Work has commenced on the drafting of the Bill in collaboration with the Office of Parliamentary Council.

The General Scheme has been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for pre-legislative scrutiny. A date for the start of this process has not yet been set.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

978. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training on same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35578/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In August 2018 under the Office of Government Procurement Framework, external consultants were commissioned to assist the Data Protection Unit in implementing a GDPR compliance programme for the Department. This work was completed in April 2019 and included a GDPR gap analysis, implementation plans, compliance strategy and training and skills transfer.

Table of Costs

Consultants	Total Cost (Inclusive of VAT)
Mazars	€110,423.25

*Question No. 979 answered with Question No. 779.*

### Health Screening Programmes

980. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of children diagnosed with potential trisomy 18 or Edward's syndrome at antenatal screening nationally; when this information gathering was commenced; if it is done in each maternity hospital and fertility clinics; if this information is not collated, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35589/19]

982. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has discussed the diagnostic testing required for trisomy 18 in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35591/19]

986. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if post-delivery diagnostic confirmation is optimal practice to confirm prenatal tests and diagnostic accuracy of trisomy 18 and other fatal foetal abnormalities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35595/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 980, 982 and 986 together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to service issues, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

### **Health Screening Programmes**

981. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of cases with conclusive trisomy 18 diagnosis that have been diagnosed here in the past five years in tabular form; if this diagnosis has a national protocol; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35590/19]

**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.

*Question No. 982 answered with Question No. 980.*

### **Health Screening Programmes**

983. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on prenatal fetomaternal testing policy incorporating the use of cytogenetic screening and testing technology; the way in which it developed in maternity hospitals and clinics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35592/19]

984. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he is considering the use of tests to confirm the accuracy of cytogenetic assays and results being confirmed post-delivery by definitive testing of foetus, child and placenta in circumstances in which it is appropriate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35593/19]

985. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has received requests from the clinicians in the maternity hospitals or clinic laboratories or others to improve the cryogenic services for maternity cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35594/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 983 to 985, inclusive, together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to service issues, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

*Question No. 986 answered with Question No. 980.*

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications**

987. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a fair deal application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35598/19]

**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 Consultant Data**

988. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of gynaecologist consultant posts in Mayo University Hospital; the number of vacant posts; the length of time they have been vacant; when the posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35607/19]

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

989. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the waiting lists to see a gynaecologist here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35608/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures is a key commitment of government. Budget 2019 announced that the Government had further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019.

The joint Department of Health, HSE, and NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 1.155 million elective inpatient and day case discharges and 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which more than 1 million will be to new patients. For its part, the NTPF will provide additionality through the provision of 25,000 IPDC appointments, 5,000 GI scopes, and 40,000 outpatient appointments.

In addition, the Department of Health has established a Working Group comprised of representatives from the HSE, NTPF, and Departmental officials, to examine ways of improving access for patients waiting for scheduled care. Part of this work includes developing initiatives which will move care to the most appropriate setting, and at the lowest level of complexity. Gynaecology is one of the specialties being examined by this group.

### **Hospital Consultant Data**

990. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant gynaecologist posts in the CHO2 area by hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35609/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

991. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the wait time for a gynaecologist appointment at Mayo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35610/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

Budget 2019 announced that the Government has further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €55 million in 2018 to €75 million in 2019. The joint Department of Health/HSE/NTPF Scheduled Care Access Plan 2019 was published in March and sets out measures to improve care for patients waiting for scheduled care in 2019 by reducing waiting times for inpatient/day case treatment and outpatient appointments.

In addition, the Department of Health has established a Working Group comprised of representatives from the HSE, NTPF, and Departmental officials, to examine ways of improving access for patients waiting for scheduled care. Part of this work includes developing initiatives which will move care to the most appropriate setting, and at the lowest level of complexity. Gynaecology is one of the specialties being examined by this group.

The NTPF advise that over recent months they have placed a particular focus on engaging with hospital groups and individual hospitals to identify waiting list proposals. The NTPF welcomes proposals from all acute hospitals for initiatives to improve access for patients on waiting lists.

The data requested by the deputy is contained in the following table.

Outpatient Waiting list for Gynaecology at Mayo University Hospital – end July 2019

0-3 mths	3-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12 mths+	Total
257	28	0	0	0	285

### Hospital Consultant Data

992. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the shortfall in gynaecologist consultant posts here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35611/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### Nursing Homes Support Scheme

993. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the incentives in place to ensure the use of vacant properties under the fair deal scheme; the timeline for such changes to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35616/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** Under NHSS rental income is considered income for the purpose of the financial assessment, and is assessed at 80% less any allowable deductions. Allowable deductions include income tax and, therefore, any income tax arising from rental income should be deducted; other deductions include some health expenses, levies required by law to be paid, and interest on some loans in respect of a person's principal private residence.

Action 17 of the Strategy for the Rental Sector commits the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government (DHPLG) to examine the treatment, under the Nursing Homes

Support Scheme's financial assessment, of income from the rental of a person's principal private residence where they move into long term residential care. My officials are working with DHPLG officials and examining a number of possible options. I am not in a position, however, to provide detail on these as discussions and detailed examination are ongoing and any potential proposals have not been finalised.

### **Healthcare Professionals**

994. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) who sought to have their certificate of good standing and registration documentation sent by CORU to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has been refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35620/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a matter relating to an individual health and social care professional, the Health and Social Care Professional Council (CORU) has been asked to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

995. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the delays being experienced by a person (details supplied) due to HSE guidelines will be addressed; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the person needs the specially made shoes to be able to walk; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that the person has been waiting for more than a year due to HSE guidelines and cases being dealt with on a priority basis; and if he will direct the HSE to expedite the case. [35622/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Applications**

996. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if assistance to purchase an item will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35625/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Provision**

997. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reinstate a multi-annual funding model for organisations in the disability sector, as advocated by the multi-annual investment programme proposal of the Oireachtas disability group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35634/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to reform the funding system to support new models of care and drive value to make better use of resources. In this regard, the Department is examining the feasibility of imple-

menting multi-annual budgeting in the healthcare system.

### **Departmental Customer Charters**

998. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35646/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Since my time as Minister, no complaints have been made or processed through the formal complaints procedure.

The customer service function in my Department manages complaints in the form of emails to [complaints@health.gov.ie](mailto:complaints@health.gov.ie) and customer service telephone calls.

The Department adheres to the Principles of Quality Customer Services as set in our Quality Customer Action Plan and our Customer Charter. Our customer complaints procedure is published on the Department's website. (<https://health.gov.ie/about-us/customer-charter>)

The Complaints Procedure covers complaints about issues, including delays in responding to correspondence and the use of Irish. The complaints procedure does not cover:

- Matters of policy;
- Complaints relating to a hospital/the HSE or other health agencies;
- Matters that are the subject of litigation; or
- Matters that have been referred to the Ombudsman or Information Commissioner.

Through Your Service Your Say, the Health Service Executive offers service users a vital avenue for feedback, and by collecting and classifying complaints data supports organisational learning by enabling the collective voice of complainants to inform healthcare development.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

999. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to reverse the decision to cut from September 2019 onwards the training grant for persons with disabilities who participate in rehabilitative training; if his attention has been drawn to the extra costs associated with participation in such training, the impact it will have on the limited income of persons with disabilities and the barriers to engagement in training it may subsequently present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35652/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative / Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National

Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

1000. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of medical items for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35664/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists**

1001. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of braces for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35666/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

## **Services for People with Disabilities**

1002. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of applications of assessments of needs under the Disability Act 2005 commenced within three months of a completed application being received, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35667/19]

1003. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of applications, by county, for assessments of needs under the Disability Act 2005 concluded within six months of a completed application being received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35668/19]

1004. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of applications, by county, for assessments of needs under the Disability Act 2005 overdue for completion at three, six, 12 and 18 months respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35669/19]

1005. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of applications for assessments of needs under the Disability Act 2005 in which a referral was made under section 8(3) of the Act, by county. [35670/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1002 to 1005, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1006. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position with regard to a post in the HSE not being filled (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35672/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

1007. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if the decision recently made by the HSE to cease paying the rehabilitative training allowance of €31.80 per week to approximately 400 applicants, who are persons with disabilities, for a rehabilitative training programme will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35678/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This Govern-

ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative / Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

## **Maternity Services**

1008. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he has requested information from the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street on shared services that are being provided to a clinic (details supplied); and his views on the nature of these shared services. [35683/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the query raised by the Deputy relates to an operational matter, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

## **Medical Card Applications**

1009. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the status of a medical card application by a family (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35699/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

## **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1010. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure positions are available for graduate nurses in a hospital (details supplied); his views on the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35702/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

1011. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the rationale for County Meath having only three CAMHS teams in view of the fact that the population of the county is now more than 200,000 persons and that A Vision for Change indicates there should be one CAMHS team for every 50,000 persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35703/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1012. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [35704/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1013. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be seen in Tallaght University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35705/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1014. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment in CHI at Crumlin, Dublin 12; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35706/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Home Care Packages**

1015. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an update on a revised application for funding in respect of a homecare package application. [35707/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Govern-

ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1016. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35710/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1017. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the appointment of a specialist eye doctor for County Laois; and when the service will resume. [35711/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1018. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35713/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any

individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1019. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that all staff in HSE nursing homes are appropriately vetted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35717/19]

**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.

### **Primary Care Centres**

1020. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if matters will be addressed regarding a day care centre (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35718/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

1021. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if matters regarding SouthDoc services in counties Kerry and Cork will be addressed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35719/19]

**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.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1022. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting for an operation in view of the fact his pre-op was carried out over three months ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35728/19]

**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 be-

half, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### Primary Medical Certificates Applications

1023. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal was refused a primary medical certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35750/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Services

1024. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a place will be provided at a specific hospital for a person (details supplied) who urgently requires specialised treatment. [35755/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### Departmental Reviews

1025. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 438 of 2 July 2019, when a full response will be provided. [35756/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In my response to you on 2 July 2019 I advised that I would survey the Department and revert with collated material. Set out in the following table are details of live studies, reviews and research and their scheduled date of completion.

Study/Review/Research	Expected Completion
Validation of Inpatient and Day Case Waiting Lists: Improving Patient Engagement	August, 2019

Study/Review/Research	Expected Completion
Patients' Reasons for Requesting a Removal from Inpatient Waiting Lists During Administrative Validation	August, 2019
A Literature Review of International Evidence on Patients' Reasons for Non-Attendance at Outpatient Appointments	September, 2019
Synthesis of Empirical Evidence on the Association of Work Characteristics with Health Outcomes in Ireland	September, 2019
A Literature Review of International Evidence on the Use of Reminders to Reduce Non-Attendance at Outpatient Appointments	October, 2019
Inpatient and Day Case Appointment Offers: Improving Patient Engagement	November, 2019
Health Literacy in Ireland 2011-2020	December, 2021
Health Literacy in Europe 2011-2020	December, 2021
An analysis of factors contributing to sustainable work for older people in Ireland and Europe	December, 2019
An Analysis of Age-friendly Environments and Quality of life in Four Irish Cities	December, 2019
A Review of International Evidence and Approaches to increasing Access to Contraception	September, 2019
A review of the evidence to inform the use of alternative dental restorative materials for amalgam	August, 2019
International approaches to the role of strategic communications in public sector reform	September, 2019
International approaches to accountability structures for health service managers	September, 2019
A review of international approaches to supporting health information infrastructure	October, 2019
E-cigarettes: Evidence on the Benefits and Harms, and Evidence as a Smoking Cessation Tool	December, 2019
International legislative approaches to support the delivery of public health measures to address communicable / infectious diseases	December, 2019
Projections of Healthcare Expenditure in Ireland- ESRI Research Series report (work conducted under the auspices of the DoH-ESRI research programme on healthcare Reform)	June, 2021
Behavioural research to support Action 3.5 of the A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan: "Consider measures to introduce maximum portion sizes for relevant foods and drinks, on a voluntary basis initially" (work conducted under the auspices of the DoH-ESRI research programme on healthcare Reform)	December, 2019

Study/Review/Research	Expected Completion
Expert Group to review the law of torts and the current systems for the management of clinical negligence claims	End 2019
Focus group consultation study (on health sector adult safeguarding policy)	End 2019
Evidence brief: Supported housing models for older people	February, 2020
Expert Panel Review of CervicalCheck Screening	End Summer 2019
Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix for Nursing and Midwifery is working with UCC to provide the evidence and impact reviews.	2020
HRB-CICER Economic Burden Review of Antimicrobial Resistance	October, 2020
The National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services is ongoing. HRB-CICER were appointed to carry out an Evidence Synthesis Review on Cardiology services and configurations as part of the National Review.	The draft report was received by the Steering Group for consideration on 14 June 2019
A systematic review of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of interventions to support the development of an evidence-based Clinical Guideline on National Early Warning Systems (NEWS).	August, 2019
A systematic review of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of interventions to support the development of an evidence-based National Clinical Guideline on Care of the Dying Adult.	October, 2019
A systematic review of the clinical and cost-effectiveness of Healthcare-Associated Infection interventions to support an evidence-based National Clinical Guideline on Healthcare-Associated Infections	January, 2020
The Health Behaviour in School Age Children study is carried out every four years. The most recent study was carried out in 2018 and the report on this will be completed in Q4 2019	Q4 2019
Co-producing health and well-being in partnership with patients, families and communities: The role of the epilepsy patient portal.	September, 2020
Review of the HSE reimbursement and pricing decision-making process	Autumn, 2019
The Healthy Ireland Survey has been carried out annually since 2015 with an annual report published in October.	October, 2019
European Health Literacy Survey HLS19	January, 2021

### Psychological Services

1026. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details sup-

plied) will be assessed by a psychologist; when he will be given occupational therapy appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35765/19]

**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.

### **Magdalen Laundries Data**

1027. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on the provision of services specified under Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Act 2015 in each year since its initiation; and the number of women that have benefited from the section of the Act in each year in tabular form. [35769/19]

**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 Appointments Status**

1028. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35770/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1029. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35771/19]

**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.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1030. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35772/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Staff Recruitment**

1031. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding nursing recruitment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35779/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Having spoken with the administrator in your office Deputy, to clarify that this question relates to graduate nurses being retained in the location in which they completed their 36 week rotation, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

### **Hospital Appointments Administration**

1032. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if treatment scheduled in the urology clinic at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, for a person (details supplied) can be received in view of the fact that she is already in the hospital receiving treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35785/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1033. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can obtain varicose vein surgery at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35786/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

*Question No. 1034 answered with Question No. 950.*

### **Health Services Reports**

1035. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health if a copy of the draft report of the independent review group to examine the removal of private practice from public acute hospitals submitted to his Department will be provided. [35793/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Report of the Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public acute hospitals was published on 26 August 2019 and is available on the website of my Department at <https://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/report-of-the-independent-review-group-established-to-examine-private-activity-in-public-hospitals/>

## **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1036. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of Duopoda used in the treatment of advanced Parkinson's disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35797/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Health Services Provision**

1037. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a matter in relation to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35799/19]

**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 Screening Programmes**

1038. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the date on which his attention was first drawn to correspondence from the chief medical officer of his Department to a person (details supplied) dated 13 March 2019; the person who drew his attention to the correspondence; the way in which his attention was drawn to same; when the person drew the attention of same to the Secretary General of his Department; his views on the content of the correspondence; if he has spoken to the chief medical officer regarding same; and if so, when. [35801/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** On the 13th March 2019, my Department's press office received a query from a journalist seeking a comment for a story that was to be published the following day.

The query included a number of quotes containing statements attributed to a patient representative relating to the Chief Medical Officer which were due to be published in the media and would have been untrue. The Chief Medical Officer wrote to the patient representative on March 13th raising his concerns and offering to engage in mediation to facilitate the ongoing important work.

The Secretary General was aware of this matter prior to the correspondence concerned being issued.

On March 14th, contact was made with my office by a connected individual. I was out of the country at the time on official business. My office made me aware of the letter later that day. I spoke to senior officials in the Department of Health. As I have said, I accept the context in which the correspondence was issued.

The patient representatives play an important role in the ongoing work of my Department's CervicalCheck Steering Committee and on the HSE's working groups on this issue. I am also in regular contact with the patient advocates and believe it is vital that the health services support them and ensure their input is valued and respected, as does my Department. Both I and my Department are committed to working with patient representatives and health professionals

across the health service towards effectively eradicating cervical cancer within a generation.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1039. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an operation will be expedited for a person (details supplied); the status of the operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35805/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Equipment**

1040. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding a scanner in University Hospital Kerry (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35811/19]

**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.

### **Disability Support Services**

1041. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding transport services in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35812/19]

**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.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Health Services Provision**

1042. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be called for specific treatment. [35813/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

**Nursing Staff Recruitment**

1043. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when the embargo on hiring new nursing staff at Mayo University Hospital will be lifted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35814/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Nursing Staff Recruitment**

1044. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurse graduates Mayo University Hospital is hiring in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35815/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Nursing Staff Data**

1045. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of nurse staff vacancies in Mayo University Hospital by department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35816/19]

**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.

**HSE Agency Staff Data**

1046. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of agency staff hired at Mayo University Hospital; the funding spent on agency staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35817/19]

**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.

**HSE Agency Staff Expenditure**

1047. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the amount the Health Service Executive has paid for agency staff in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [35818/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Nursing Home Services**

1048. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of a nursing home (details supplied); the number of staff employed at the unit; the number of staff vacancies at the unit; when these vacant posts will be filled; when day services will reconvene in a full-time manner without further cancellations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35820/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Disability Services Funding**

1049. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available to provide essential supported accommodation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35821/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medicinal Products Supply**

1050. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in the swift provision of new medicines to persons with multiple sclerosis here. [35824/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. As Minister, I have no role in this statutory process. I do, however, understand the following in terms of the timelines for the provision of medicines for patients, in Ireland:

The development and provision of new medicines for treating conditions, including Multiple Sclerosis (MS), follows an important, scientific, and robust series of procedures. Under European and Irish legislation, the manufacturer must seek authorisation to market the product for human use from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and/or Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) in Ireland. European legislation, including Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 clearly sets out the defined timelines in processing such applications.

Once licensed for human use, the manufacturer may then seek taxpayer funding for the provision of their medicine in each Member State. For this they apply for inclusion of their medicine on each Member State's respective public healthcare schemes. Typically, Member States consider the additional benefit of the applicant medicine compared to existing treatments available and the additional cost compared to the cost of existing treatments in their decision.

In Ireland, under the 2013 Health Act, a company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the medicine added to the Reimbursement List. It is further outlined in the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines that the HSE will decide within 180 days of receiving the complete application, to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list, agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse it.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific, and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention. Working in the interests of the people of Ireland, patients and taxpayers alike, the HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis.

Where a manufacturer has failed to meet the requirements of the 2013 Health Act, it can lead to a negotiation process. The purpose of those negotiations is to assist the applicant manufacturer in meeting the statutory requirements in as swift a time frame as possible.

There are currently a number of medicines for the treatment of MS making their way through the reimbursement process and they will be assessed in line with the 2013 Act.

### **Medicinal Products Supply**

1051. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health if an updated timeline on the roll out of a PrEP programme here will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35826/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Sexual health is a key priority, both for me and for this Government as a whole. The Health Information and Quality Authority Health Technology Assessment report on PrEP was published in June, which found that the introduction of a PrEP HIV prevention programme would be safe, effective and cost saving.

Considerable work is underway in order to introduce a PrEP programme in the autumn. Further details on the specific timeline and details of the programme will be available shortly. It is intended to roll out an awareness campaign on PrEP once the programme is ready to commence.

### **Dental Services Provision**

1052. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the dental cover available to children in the south-west areas of County Cork in circumstances in which primary school children are only receiving appointments after they have left primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35828/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Staff Recruitment**

1053. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health if vacant nursing and midwifery posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35830/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Rare Diseases Strategy Implementation**

1054. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he and his officials will meet with persons (details supplied) regarding Ehlers-Danlos syndrome and the issue in relation to the availability and quality of treatment of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35836/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The question of availability of quality treatment for EDS sufferers is addressed in the National Rare Disease Plan for Ireland which is a generic policy framework for rare diseases. The scope of the plan is broad given that there are approximately 8,000 rare diseases affecting millions of EU citizens; and consequently, there can be a dearth of expertise and knowledge about some rare diseases, simply because they are so rare.

The HSE National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases was established in 2013 and is responsible for assisting with mapping and developing care pathways for rare diseases; facilitating timely access to centres of expertise – nationally and internationally; and developing care pathways with European Reference Centres for those ultra-rare disorders where there may not be sufficient expertise in Ireland. The National Rare Disease Office was established by the HSE in 2015 and is headed up by Professor Eileen Treacy, Director of that Office.

It is important to note that a revised Model of Care for Rare Diseases has been finalised and approved by the HSE. This model includes the further development of a model of care for transition from paediatric to adult healthcare providers. The more severe forms of EDS require specialist treatment often by multiple specialists but usually under the care of the specialist for the most severely affected organ system. These specialists can be paediatric cardiologists, rheumatologists, neurologists, orthopaedists etc. The provision of rheumatology services for all patients with musculoskeletal disease is addressed in the implementation of the National Clinical Programme for Rheumatology (NCPR) Model of Care for Rheumatology Services. The Model of Care aims to ensure that the rheumatology patient is seen, assessed and treated by the right person, in the right place and in the timeliest manner. The Model of Care for Rheumatology recommends minimal staffing standards, based on population, for each department in order to provide appropriate treatment to patients with rheumatological diseases.

With the implementation of this model of care, disease specific pathways for rheumatological disease groups will be developed which will include EDS as part of hypermobility diseases. The Paediatric Consultant Rheumatologists in Ireland based at OLCHC have specialist training in the management of all types of rheumatic and musculoskeletal disorders, including EDS. They are supported by a multidisciplinary team and have access to other relevant consultant specialists needed for the care of EDS sufferers.

It is worth noting that I have had significant engagement with representatives in the rare disease area. For example, I met with the Rare Disease Taskforce (comprising Rare Disease Ireland, Medical Research Charities Group (MRCP), The Irish Platform for Patient Organisations, Science and Industry (IPPOSI)) who represent the patient voice in the Rare Disease arena and also my officials met with them in February and May of this year and are scheduled to meet with this important stakeholder again in the Autumn to ensure that their input and the voice of the patient is represented in the continued implementation of the Rare Disease Plan.

### **Hospital Staff Recruitment**

1055. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health the length of time a staffing embargo will be in place at Sligo University Hospital; his views on whether an embargo on hiring or replacing staff will be cost-effective in view of knock-on effects across the service; if this embargo will end at the start of 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35837/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1056. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting a long period for an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35840/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1057. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35848/19]

**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.

### **First-Aid Training**

1058. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health his views on the recent proposals to increase the cost of first aid certification by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35850/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is an independent statutory body with responsibility for professional regulation in the area of pre-hospital emergency care including the recognition of professional qualifications.

Accordingly, the Deputy's query has been referred to PHECC for direct response.

### **Departmental Funding**

1059. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if funding for the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council has been reduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35851/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There has been no reduction in the level of funding provided to PHECC in 2019. Funding of €2.997m has been allocated to PHECC in 2019; the same amount was provided in 2018. The Deputy may wish to note that funding provided in 2018 reflected a €200,000 increase as compared with funding provided in 2017.

### **Primary Care Centres**

1060. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if there is a generalised car parking cost for each primary care centre; if not, the person or body that decides the rates charged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35852/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

1061. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the decision by the Health Service Executive to abolish the rehabilitative training allowance in view of the benefit which this allowance gives to persons with disabilities who are receiving same in their endeavours to learn to live independent lives. [35855/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative / Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Disabilities Assessments**

1062. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the number of children waiting for an assessment of needs in excess of three months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35857/19]

1063. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Health the measures he will take to eliminate the waiting list for children requiring an assessment of needs; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [35858/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1062 and 1063 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Medical Treatment Complaints**

1064. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a letter of complaint was received from a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; if so, when a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35861/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As of 5 September 2019, the letter referred to by the Deputy was not received by the Minister's office. When a letter is received, the issues raised therein are investigated and a reply issued.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1065. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is being charged €4 per day for transport from their home to the community inclusion hub in Letterkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35862/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1066. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities in receipt of home support hours in each local health office, LHO, area at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; the number of persons on the waiting list for same in each LHO area; and the number waiting zero to three months, three to six months, six to 12 months and 12 months plus, respectively, in tabular form. [35869/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1067. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with disabilities in receipt of personal assistance hours in each local health office, LHO, area at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; the number of persons on the waiting list for same in each LHO area; and the number waiting zero to three months, three to six months, six to 12 months and 12 months plus, respectively, in tabular form. [35870/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1068. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of residential places for persons with a disability being provided at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available by community healthcare organisation area in tabular form. [35871/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1069. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of new emergency places provided to persons with a disability at the end of August 2019 by local

health office area in tabular form. [35872/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disabilities Assessments**

1070. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a first assessment from the HSE under the Disability Act 2005 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available in each local health office area, in tabular form. [35873/19]

**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.

### **Physiotherapy Provision**

1071. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the physiotherapy waiting list for each local health area at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months respectively; and the numbers waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35874/19]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Waiting Lists**

1072. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy assessment waiting list for each local health area at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; and the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively, in tabular form. [35875/19]

1073. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy initial treatment waiting list for each local health

area at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; and the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively, in tabular form. [35876/19]

1074. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy further treatment waiting list for each local health area at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; and the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively, in tabular form. [35877/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1072 to 1074, inclusive, together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### **Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists**

1075. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy first-time assessment waiting list for each local health area at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35878/19]

**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.

### **Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists**

1076. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO1 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35879/19]

1077. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO2 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35880/19]

1078. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO3 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35881/19]

1079. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO4 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35882/19]

1080. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO5 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35883/19]

1081. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO6 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35884/19]

1082. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO7 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35885/19]

1083. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO8 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35886/19]

1084. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy treatment waiting list for each local health area in CHO9 at the end of August 2019 or latest date available; the number waiting less than 4, 4 to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively; and the number waiting aged 0 to 4, 5 to 17, 18 to 64 and aged 65 years of age plus, respectively in each category, in tabular form. [35887/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1076 to 1084, inclusive, together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data**

1085. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting placement under the fair deal scheme at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; the average waiting time; and the length of time waiting in each local health area, in tabular form. [35888/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Beds Closures**

1086. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of beds and wards in each public and voluntary acute hospital that were closed on 30 August 2019 or the latest date on which data for validated bed closures at hospital and ward level are available, in

tabular form. [35889/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Open Beds Report, published by my Department monthly, provides a summary of the average numbers of open inpatient beds and day beds/places in the acute hospital system based on data provided by the HSE. It can be found on the Department's website: <https://health.gov.ie/publications/> According to provisional data received from the HSE Acute Business Information Unit, there were on average 10,978 inpatient beds and 2,251 day case beds/places available nationally in June 2019.

Information relating to closed beds is collated at a particular date in time. The number of beds closed can fluctuate greatly from day to day for a variety of reasons, including on-going refurbishment, maintenance work, and infection control measures.

In relation to the particular data requested, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospitals Discharges**

1087. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of delayed discharges in each public and voluntary hospital at the end of July 2019, in tabular form. [35890/19]

1089. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of delayed discharges at the end of August 2019 in each public and voluntary hospital, in tabular form. [35892/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1087 and 1089 together.

According to the information provided by the HSE's Acute Business Information Unit (Acute BIU), the national average number of delayed discharges for the month of July 2019 was 672. For August 2019, the national average number of delayed discharges was 734, which represents an increase of 9.2% on the previous month.

The Department does not have the level of detail required by the Deputy. As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Beds Data**

1088. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of bed days lost through delayed discharges in July 2019 in each public and voluntary hospital, in tabular form. [35891/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

*Question No. 1089 answered with Question No. 1087.*

### **Hospital Beds Data**

1090. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of bed days lost through delayed discharges in August 2019 for each public and voluntary hospital, in tabular

form. [35893/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Ambulance Service Response Times**

1091. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of clinical status 1 ECHO incidents responded to by a first responder in 7 minutes and 59 seconds or less for each ambulance station in each month in 2019 to the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the percentage of clinical status 1 DELTA incidents responded to by a patient-carrying vehicle in 7 minutes and 59 seconds or less, in tabular form. [35894/19]

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

### **Emergency Departments Waiting Times**

1092. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients aged 75 years of age or over that experienced an emergency department wait time of more than 24 hours during August 2019; the number to date in 2019; and the hospitals in which the wait occurred. [35895/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The hospital system is currently operating at close to full capacity. The number of patients attending Emergency Departments continues to increase year on year, with approximately 1.3 million attendances in 2018, up 3.5% on 2017. For the first seven months of 2019, the number of patients over the age of 75 attending hospital EDs increased by 2.7% compared to the same period last year. This reflects increasing demand for unscheduled care, especially by patients in the 75 years and over age group.

However, the National Service Plan 2019 includes an expected activity target that 99% of patients aged 75 and over attending at an Emergency Department are discharged or admitted within 24 hours and any breach of this target in respect of patients in this age cohort is unacceptable.

With regard to the Deputy's specific question, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with the requested information.

### **Home Help Service Data**

1093. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours being provided in each Local Health Office, LHO, area to the end of August 2019; the number of persons on the waiting list for home support hours in each LHO area; and the number waiting 0 to 3, 3 to 6, 6 to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35896/19]

**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.

### **Ambulance Service Data**

1094. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance attendances at each emergency department nationally in August 2019; the number of such ambulances that waited longer than 20 minutes to hand over patients, get their trolleys back and return to responding to calls; the number that waited longer than 40, 60, 90, 120 and 180 minutes for same, respectively, in tabular form. [35897/19]

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

### **Health Services Data**

1095. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of spinal fusion patients waiting less than four; four to eight and more than eight months respectively for treatment; and if the same information will be provided for other spinal patients in tabular form. [35898/19]

**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 respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Health Services Data**

1096. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office, LHO area waiting for a podiatry appointment in primary care at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the number waiting zero to 12; 12 to 26; 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks respectively. [35899/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Health Services Data**

1097. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office, LHO area waiting for an ophthalmology appointment in primary care at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the number waiting zero to 12; 12 to 26; 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks respectively. [35900/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Audiology Services Data**

1098. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office, LHO area waiting for an audiology appointment in primary care at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the number waiting zero to 12; 12 to 26; 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks respectively. [35901/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### Health Services Data

1099. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office, LHO area waiting for a dietetics appointment in primary care at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the number waiting zero to 12; 12 to 26; 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks respectively. [35902/19]

**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.

### Health Services Data

1100. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each local health office, LHO area waiting for an oral health appointment in primary care at the end of August 2019 or the latest date available; and the number waiting zero to 12; 12 to 26; 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks respectively. [35903/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Waiting Lists Data

1101. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the RCSI Hospitals Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35904/19]

1102. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the RCSI Hospitals Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35905/19]

1103. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35906/19]

1104. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the Dublin Midland Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35907/19]

1105. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35908/19]

1106. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram scan in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35909/19]

1107. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35910/19]

1108. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for cholangiopancreatography in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35911/19]

1109. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group for less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively in tabular form. [35912/19]

1110. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35913/19]

1111. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35914/19]

1112. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35915/19]

1113. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35916/19]

1114. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35917/19]

1115. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a cholangiopancreatography in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35918/19]

1116. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the South/Southwest Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35919/19]

1117. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35920/19]

1118. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35921/19]

1119. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35922/19]

1120. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35923/19]

1121. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35924/19]

1122. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a cholangiopancreatography in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35925/19]

1123. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the Saolta Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35926/19]

1124. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35927/19]

1125. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35928/19]

1126. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35929/19]

1127. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35930/19]

1128. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35931/19]

1129. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a cholangiopancreatography in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35932/19]

1130. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the UL Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35933/19]

1131. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the RCSI Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35934/19]

1132. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram in the RCSI Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine and nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35935/19]

1133. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram in the RCSI Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35936/19]

1134. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a cholangiopancreatography in the RCSI Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35937/19]

1135. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the RCSI Hospitals Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35938/19]

1136. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a MRI scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35939/19]

1137. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a CT scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35940/19]

1138. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a bone scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35941/19]

1139. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an angiogram scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35942/19]

1140. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an electroencephalogram scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35943/19]

1141. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for a cholangiopancreatography in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35944/19]

1142. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting as of 31 August 2019 or the nearest available date for an ultrasound scan in the Ireland East Hospital Group less than three; three to six; six to nine; nine to 12 and more than 12 months respectively, in tabular form. [35945/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1101 to 1142, inclusive, together.

The HSE advise that a pilot project was commenced in 2016 by the HSE Acute Hospitals Division to progress the collection of national radiology waiting list data. The project has been supported by the Radiology Clinical Care Programme and has involved key stakeholders across the system including the National Integrated Medical Imaging System (NIMIS) Team, Hospital Groups, and the support of the National Treatment Purchase Fund for data collection and data management expertise.

The data requested by the Deputy is collected quarterly and will be provided by my Department to the Deputy, in the format requested, when the data for Quarter 2 2019 becomes available.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1143. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for an operation for a person (details supplied); if there is a timeframe for pre-assessment; the position of the person on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35967/19]

**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.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

1144. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the alternative local supports being put in place due to the crisis situation at a centre (details supplied); the status of the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35969/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1145. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of surgery for a person (details supplied); the length of time they will be waiting for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35970/19]

**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.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Data**

1146. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the caseload per speech and language therapist for counties Louth and Meath in 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35977/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### Hospitals Capital Programme

1147. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the position in relation to the progression of the 50-bed new St. Joseph's Hospital, Ardee, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35979/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan provides for €220m capital funding to the Community Nursing Unit programme over the period 2019 to 2021 and also sets out the current status of all projects within the programme, including St. Joseph's Hospital, Ardee.

The Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects and has advised that the project, which is expected to have 50 beds, is currently being considered for delivery as part of a bundle of facilities by Public Private Partnership (PPP). A design team has been appointed and a planning application has recently been lodged.

### HIQA Reports

1148. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the measures undertaken since the launch of the HIQA report Office of the Chief Inspector - The use of information gathered and received in the regulation of services September 2018 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35981/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I understand that the Deputy is referring to a report prepared by HIQA in September 2018 concerning its use of information gathered and received in the regulation of services.

The report outlines how unsolicited information and mandated monitoring notifications are received and reviewed by an inspector of social services who assesses the related risk and decides on a regulatory response. Every piece of information received, whether unsolicited or mandated, is reviewed in such a manner. In the report's concluding remarks HIQA identifies a small number of areas that would benefit from further review and assessment in terms of its information management. Implementation of any such proposals is an internal matter for the regulator.

As the Deputy will be aware, HIQA, as regulator, has no formal legal role in examining individual complaints; however, the Authority does take into account all information it receives, including complaints from the public, when carrying out inspections. If concerns are raised, HIQA reviews all information received and evaluates it against the regulations and standards. Where issues are identified, HIQA works closely with service providers to agree an appropriate action plan to address these issues and to ensure the required standards are met.

I note that HIQA is very open and transparent in relation to the information it gathers. It publishes an annual report and every individual report relating to the quality and safety of services within its legislative remit. The Chief Inspector also publishes an overview report detailing the

quality and safety of services and areas of high risk.

The safety and protection of vulnerable people in the care of the State is paramount. Officials in my Department remain in ongoing contact with relevant health agencies, including HIQA, the Mental Health Commission and the HSE, in relation to safeguarding policy matters, and are working with stakeholders to strengthen safeguarding structures and policies in the health sector nationally.

### **Medical Records**

1149. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if action has been taken against a hospital or hospital group for the numerous incidents in which personal data in the form of medical documents have been found in public, including the files found in Baltray, County Louth in November 2018; if the Data Protection Commissioner has made recommendations on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35982/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1150. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if Sruthan House, Dundalk, County Louth will remain open into the future following the deferral of its closure in July 2019; the plans of the HSE in place to cater for the service users that will be affected by such a closure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35984/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1151. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a knee replacement for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35986/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1152. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; the steps required in the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35987/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services**

1153. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the funding for services in Cobh Hospital for the remainder of 2019; if his attention has been drawn to difficulties regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35989/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1154. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the roll-out of the €4 charge for persons with a disability commuting to local day services will be ceased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35991/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1155. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment for admission to St. Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise, County Laois. [35997/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1156. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36001/19]

**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.

### **Maternity Services Provision**

1157. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date in respect of the proposed transfer of the Rotunda Maternity Hospital to Blanchardstown, Dublin 15; the expected date on which the transfer is due to commence; the expected date for the completion of the transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36036/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Project Ireland 2040 provides €10.9 billion for health capital developments across the country, including funding to support implementation of the National Maternity Strategy. The relocation of the Rotunda Hospital to the Connolly campus is one of the key infrastructure projects which will be funded under Project Ireland 2040. It is important that we carefully plan all projects to meet population health needs and achieve value for money. This work is ongoing. While I am not in position to outline the year on year provisions for any individual hospital project at this stage, this will be considered through the process of the determination of service priorities and in the context of the finalisation of the Health Capital Plan.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Rotunda project is at an early stage and will require to progress through appraisal, planning design and tender before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

## Maternity Services Provision

1158. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the expected costs of the transfer of the Rotunda Maternity Hospital to Blanchardstown, Dublin 15; if the costs have been included in the budget forecasting of his Department; if he expects the Rotunda Maternity Hospital to contribute from its respective budget to the cost of the transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36037/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In line with best international practice, it is Government policy that standalone maternity hospitals should be co-located with acute adult hospitals. The National Maternity Strategy, published in January 2016, reaffirms this commitment. The New Maternity Hospital at the St Vincent's University Hospital campus will be the first of these to be developed, with the Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital, the Rotunda Hospital and University Maternity Hospital, Limerick to follow in time.

Project Ireland 2040, incorporating the National Development Plan 2018-2027, will provide funding of €10.9 billion over the next decade to develop infrastructure, equipment and additional service capacity for the public health sector, in an ambitious plan to improve our health services and modernise how we deliver services through the implementation of Sláintecare.

We must ensure that we carefully plan the use of this capital funding to meet population health needs and achieve value for money.

Project Ireland 2040 includes funding to provide the infrastructure to support implementation of the National Maternity Strategy and to provide an appropriate environment within all our maternity hospitals/units to facilitate the delivery of a modern, safe, quality service where the woman's need for privacy and dignity is respected. These new developments will radically improve maternity, gynaecology and neonatal healthcare, both at local and national level.

It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals, including the relocation of the Rotunda to Connolly Hospital campus in Blanchardstown, must progress through detailed appraisal, planning, design and procurement, in line with the requirements of the Public Spending Code, before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

The HSE Capital Plan 2019, published recently, provides for the project brief to be progressed.

## Care of the Elderly Provision

1159. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the cost overruns in respect of the senior care centres programme; if an assessment has been carried out of the likely impact of cost overruns on the senior care centres programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36038/19]

1162. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the proposed 100-bed senior care centre on the grounds of Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown; if cost overruns will have an impact on the proposed 100-bed senior care centre; if so, the impact in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36041/19]

1166. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the amount of capital investment proposed in respect of each senior care centre by county in tabular form. [36045/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1159, 1162

and 1166 together.

Community Nursing Units (CNUs) are an essential part of our national healthcare infrastructure. However, many units are housed in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. The Government's Capital Investment Programme 2016-2021 provided for investments totalling €535m to replace, upgrade and refurbish up to 90 public facilities across the country, which would bring them into compliance with new regulations from 2022.

The programme provides for a phased approach, with new builds and larger projects sequenced towards the end of the six-year period. Most of the funding comes from the Exchequer Capital Plan, with €150m to be sourced through Public Private Partnerships.

In considering the phasing of the projects over the 6 years, the HSE has had regard to the Capital funding available each year. The programme of works prioritises the completion of smaller projects in the earlier years of the Plan with larger projects, including those to be developed under the PPP model, to be commenced later.

Through normal ongoing engagements with the HSE it has recently advised that significant progress has been made and almost 30% of the projects have been completed to date. Construction is underway on a number of others, while the remainder are at various stages of appraisal, planning and/or design.

The HSE has indicated to the Department of Health two and a half years in advance of the December 2021 regulatory deadline that it expects over 80% of the projects will be complete or under construction by that time. While this represents substantial progress on the Programme, it is recognised that not all centres are likely to be completed within the originally planned timeframe.

The HSE has recently commenced an integrated package of work to examine each of the CNU projects as to their current status, next stages of development, timelines and costs.

The Department and the HSE are in early engagement which allows for the issues to be worked through to determine the best course of action and to discuss the extent of additional costs and any measures that could be adopted to mitigate challenges arising.

The HSE Capital Plan, published recently, provides for €220m capital funding to the CNU programme over the period 2019 to 2021 and also sets out the current status of all projects within the programme.

As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to the status of individual projects.

### **Care of the Elderly Provision**

1160. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the serious shortage of beds in the Dublin 15 area for older persons in need of both step-down care and nursing home care; his plans to provide adequate care for older persons in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36039/19]

**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.

### Care of the Elderly Provision

1161. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the healthcare facilities at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown available to older persons that need nursing home care and in need of specialised step-down care; the number of beds including step-down care beds available to older persons in need of such care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36040/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 1162 answered with Question No. 1159.*

### Care of the Elderly Provision

1163. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health if the senior care centre at Woodlands on the Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown campus has been closed; his plans for an alternative use of the Woodlands building and complex; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36042/19]

**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.

### Care of the Elderly Provision

1164. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the number of step-down care beds and long-term residential care beds, respectively at St Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park. [36043/19]

**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.

### Care of the Elderly Provision

1165. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the senior care centres available to older persons in the Dublin 15 and Navan Road areas in tabular form; the name of each institution that provides either day care or long-term residential care and respite care; the location of each of these facilities; and the number of beds available in each facility. [36044/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 1166 answered with Question No. 1159.*

### Blind Welfare Allowance Data

1167. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the blind welfare allowance in 2019. [36047/19]

**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.

### **Blind Welfare Allowance Eligibility**

1168. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health his plans to taper the withdrawal of the blind welfare allowance in circumstances in which a blind person takes up employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36048/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Blind Welfare Allowance is a means tested, supplementary payment, which is administered by the Health Service Executive. It is paid on a weekly basis to eligible persons from 18 years of age, who are blind or visually impaired who are in receipt of an existing Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection income maintenance payment; or an equivalent type Social Security payment from another country; or to eligible persons whose income is below the combined Blind Pension rate and Blind Welfare Allowance rate.

As this is a means tested payment, the rate of the Blind Welfare Allowance payable is determined on the basis of the total assessable income of the applicant.

As the administration of the Blind Welfare Allowance is a service matter, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be referred to the Health Service Executive, for a more detailed reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 1169 answered with Question No. 829.*

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

1170. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for orthodontic services will be prioritised for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36055/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Patient Transfers**

1171. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) can be transferred between hospitals to gain access to treatment; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [36056/19]

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

### **Hospital Facilities**

1172. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans for the development of a new endoscopy unit at Naas hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36057/19]

1204. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delays in the planned expansion of Naas General Hospital; the further reason an extension was required for planning permission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36275/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1172 and 1204 together.

The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan includes a number of projects at Naas General Hospital, including the development of new units for endoscopy, day procedures, physical medicine and oncology, for which planning permission has been granted.

The Capital Plan also includes a new acute mental health unit, for which the design team been appointed and the design is being progressed with a view to making an application for planning permission in the first half of 2020.

It is important to note that all proposals must progress through a number of approval stages, in line with the Public Spending Code. The final decision to proceed with the construction of a project cannot be made until the tender process has been completed and the costings reviewed to ensure that the proposal delivers value for money and remains affordable, and that sufficient funding is available to fund the project to completion, including equipping and commissioning costs.

The delivery of capital projects is a dynamic process and is subject to the successful completion of the various approval stages, which can impact on the timeline for delivery. In some instances, this can necessitate an extension of the planning permission, as in the case of Naas General Hospital.

The HSE actively manages the capital programme in order to ensure it has flexibility to progress as many projects as possible within the available funding, particularly in the event of any project not progressing as anticipated.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

1173. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the six-month wait for the prostate-specific membrane antigen prostate scan to diagnose PROTRACT cancer; the reason for the high cost of the scan, that is, €1,850; and his views on whether such a service should be discounted or subsidised to make it more affordable. [36059/19]

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

### **Hospital Staff Recruitment**

1174. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the recruitment of a dermatologist in the Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar. [36060/19]

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

*Question No. 1175 answered with Question No. 887.*

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

1176. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of respite care, occupational therapy, home support and speech and language therapy appointments in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36072/19]

**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.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

1177. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if home help will be sanctioned in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36078/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1178. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36080/19]

**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.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1179. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the provision of a drug to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36081/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. As Minister for Health I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE they must first submit an application to have it added to the reimbursement list.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess the additional benefit of the applicant medicine compared to existing treatments available and the additional cost compared to the cost of existing treatments in their recommendation.

On behalf of the people of Ireland, the HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. Where a manufacturer has failed to meet the requirements as set out in the 2013 Health Act, it can lead to a negotiation process. The purpose of those negotiations is to assist the applicant manufacturer in meeting the statutory requirements in as swift a timeframe as possible.

The HSE commissioned a HTA on Pembrolizumab as monotherapy for the adjuvant treatment of adults with Stage III melanoma and lymph node involvement in December 2018. The NCPE received the HTA submission from the manufacturer on 16 July 2019.

I am advised that the assessment is currently in process.

### **Pension Provisions**

1180. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if an outstanding pension and arrears payment to be made to a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36100/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

1181. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a care plan put in place in recent weeks will be examined for a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that areas of the plan have not been put in place. [36101/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services**

1182. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the timeline of the implementation of the formal pathway between hospitals (details supplied); when the agreement will be formalised; if a date for commencement of the service in County Cavan has been chosen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36113/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1183. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 894 of 26 March 2019, to which no reply was received, when a reply will issue regarding waiting times for early intervention teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36126/19]

**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 Properties**

1184. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 844 of 26 March 2019, to which no reply was received from Beaumont Hospital, when a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36127/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I understand the Health Service Executive is continuing to pursue this matter with Beaumont Hospital and I have asked them to respond directly to you.

### **Pension Provisions**

1185. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the person or body a person (details supplied) should contact regarding the person's HSE pension; if same can be accessed before retirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36134/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Departmental Internships**

1186. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36150/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In the 5 years to 28 August 2019 my Department did not issue or grant unpaid internships and does not intend to do so in the future.

My Department participates in a small number of formal internship or work experience schemes, such as the "Job Shadow Day" initiative by the Irish Association of Supported Employment, under which we host a person with a disability for one day every year.

The Department is also participating in the "Willing, Able and Mentoring" Programme, for graduates with a disability. This is a paid, six month internship and a graduate will shortly begin work in an area of the Department directly relevant to their particular qualifications, to assist the individual in gaining valuable work experience in their own specialised field.

### **Hospital Beds Closures**

1187. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when short-term beds in West Kerry Community Hospital will be brought back into use (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36157/19]

**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.

### **Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

1188. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if he will prioritise and outline the measures he will take to address the significant drug-related activity that has escalated in Drogheda, County Louth and its surrounding areas in view of the murder that took place on 27 August 2019 in Clogherhead, County Louth; the action he will take to address the perceived complete lack of drug outreach workers in Drogheda; if he has assessed or progressed matters relating to funding a Mulvey-type report to assess and plan appropriately to manage the drugs crisis in view of the recent drug-related criminality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36158/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Various state agencies, led by the local authority and involving An Garda Síochána, HSE, Probation Services, Tusla, Education and Training Boards, and the North East Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force, are working together to address drug-related activity in Drogheda.

The introduction of measures to address drug related criminal activity primarily comes within the remit of An Garda Síochána and the Minister for Justice and Equality.

The remit of the Department of Health and the HSE is to reduce harm and support recovery from drug use, in line with the public health approach set out in the national drug strategy.

The HSE has appointed a senior counsellor with the priority of developing and supporting counselling services in Drogheda. The HSE also intends to recruit an additional outreach worker in Drogheda to enhance its existing service. I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with an update on this post.

In March 2019, I announced additional funding of €1 million for implementation of the National Drugs Strategy. This funding, which will be provided on a recurring, multi-annual basis, will address the priorities set down in the Strategy. CHOs and drug and alcohol task forces were invited to submit proposals under this funding. These proposals are currently being assessed.

I visited the North East earlier this year to hear about drug related issues in the area and the impact they have on families. The issues are multi-faceted and require an inter-agency response. I'm confident that the HSE and the North East Drug and Alcohol Task Force are contributing to this response from a public health perspective.

### **Psychological Assessments**

1189. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be assessed by a psychologist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36160/19]

**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.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

1190. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if persons who are newly diagnosed with cervical cancer must pay for their own independent reviews, especially in circumstances in which all previous smears were normal before the cancer diagnosis. [36171/19]

1191. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the reason patients who were diagnosed or will be diagnosed in the coming months as having cervical cancer will not be able to avail of the HSE cancer audit to review their smears in order to avoid a financial burden on cancer patients who wish to have their smears reviewed. [36172/19]

1197. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if women diagnosed with cervical cancer that were not included in the previous review process can request a review of their screening history; if so, if the HSE will fund and support such a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36214/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1190, 1191 and 1197 together.

Since 2010, as part of quality assurance measures, CervicalCheck reviewed the screening history of every woman notified to it as having a diagnosis of cervical cancer, who had previously been screened by the programme. The objective of audit and quality review at CervicalCheck was to facilitate continued improvement and ongoing learning within the programme. Following the issues which arose in relation to the non-disclosure of audit findings, a decision was taken to pause the audit. The Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Gabriel Scally made a number of recommendations, one of which was that “Audit should continue to be an important component of cervical screening as this complies with all good clinical practice. Common, robust and externally validated approaches to the design, conduct, evaluation and oversight of audits should be developed across the screening services.” (Recommendation 26).

As set out in the approved plan for the implementation of Dr Scally’s recommendations, in order to address and implement this recommendation, the HSE established an Expert Group within the National Screening Service (NSS) to review the clinical audit processes for interval cancers across all screening programmes. This work is ongoing and is expected to be complete by the end of this year, following which recommendations will be implemented.

While the audit process carried out by CervicalCheck is paused, any person may seek their slides from a laboratory for independent review should they wish to do so.

It is important to emphasise that Dr Scally found no evidence to suggest deficiencies in screening quality in any laboratory. Cervical screening does not prevent all cases of cervical cancer and, unfortunately, some women will still develop cervical cancer despite regular screening. If 1,000 women are screened, about 20 women will have abnormal cervical cells. About 15 women will have these cells detected through screening. About five women will not have these cells detected through screening and may develop cervical cancer.

### **Protected Disclosures**

1192. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the safeguards in place to protect the identity of persons who make a protected disclosure in instances in which the protected disclosures are shared with external consultants; if the person who made the protected disclosure is notified in advance; if his or her consent is required in order to share the disclosure with external consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36203/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Section 16 (1) of the Protected Disclosures

Act 2014 provides that a person to whom a protected disclosure is made, and any person to whom a protected disclosure is referred in the performance of that person's duties, shall not disclose to another person any information that might identify the person by whom the protected disclosure was made.

This does not apply however, where:

(a) the person to whom the protected disclosure was made or referred shows that he or she took all reasonable steps to avoid so disclosing any such information,

(b) the person to whom the protected disclosure was made or referred reasonably believes that the person by whom the protected disclosure was made does not object to the disclosure of any such information,

(c) the person to whom the protected disclosure was made or referred reasonably believes that disclosing any such information is necessary for—

(i) the effective investigation of the relevant wrongdoing concerned,

(ii) the prevention of serious risk to the security of the State, public health, public safety or the environment, or

(iii) the prevention of crime or prosecution of a criminal offence,

or

(d) the disclosure is otherwise necessary in the public interest or is required by law.

Notwithstanding this, the Department of Public Expenditure's Guidance recommends that the discloser should be afforded the opportunity to give his/her consent to the information provided in the disclosure being shared with a third party.

My Department's Policy and Procedures provides that where action is to be taken following a disclosure, except in exceptional cases, the disclosure recipient should contact the discloser and, where possible, gain the informed consent of the discloser, prior to any action being taken that could identify the discloser.

Where it is decided that it is necessary to disclose information that may or will disclose the identity of the discloser, the discloser should be informed of this decision, except in exceptional cases. The discloser may request a review of this decision and a review should be carried out, where practicable.

### **Health Services Provision**

1193. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a special bed will be assigned in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36204/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Home Care Packages Provision**

1194. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a home care package for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; if recent correspondence to the person from the HSE will be noted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36210/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Funding**

1195. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an occupational therapy and physiotherapy appointment for a person (details supplied); if the matter will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36211/19]

**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.

### **Occupational Therapy**

1196. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an occupational therapy appointment will be scheduled urgently in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36213/19]

**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.

*Question No. 1197 answered with Question No. 1190.*

### **Home Help Service**

1198. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; if home help will be expedited for the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36215/19]

**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.

### **Cyber Security Data**

1199. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in respect of cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36230/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** While my Department does not release specific details in relation to staff employed for operational and security reasons, the expertise and qualifications of the staff in our ICT Unit covers a broad range of capabilities including Computer Science, Application Development and Cyber Security.

My Department implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting our ICT systems, data and infrastructure. Contracts are in place with several external parties to provide preventative controls like firewalls, anti-virus and endpoint protection alongside an advanced network intrusion detection system.

A register of security breaches is maintained by the Security Officer. This is proactively monitored and measures are implemented to mitigate breaches in the future. ICT risks are recorded in the Departmental Risk Register with contingency plans in place to mitigate these.

My Department continues to engage with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) based in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and receives regular updates from the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE).

### **Information and Communications Technology**

1200. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36246/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department has Incident Management (IM) and Technology Recovery plans (TR) in place.

A Departmental ICT Disaster Recovery Site is maintained in a public service data centre, which can provide key ICT services in the event of loss of access to the primary data centre.

Following the move to new headquarters last year and the consequent infrastructure and facility changes, the preparation of a tender is at an advanced stage for the provision of a Business Continuity Plan and for the updating of the IM and TR plans. The Business Continuity Plan will also address the wider issues of business processes outside of ICT.

### **Health Care Infrastructure Provision**

1201. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the details and timeframe of a development (details supplied). [36253/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare services and infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1202. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a bed will be made available for a person (details supplied) at a unit in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36255/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Disability Support Services Funding**

1203. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health when funding will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36260/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 1204 answered with Question No. 1172.*

### **Health Services Provision**

1205. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of access to treatment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36276/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Disability Support Services**

1206. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36277/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Govern-

ment is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Car Parks**

1207. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the report into the cost of hospital car parks across the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36281/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Hospitals which charge parking fees are cognisant of the financial implications parking costs can have on patients and their families, particularly those with long-term illnesses. Some hospitals have introduced a maximum daily fixed parking charge, thus capping this expense. I understand that some hospitals also provide reduced rate parking for long-term patients and visitors for whom the payment of the full rate would cause hardship.

I have made it clear I want to see progress made in this area and I am working with my Department and the HSE in this regard. In March 2018, I requested the HSE to conduct a review of hospital car parking charges with a view to establishing clear national guidelines in the area. My Department and the HSE are currently engaging on a draft implementation plan to accompany the review report.

*Question No. 1208 answered with Question No. 887.*

### **Disability Support Services**

1209. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting for occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36286/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1210. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36288/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1211. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36289/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1212. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36290/19]

**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.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1213. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36291/19]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

1214. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment for orthodontic treatment. [36292/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1215. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36293/19]

**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.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1216. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [36294/19]

**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.

### **Orthodontic Services Provision**

1217. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment for orthodontic treatment. [36295/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Emergency Departments Data**

1218. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number presenting at the accident and emergency department of Mayo University Hospital from January 2019 to date in comparison to the same period in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36297/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** This is a very busy period for our health services, with many hospitals reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. For the first seven months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital EDs increased by 3.3%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 2.3% compared to the same period last year.

Provisional TrolleyGAR figures show 9,138 people were counted on trolleys in August, 5% higher than last month (8,671) and 31% higher than August 2018 (6,997). Provisional trolley numbers for the year-to-date from January to August were 71,551, a 3% increase compared to 69,465 for the same period last year.

The HSE has advised that hospitals are reporting very high levels of demand, high patient acuity, and high bed occupancy, especially in the over 75-year old cohort of patients. In addition, delayed discharges are above the expected activity threshold set out in the National Service Plan. Hospitals and Community Health Organisations are reporting constrained options for supported discharges, particularly in relation to home support and long-term care.

The Department is engaging extensively with the HSE to identify mitigating actions to bring down trolley numbers and waiting times in the ED.

With regard to the Deputy's specific question, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with the requested information.

### **Mental Health Services Funding**

1219. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to the adult mental health unit at Mayo University Hospital in each of the years 2014 to 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36298/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Mental Health Services Staff**

1220. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff vacancies at the adult mental health unit of Mayo University Hospital by post; the reason each post is vacant; the timeframe each post has been vacant; and when each post will be filled [36299/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

1221. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the guidelines governing programmes that are put in place for patients attending a mental health facility in terms of activities, hours spent with a psychiatrist or counsellor and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36300/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Mental Health Services Data**

1222. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients that presented at the adult mental health unit of Mayo University Hospital in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36301/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### Hospital Waiting Lists Data

1223. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the wait time for outpatient appointments at Mayo University Hospital and University Hospital Galway, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36302/19]

1227. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list to see a paediatrician in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36306/19]

1228. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting an outpatient appointment at Mayo University Hospital and University Hospital Galway, respectively, from January 2019 to date in comparison to the same period in 2018. [36307/19]

1229. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on waiting lists at Mayo University Hospital and University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36308/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1223 and 1227 to 1229, inclusive, together.

Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

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

A key element of the Plan is the stabilisation of the Outpatient Waiting List. Under the Plan the HSE, in line with the National Service Plan, will aim to deliver 3.3 million outpatient appointments, of which approximately 1 million will be first appointments. For its part the NTPF will aim to deliver 40,000 first Outpatient appointments.

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

thalmology, ENT, Orthopaedics, and Dermatology.

In addition, the Department of Health has established a Working Group comprised of representatives from the HSE, NTPF, and Departmental officials, to examine ways of improving access for patients waiting for scheduled care. Part of this work includes developing initiatives which will move care to the most appropriate setting, and at the lowest level of complexity.

In relation to the data requested, the latest published NTPF waiting list figures show that are 2,128 patients on the Mayo University Hospital IPDC waiting list. Of these, 65% (1,373) are waiting 9 months or less and 76% (1,613) are waiting 12 months or less. There are 8,839 patients on the Mayo University Hospital Outpatient waiting list. Of these 60% (5,265) are waiting 12 months or less.

The latest figures show that there are 8,853 patients on Galway University Hospital IPDC waiting list. Of these, 66% (5,827) are waiting 9 months or less and 75% (6,688) are waiting 12 months or less. There are 42,683 patients on the Galway University Hospital Outpatient waiting list. Of these 69% (29,598) are waiting 12 months or less.

The NTPF have advised that currently a total of 2,130 children with an area of residence in Co Mayo are waiting to see a paediatrician. In relation to the number of children waiting for an outpatient appointment at Mayo and Galway University Hospitals from January to July in both 2019 and 2018, please see the document supplied.

In relation to the requested wait time for outpatient appointments at Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital, please see table below.

*Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital outpatient waiting times*

-	0-3 mths	3-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12-15 mths	15-18 mths	18-21 mths	21-24 mths	24-36 mths	36-48 mths	48+	Total
Mayo Hospital	2755	1160	698	652	662	549	289	295	940	531	308	8839
Galway Hospital	13620	7158	4778	4042	3280	2392	1701	1401	3270	865	176	42683

Number of children waiting for an outpatient appointment at Mayo and Galway University Hospitals from January to July in both 2019 and 2018

	2018	2019
Galway University Hospital		
Jan	4808	4567
Feb	4687	4606
Mar	4683	4676
Apr	4566	4634
May	4583	4589
Jun	4550	4560
Jul	4507	4555
Mayo General Hospital		
Jan	1484	1374
Feb	1459	1430

	2018	2019
Mar	1513	1465
Apr	1598	1499
May	1466	1540
Jun	1527	1516
Jul	1481	1429

### Occupational Therapy Data

1224. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for occupational therapy in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36303/19]

**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.

### Speech and Language Therapy Data

1225. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for speech and language therapy in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36304/19]

**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.

### Audiology Services Data

1226. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list for an audiology appointment in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36305/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

*Questions Nos. 1227 to 1229, inclusive, answered with Question No. 1223.*

### Home Care Packages Data

1230. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the home care waiting list in County Mayo in comparison to the same period in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36309/19]

**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.

## **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data**

1231. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents in County Mayo receiving counselling and services from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; the number of children and adolescents on a waiting list to receive such services in County Mayo; the average wait time on this list; the number of children receiving treatment in adult mental health services in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36310/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## **Mental Health Services Staff**

1232. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant mental health staff posts in County Mayo in child mental health services and adult mental health services by unit; the details of each post vacancy; the length of time each post has been vacant; when each post will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36311/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

1233. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting for a cataract operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36312/19]

**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.

## **National Treatment Purchase Fund**

1234. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if dental and optical treatment for children will be included under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; the procedures in

respect of dental and optical work that can be carried out under the scheme; if it can be used for cases in which there is a long backlog for young persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36315/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by officials in my Department and will be provided to the Deputy directly as soon as it becomes available.

### Hospital Appointments Status

1235. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting for a knee operation since 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36316/19]

**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.

### Nursing Homes Support Scheme

1236. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if sufficient funding will be ensured for the fair deal nursing home scheme to meet the demand for the remainder of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36317/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme, commonly referred to as *Fair Deal*, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

As outlined in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2019, the NHSS is expected to support 23,042 people in 2019. The NHSS budget for 2019 is €985.8m which is an increase of €24.3m over its 2018 budget.

Over the last two years, an additional €45 million has been provided to NHSS budget for the continued provision of services in line with pricing and demand. As part of normal governance and performance management arrangements The Department and the HSE maintain regular service area engagements, which also form part of ongoing collaborative work on issues relating to older persons policy and service delivery.

The HSE have noted that the number of residents in nursing homes whom are supported by

the NHSS to be ahead of forecast for the year to date. The latest available performance reports indicate that there are 23,236 people supported in the Scheme at the end of July this year. This is significantly more people than forecast and this creates a challenge. The HSE has also advised that the cost of care continues to rise and the average weekly cost per bed is higher in 2019 than anticipated.

Having regard to the available budget and the demand for support, the HSE releases funding in a managed way to ensure that the operation of the NHSS remains within the budgetary allocation. The HSE cannot legally fund clients beyond the determined funding allocation, and the appropriate mechanism relating to funding allocations is through the estimates and budgetary process. To manage the available funds throughout the year, a national placement list for the release of funding is operated by the HSE, to enable it to operate within budget. Funding issues to applicants in chronological order, to ensure equity nationally. Approved applicants are placed on the national placement list in order of their approval date and funding is released to applicants in order of their place on this list. The length of time spent on the placement list depends on the number of applicants currently receiving financial support and the number of new applications. Where demand is higher, the time spent on the waiting list may increase having regard for the prudent management of the Scheme's budget.

The HSE has put in place arrangements that a monthly analysis of performance of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme continues to ensure that the maximum number of new entrants are approved with the shortest possible waiting times while remaining on track to deliver a balanced budgetary position by year end. My Department and the HSE will continue to closely engage on this matter, including with a view to improving the approval time frame for release of funding for approved cases.

### **Hospitals Funding**

1237. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the situation of a hospital (details supplied) in County Cork facing closure; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact patients will have to be accommodated within a directly funded HSE facility; if the appropriate funding requirement will be made available to retain the hospital; and if the current financial model of the hospital will be examined to ensure viability of same. [36318/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data**

1238. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time up to 31 August 2019 for persons that have been approved for the fair deal scheme to access a nursing home by county in tabular form; his views on whether the wait is too long and is having a negative effect on discharges from level 4 acute hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36321/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme, commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

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As outlined in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2019, the NHSS is expected to support 23,042 people in 2019. The NHSS budget for 2019 is €985.8m which is an increase of €24.3m over its 2018 budget.

The HSE has noted that the number of residents in nursing homes whom are supported by the NHSS is ahead of forecast for the year to date. The latest available performance reports indicate that there are 23,236 people supported in the Scheme at the end of July this year. This is significantly more people than forecast and this creates a challenge. The HSE has also advised that the cost of care continues to rise and the average weekly cost per bed is higher in 2019 than anticipated.

Having regard to the available budget and the demand for support, the HSE releases funding in a managed way to ensure that the operation of the NHSS remains within the budgetary allocation. To manage the available funds throughout the year, a national placement list for the release of funding is operated by the HSE, to enable it to operate within budget. Funding issues to applicants in chronological order, to ensure equity nationally. Approved applicants are placed on the national placement list in order of their approval date and funding is released to applicants in order of their place on this list. The length of time spent on the placement list depends on the number of applicants currently receiving financial support and the number of new applications. Where demand is higher, the time spent on the waiting list may increase having regard for the prudent management of the Scheme's budget.

The current average wait time on the placement list is at about 7 weeks which is, of course, a matter of concern for me. My Department and the HSE are working to ensure that the resources that are available are deployed in the most effective way possible and deliver the best outcomes for older people. This will require an integrated approach across community, residential and other service areas including Acute Hospitals.

Delayed Transfers of Care continue to represent a significant challenge to the Health Service as a whole, and for some hospital patients their ultimate destination will be into transitional care or long term residential care supported by the NHSS. However, there are a number of challenges apart from those related to NHSS, that lead to delayed transfers of care. The Delayed Discharges Implementation Group has been established to address these challenges through the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the Report of the Independent Expert Review of Delayed Discharges.

In relation to the operational matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Home Care Packages Data**

1239. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons up to 31 August 2019 waiting for a home care support package by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36322/19]

**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**

1240. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the most cost-effective way to deliver care for older persons is a home care support package at an average cost of €165 weekly; his further views on whether the current waiting lists are not facilitating a timely delivery of home care supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36323/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

1241. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting for a high-resolution manometry 24-hour PH study at St. James's Hospital to diagnose the cause of their incapacity to swallow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36327/19]

**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.

### **Autism Support Services**

1242. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in County Mayo on the waiting list for an autism assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36333/19]

**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.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

1243. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the turnaround times in the primary care reimbursement service specifically through the cross-Border treatment scheme; his views on the adequacy of the service being delivered; his plans to reduce the waiting times for persons that have applied and been approved; the way in which he plans to deal with waiting times which can be up to six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36342/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE is responsible for the operation of the Cross Border Directive and the management of the HSE Cross Border Directive (CBD) office is an operational matter for the HSE. Officials of my Department recently met with the HSE to discuss this matter and have requested the Executive to examine current resourcing of the CBD office, and to identify necessary actions to mitigate waiting times arising from current demands for the Scheme. As the HSE have operational responsibility for the CBD office I have also referred the Deputies question to them for direct reply.

### **Addiction Treatment Services**

1244. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to allow general practitioners administer a drug (details supplied) to help patients combat addiction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36343/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** The Misuse of Drugs (Supervision of Prescription and Supply of Methadone and Medicinal Products containing Buprenorphine authorised for Opioid Substitution Treatment) Regulations 2017 came into effect on 22 November 2017. The purpose of these Regulations is to provide access to certain buprenorphine-based medicinal products for Opioid Substitution Treatment (including buprenorphine/naloxone (suboxone) and buprenorphine only) on the same statutory basis as methadone.

The phased rollout of suboxone commenced on 01 May 2018 and allowed for prescribing of this product by trained Doctors working in HSE Addiction service and specifically approved Level 1 and Level 2 GPs outside the Dublin region. This rollout then extended to suitably trained Level 1 and 2 GPs within the Dublin region in October 2018.

The HSE Addiction services have provided training to HSE Addiction staff and community based GPs in relation to buprenorphine containing products to include the prescribing and dispensing of suboxone on seven separate occasions since October 2017. In addition, the ICGP in conjunction with the HSE provided training to community based GPs in relation to buprenorphine and buprenorphine/naloxone in October 2018.

This has resulted in an increase in the number of patients receiving treatment for Opioid Dependence with suboxone from 118 in 2014 to 254 in 2019 (January to July).

The provision and expansion of buprenorphine/naloxone (suboxone) prescribing is in line with one of the key actions under the National Drug and Alcohol Strategy Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - to improve the availability of Opioid Substitution Treatments (2.1.14).

The provision of this medication is expected to continue to expand over the coming year and GPs are continually being encouraged to become trained to prescribe this medication. Further training of Community GPs will come under the remit of the ICGP who have the expertise and responsibility to provide training to GPs.

1245. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the number of positions in the health service by region and type of position in cases in which an applicant received an offer of a post but was subsequently informed by the HSE that the position is on hold due to budgetary restraints and continues to require the approval from the National Director; the quarter in each case during which the offer of a position was initially made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36344/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

1246. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive reimbursement through the cross-border treatment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36349/19]

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

### **Healthcare Infrastructure Provision**

1247. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health the status of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36351/19]

**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.

### **Organ Donation**

1248. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health the progress regarding the organ donation opt-out scheme; the timeline for delivery of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36353/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government approved the publication of the General Scheme of a Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill on the 1st May 2019.

Work has commenced on the drafting of the Bill in collaboration with the Office of Parliamentary Council.

The General Scheme has been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for pre-legislative scrutiny. A date for the start of this process has not yet been set.

### **General Practitioner Services Provision**

1249. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the Shannondoc locum shortage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36354/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Atypical Working Scheme is managed, monitored and administered by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service within the Department of Justice and Equality. The current terms applying to this scheme have been in place since 2015.

The Health Service Executive has recently become aware of challenges faced by agencies providing general practitioner services, particularly GP out of hours services, in relation to the recruitment and retention of suitable locum general practitioners from abroad. The current terms of the Atypical Working Scheme have been identified as a significant factor in these challenges.

GP out of hours services play a key role in the provision of community primary care services, and in this regard the HSE is reviewing this matter and is liaising with the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in the Department of Justice and Equality with a view to examining how best to address the challenges as identified in terms of the Atypical Working Scheme.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1250. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36356/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Home Help Service Provision**

1251. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a home help package as approved will be provided to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36359/19]

**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.

### **Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland**

1252. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary

Question No. 1265 of 23 July 2019, the grade of staff involved in the administrative process of reviewing applications from overseas applicants, in particular the grade of five staff of various grades from other departments within the NMBI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36362/19]

1253. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1264 of 23 July 2019, the number of persons waiting to have their overseas applications processed as at 31 August 2019, by length of time in months in tabular form; the number and grade of all staff working on the backlog; the anticipated timeframe to clear the backlog; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36363/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1252 and 1253 together.

As these questions relate to operational matters I have referred them to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland for attention and direct reply.

### **Hospital Accommodation Provision**

1254. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the status of the plan to provide prefabricated theatres at Merlin Park Regional Hospital, Galway; when the decision was first taken to go for a prefabricated solution; when tenders were sought, received and a preferred tender selected; the original timeline for completion; the current timeline; the projected capacity of the new facility over the current capacity at the hospital; the current capacity and the number of patients treated to date in 2019; the interim measures being taken to make up for the shortfall in capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36369/19]

**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.

### **Patient Files**

1255. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health the assistance available to a person (details supplied) in order to locate missing information in relation to their vaccination record; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36380/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive collects and maintains vaccination records, I have asked them to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Respite Care Services**

1256. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the steps that can be taken in relation to respite beds at Kenmare Hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36381/19]

**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 Funding

1257. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional financial resources will be provided to the HSE for home support in view of the delays in providing such support to patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36385/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides for 17.9m home support hours to be delivered to 53,000 and Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year.

As at 30th June 2019

- there were 51,896 people in receipt of home support and 233 in receipt of an Intensive Home Care Package.

- 8,591,543 home support hours have been provided nationally

Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support continues to grow as the population aged over 65 years' increases. All those waiting are assessed and provided with a service, if appropriate, as soon as possible having regard to their assessed needs. In addition, people being discharged from acute hospitals, who are in a position to return home with supports, are prioritised. As of 30th June 2019, 7,217 people nationally were waiting for funding for a home support service. The numbers on the waiting list reflect a point in time and those people who are on the waiting list are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resource and as determined by local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs. If clients are assessed and approved for home support and funding is not immediately available, these cases are included on the waiting list for funding. The level of activity and associated costs in relation to home support is monitored on an on-going basis by the HSE.

The level of funding available for my Department for next year is being considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process which is currently underway. Pending completion of this process it is not appropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop a new stand-alone, statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home support services. Developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home support services. The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the new scheme in 2021.

## Children's Eye Care Services

1258. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will extend the scheme for free eye care for primary school children to include secondary school children in view of the fact that once a child leaves the primary education system they receive no financial help for glasses or eye tests unless they hold a full medical card. [36388/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Eye examinations, treatments and appliances for children are provided by the HSE under the Health Act 1970.

Such services are provided to children until completion of primary education and to children up to the age of 16 who have had defects noticed at child or school health examinations at

primary level. Eye care services are also provided by the HSE to children from completion of primary school up to 16 years if they are medical card holders or dependants of medical card holders. I have no plans at present to review eligibility for eye care services.

### **Primary Care Centres**

1259. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a development (details supplied) in County Cork. [36401/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1260. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if surgery will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); if a date for same will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36402/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Home Care Packages Funding**

1261. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if specific additional funding will be provided to the HSE to provide additional home support in counties Cavan and Monaghan in view of the delays in providing such support in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36405/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The 2019 National Service Plan 2019 provides for 17.9m home support hours to be delivered to 53,000 and Intensive Home Care Packages delivered to approximately 235 people with approximately 360,000 hours delivered in the full year.

As at 30 June 2019,

- there were 51,896 people in receipt of home support (4,033 in CHO 1) and 233 in receipt

of an Intensive Home Care Package (9 in CHO 1).

- 8,591,543 home support hours have been provided nationally with 844,226 hours provided in CHO 1 and a further 24,126 hours through the IHCPs.

Despite the significant level of service provision, the demand for Home Support continues to grow as the population aged over 65 years' increases. All those waiting are assessed and provided with a service, if appropriate, as soon as possible having regard to their assessed needs. In addition, people being discharged from acute hospitals, who are in a position to return home with supports, are prioritised. As of 30 June 2019, 7,217 people nationally were waiting for funding for a home support service. The numbers on the waiting list reflect a point in time and those people who are on the waiting list are reviewed, as funding becomes available, to ensure that individual cases continue to be dealt with on a priority basis within the available resource and as determined by local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs. If clients are assessed and approved for home support and funding is not immediately available, these cases are included on the waiting list for funding. The level of activity and associated costs in relation to home support is monitored on an on-going basis by the HSE.

The level of funding available for my Department for next year is being considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process which is currently underway. Pending completion of this process it is not appropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

The Department is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop a new stand-alone, statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home support services. Developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home support services. The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to the introduction of the new scheme in 2021.

### **Disability Support Services Provision**

1262. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will receive occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36407/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data**

1263. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in nursing homes under the fair deal scheme who have a family home registered in their name which is included as part of the assessment for the scheme; the number of these houses that still have a spouse or family member residing in the property; the number of these family homes that

are rented and generating an income; the number of these houses that are vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36408/19]

**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.

### **Tattooing and Body Piercing Regulation**

1264. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health his plans to regulate tattoo providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36409/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There is no licensing or regulation of the tattooing or body piercing industries in Ireland and there are currently no plans to introduce regulation or legislation in the area of tattooing and body piercing. However, where a tattoo or body piercing business has been implicated as a possible source in a case of a confirmed scheduled notifiable disease, such cases can be investigated by the HSE Environmental Health Service in conjunction with the HSE Public Health Service under the provisions of S.I. No. 390/1981 - Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 and Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 276 of 2016).

In the absence of a statutory framework being in place, my Department and the Health Service Executive took the initiative to develop guidelines in relation to tattooing and body piercing industry – these guidelines are currently in the process of being finalised. It is anticipated that the publication of this Guidance will promote and enhance evidence based best practice in hygiene standards and infection control. Discussions will shortly be held with the Health Service Executive in relation to publication, dissemination and support following publication of the guidance document. Given the absence of a clear statutory framework and the need to obtain expert views in relation to the area, some delays arose in relation to finalising the final text of the guidelines – however, it is expected that they will be published shortly. Once published, this guidance document will set out a standard of practice in relation to infection prevention and control which all operators should adhere to. This will help to drive up standards and provide a safe environment for clients and practitioners.

### **Appointments to State Boards**

1265. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his role in relation to the appointment of members to the board of a hospital (details supplied); if the positions are nominated following a process conducted by the Public Appointments Service; the categories of persons appointed by him; the name of those appointed by him to the board in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36425/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Dublin Dental Hospital Board consists of a Chairperson and 13 Board members appointed by the Minister, as provided for in the Dublin Dental Hospital (Establishment) Order 1963.

I have recently appointed a new Board for a four year term beginning 02 August 2019. Names of Board members are published on the websites of my Department and of the Dublin Dental Hospital.

I re-appointed the Chairperson of the Board with the approval of Government and I re-

appointed six members to the new Board for a second term in line with Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2014). Five of these members had already gone through a previous selection process organised with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and one was a previous employee of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and had been nominated by that Body. In line with the statutory provision, I appointed three Board members on the nomination of Trinity College and one member on the nomination of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. The three remaining positions were filled through a process conducted by the PAS which advertised the vacancies on 29 March 2019. Applications were sought from candidates with expertise in (i) Risk Management, (ii) Human Resources and (iii) Research.

### **Appointments to State Boards**

1266. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his role in relation to the appointment of members to the board of a hospital (details supplied); if the positions are nominated following a process conducted by the Public Appointments Service; the categories of persons appointed by him; the names of those appointed by him to the board in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36426/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As a voluntary hospital established under the Companies Act, Temple Street Hospital is a subsidiary of the Mater Misericordiae and Children's University Hospitals Limited.

I was not involved in Board appointments of the hospital in question.

### **Appointments to State Boards**

1267. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his role in relation to the appointment of members to the board of a hospital (details supplied); if the positions are nominated following a process conducted by the Public Appointments Service; the categories of persons appointed by him; the name of those appointed by him to the board in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36427/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have no role in the appointment of members to the Board of the hospital in question.

### **Hospital Facilities**

1268. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health when the correct entrance and exit for Dingle Hospital will be used (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36428/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications**

1269. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided for a person (details supplied) who has been approved for the fair deal nursing home support scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36430/19]

**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.

### **Maternity Services**

1270. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his plans to have the perinatal epidemiology centre operate on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36439/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (NPEC) collaborates with Irish maternity services to translate clinical audit data into improved maternity care for families in Ireland. It is an audit and research centre based in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in UCC, Cork.

The NPEC conducts audit and research into pregnancy outcomes in the Irish maternity services, working in collaboration with all 19 of Ireland's maternity and neonatal units.

The Minister for Health currently has no plans to have the National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (NPEC) operate on a statutory basis.

### **Hospital Equipment**

1271. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the necessary resources will be provided to staff to run the DEXA scanner at University Hospital Kerry as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36441/19]

**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.

### **Maternity Services**

1272. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a maternity monthly safety statement covering serious reportable events will be published; his plans to have these issued on a monthly basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36452/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy may be aware the Chief Medical Officer's report on Perinatal Deaths at the Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise (2014), recommended that every maternity service should be required to complete and publish a monthly Patient Safety Statement. The National Maternity Strategy and the HIQA (Portlaoise) Report reinforced that recommendation and monthly Patient Safety Statements are now published by all 19 maternity units.

Maternity Patient Safety Statements are generally published 2 months in arrears and provide individual unit/hospital level detail, including Hospital Activities, Major Obstetric Events, Delivery Metrics and Clinical incidents. The Statements are an important element of the clinical

governance for maternity services and help inform assurances around the safety and quality of our maternity services.

### **HSE National Service Plan**

1273. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE service plan 2019 and capital expenditure plan will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36453/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 2019 HSE National Service Plan was published on Thursday, 20 December 2018.

The plan is available to download from the HSE website:

*<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/media/pressrel/hse-publishes-national-service-plan-2019.html>*

Work is already underway between my Department and the HSE on the National Service Plan 2020. The Legislation (Health Act 2004 as amended) outlines the timeframes that must be adhered to in the publication of the Plan. This outlines that my Department must write to the Health Service Executive to notify it of its allocation for 2020 not later than 21 days after the publication by the Government of the Estimates for Public Services. The legislation further provides that, on receipt of the letter of this determination, the Executive has 21 days to prepare and submit its Service Plan for 2020 for my approval.

Following the submission of the service plan, the legislation provides 21 days for me examine the proposed plan and either:

- a) approve the service plan in the form it is submitted,
- b) approve the service plan with such amendments as I, having consulted with the Executive, may determine, or
- c) issue a direction to the Executive to amend the plan.

The National Service Plan must be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas within 21 days of its approval. Once the Service Plan is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, the HSE will ensure it is published at the earliest possible time.

The HSE Capital Plan was published on Monday 02 September 2019 and provides for the spending of €2.1 billion on health capital projects from 2019 to 2021.

The plan is available to download from the HSE website: *[www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/hse-capital-plan-2019-2021.pdf](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/hse-capital-plan-2019-2021.pdf)*

### **Maternity Services**

1274. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the funding set aside for the maternity strategy in 2019; the amount provided for this purpose in each year since 2016; the amount drawn down and used in each year to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36454/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Implementation of the National Maternity

Strategy is continuing, led by the HSE National Women and Infants Health Programme. The Strategy represents a significant development in the delivery of national maternity policy that will fundamentally change how maternity care is delivered in this country. Funding allocated to-date for the Strategy's implementation has helped to improve the quality and safety of our maternity services through the recruitment of additional midwives, consultants, theatre staff, ultrasonographers and quality and safety managers, by increasing access to routine anomaly scanning and through the roll-out of the Maternal and Newborn Clinical Management System.

In 2019, an additional €4.1 million was allocated to support the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

In relation to your specific query on how funding was used on an annual basis, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1275. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional placements will be provided at a HSE centre (details supplied) in view of the increased demand for services there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36467/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

1276. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health if his recent decision to remove the rehabilitative training allowance to disabled students and school leavers will be reviewed; if he will engage with the relevant stakeholders such as disability groups and service users in seeking a solution that would reinstate the allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36469/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilita-

tive training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector.

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement
- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1277. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of duodopa for Parkinson's disease patients in view of the fact that the health technology assessment process has been completed by the NCPE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36471/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Cancer Incidence**

1278. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons undergoing treatment for cancer. [36476/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Cancer Registry of Ireland estimate that cancer-directed treatment was undertaken for an average of 27,500 cancer patients per year in 2017 and 2018, within 12 months of the patients' diagnosis. Excluding patients only diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancer, an average of 17,700 cancer patients each year have

undergone treatment.

These figures include surgery, radiotherapy, medical oncology or other treatments aimed at (or with the effect of) removing, reducing or preventing cancer growth, whether for curative or palliative purposes. They exclude purely diagnostic procedures, and also exclude treatments for recurrences.

### Medical Card Expenditure

1279. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the average cost per person of providing healthcare under a medical card annually. [36478/19]

**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.

### National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy

1280. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Traveller health action plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36482/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Under the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy*, the HSE is committed to developing and implementing a detailed action plan to continue to address the health needs of Travellers, using a social determinants of health approach.

The HSE circulated a first draft of the action plan in March 2019 for consultation with stakeholders, including the Department of Health. The draft is currently being revised to take account of feedback and is expected to be finalised in quarter 4 2019.

The Department of Health is actively engaged with the HSE and Traveller organisations in developing the action plan. I am very supportive of the action plan and look forward to receiving it in due course.

### Dental Services Provision

1281. **Deputy Michael Collins** asked the Minister for Health if all primary school children in second, fourth and sixth class receive free dental check-ups under the school dental screening scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36484/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Waiting Lists Data

1282. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for robotic surgery for prostate cancer patients at University Hospital Galway in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [36486/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service delivery matter, I have

referred the question to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1283. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the waiting lists for robotic surgery for prostate cancer patients at University Hospital Galway is in line with the recommendations of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026. [36487/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 does not include a specific recommendation on robotic surgery for prostate cancer patients.

As the issue raised involves service delivery, I have referred the question to the HSE for further direct reply.

### **Hospital Accommodation Provision**

1284. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to reopen all 20 beds in the short stay ward at Letterkenny University Hospital in 2019. [36488/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Capacity Review published last year was clear on the need for a major investment in additional capacity in both hospital and community – combined with a wide scale reform of the manner and the location of where health services are provided.

Since 2017, an additional 267 beds have been opened. The Capacity Programme for 2019 provides for the following increases in capacity, as set out in the National Service Plan 2019:

- The provision of 75 acute beds and 70 community beds under the Winter Plan 2018/19 – the HSE has confirmed that all the acute beds and 59 community beds have opened to date. This includes 5 acute beds that opened in Letterkenny University Hospital in June 2019.

- 47 additional beds, including the 40-bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital (STGH), 3 HDU beds in the Mater Hospital and 4 HDU beds in Cork University Hospital.

- preparation of 202 beds, of which 16 are critical care, during 2019, with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in the first quarter of 2020.

- Commencement of works on a 60-bed modular ward in University Hospital Limerick

With regard to the specific questions the Deputy has asked, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1285. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in reimbursing the drug levodopa-carbidopa intestinal gel known as duodopa; when a decision will be made regarding reimbursement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36493/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred

to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1286. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36496/19]

**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.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1287. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the services in place to meet the needs of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36497/19]

**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.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

1288. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if additional resources have been provided to the HSE to eliminate the delays in processing of applications and the issue of payments under the HSE cross border directive scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36499/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE is responsible for the operation of the Cross Border Directive and the management of the HSE Cross Border Directive (CBD) office is an operational matter for the HSE. Officials of my Department recently met with the

HSE to discuss this matter and have requested the Executive to examine current resourcing of the CBD office, and to identify necessary actions to mitigate waiting times arising from current demands for the Scheme. As the HSE have operational responsibility for the CBD office I have also referred the Deputies question to them for direct reply.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

1289. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve services in a mental health area in a region (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36500/19]

**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.

### **Rehabilitation Training Allowance Payments**

1290. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to reinstate the rehabilitative training allowance in view of its importance over the years for many young persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36501/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This 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. The commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector.

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement

- All participants continue to be eligible for Disability Allowance of €203 per week
- All participants continue to be eligible for a free travel pass
- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate 148 full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need.

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

### **Nursing Home Accommodation Provision**

1291. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide occupational and rehabilitation services for persons under 65 years of age resident in nursing homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36528/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Disability Services Provision**

1292. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional and essential health services (details supplied) will be provided in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36529/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives.

This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists**

1293. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) will be waiting for occupational therapy for four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36530/19]

**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.

### Vaccination Programme

1294. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if certain aspects of the HPV immunisation programme will be reviewed with the view to introducing a catch-up scheme for persons that have just missed the September 2019 introduction of the programme for boys entering the first year of second-level education (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36544/19]

1311. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide a catch-up programme for boys to receive the HPV vaccine that have already completed the first year of secondary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36579/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1294 and 1311 together.

The immunisation programme in Ireland is based on the advice of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC). NIAC is an independent committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland comprising of experts in several specialties including infectious diseases, paediatrics and public health. The committee's recommendations are based on the prevalence of the relevant disease in Ireland and international best practice in relation to immunisation. It makes recommendations on vaccination policy to my Department. NIAC continues to revise recommendations to allow for the introduction of new vaccines in Ireland and to keep abreast of changes in the patterns of disease. Therefore, the immunisation schedule will continue to be amended over time.

As you are aware, NIAC recommended that the HPV vaccine should also be given to boys. The ages at which vaccines are recommended in the immunisation schedule are chosen by NIAC in order to give each child the best possible protection against vaccine preventable diseases. On foot of NIAC's recommendation, my Department asked the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to undertake a health technology assessment (HTA) to establish the clinical and cost-effectiveness of extending the current immunisation programme, which offers HPV vaccination to all girls in their first year of second level education (generally 12 to 13 year olds), to a programme that also offers the vaccination to boys in their first year of secondary school.

HIQA completed the HTA in December 2018, recommending that the HPV immunisation programme be extended to include boys. As the HPV vaccine is preventative it is intended to be administered, if possible, before a person becomes sexually active, that is, before a person is first exposed to HPV infection. A policy decision was made to extend the HPV immunisation programme to include boys starting this September with the introduction of a 9-valent HPV vaccine. However, HIQA did not recommend inclusion of a catch-up programme for boys who

have already completed the first year of secondary school.

My Department will continue to be guided by NIAC's recommendations on any emerging evidence on this issue in the future.

### **National Lottery Funding Applications**

1295. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health if an application for national lottery funding made by an organisation (details supplied) has been successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36545/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Applications for National Lottery funding are not handled by my Department and, as such, I have referred your question to the HSE.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1296. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36546/19]

**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.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

1297. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason funding for the fair deal scheme is taking a long time to be granted (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36550/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme, commonly referred to as *Fair Deal*, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost.

As outlined in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2019, the NHSS is expected to support 23,042 people in 2019. The NHSS budget for 2019 is €985.8m which is an increase of €24.3m over its 2018 budget.

Over the last two years, an additional €45 million has been provided to NHSS budget for the continued provision of services in line with pricing and demand. As part of normal governance and performance management arrangements The Department and the HSE maintain regular service area engagements, which also form part of ongoing collaborative work on issues relating to older persons policy and service delivery.

The HSE have noted that the number of residents in nursing homes whom are supported by the NHSS to be ahead of forecast for the year to date. The latest available performance reports indicate that there are 23,236 people supported in the Scheme at the end of July this year. This is significantly more people than forecast and this creates a challenge. The HSE has also advised that the cost of care continues to rise and the average weekly cost per bed is higher in 2019 than anticipated.

Having regard to the available budget and the demand for support, the HSE releases funding in a managed way to ensure that the operation of the NHSS remains within the budgetary allocation. The HSE cannot legally fund clients beyond the determined funding allocation, and the appropriate mechanism relating to funding allocations is through the estimates and budgetary process. To manage the available funds throughout the year, a national placement list for the release of funding is operated by the HSE, to enable it to operate within budget. Funding issues to applicants in chronological order, to ensure equity nationally. Approved applicants are placed on the national placement list in order of their approval date and funding is released to applicants in order of their place on this list. The length of time spent on the placement list depends on the number of applicants currently receiving financial support and the number of new applications. Where demand is higher, the time spent on the waiting list may increase having regard for the prudent management of the Scheme's budget.

The HSE has put in place arrangements that a monthly analysis of performance of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme continues to ensure that the maximum number of new entrants are approved with the shortest possible waiting times while remaining on track to deliver a balanced budgetary position by year end. My Department and the HSE will continue to closely engage on this matter, including with a view to improving the approval time frame for release of funding for approved cases.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1298. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36551/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1299. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36552/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

### **Hospital Overcrowding**

1300. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health his plans to alleviate the issue of overcrowding in a hospital (details supplied). [36554/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I wish to acknowledge the distress overcrowded Emergency Departments cause to patients, their families, and frontline staff working in very challenging conditions in hospitals throughout the country.

This is a very busy period for our health services, with many hospitals reporting significant numbers of patient attendances. For the first seven months of 2019, the number of patients attending hospital EDs increased by 3.3%, and the number of ED admissions increased by 2.3% compared to the same period last year.

My Department is engaging extensively with the HSE this year to identify mitigating actions to bring down trolley numbers and waiting times in the ED in the face of growing demand.

An independent expert review aimed at identifying the specific factors that contributed to performance over the winter period is now under way. The group will carry out a comparative analysis of unscheduled care performance across the nine hospital sites and the relevant Community Healthcare Organisations that were the subject of specific focused support through Winter 2018/2019. This will include Cork University Hospital and Cork Kerry Community Healthcare. My Department and the HSE will receive the report of the independent review group and its recommendations in due course.

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

Since 2017, an additional 267 beds have been opened. The Capacity Programme for 2019 provides for the following increases in capacity, as set out in the National Service Plan 2019:

- The provision of 75 acute beds and 70 community beds under the Winter Plan 2018/19 – the HSE has confirmed that all the acute beds and 59 community beds have opened to date. This includes 5 additional acute beds in Cork University Hospital.
- 47 additional beds, including the 40-bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital (STGH), 3 HDU beds in the Mater Hospital and 4 HDU beds in Cork University Hospital.
- preparation of 202 beds, of which 16 are critical care, during 2019, with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in the first quarter of 2020.
- Commencement of works on a 60-bed modular ward in University Hospital Limerick.

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

### **Hospital Services**

1301. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 117 of 2 July 2019, the status of the options appraisal for the model 4 hospital at Merlin Park, Galway; the cost to date of the options appraisal process; the anticipated overall cost of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36555/19]

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

### **Hospitals Building Programme**

1302. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the new emergency department at University Hospital Galway; the timeframe for delivery; the anticipated cost of the unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36556/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan includes the new Emergency Department at University Hospital Galway.

The Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects and has advised that the new ED will be part of a larger development incorporating maternity and paediatric services. Significant pre-planning work is being undertaken in this regard.

It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals, including the new Emergency Department at University Hospital Galway, must progress through detailed appraisal, planning, design and procurement, in line with the requirements of the Public Spending Code, before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established.

The delivery of capital projects is a dynamic process and is subject to the successful completion of the various approval stages, which can impact on the timeline for delivery.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

1303. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if an operation will be brought forward for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36557/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, since January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

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

## **Hospital Discharges**

1304. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1203 of 23 July 2019, the number of persons waiting one week, one, three, six and 12 months, respectively, to be discharged from each hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36566/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department does not have the level of detail the Deputy is seeking. As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

## **Primary Care Centres Provision**

1305. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1884 of 23 July 2019, when the services listed will be operational at the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36567/19]

**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.

## **Primary Care Centres Provision**

1306. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if the tender for the main construction work at the planned primary care centre in north Clondalkin, Rowlagh, has been issued; when enabling works will commence on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36568/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### **Hospital Car Parks**

1307. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health when his Department and the HSE will have an implementation plan complete to accompany the review report by the HSE of hospital car parking charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36572/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Hospitals which charge parking fees are cognisant of the financial implications parking costs can have on patients and their families, particularly those with long-term illnesses. Some hospitals have introduced a maximum daily fixed parking charge, thus capping this expense. I understand that some hospitals also provide reduced rate parking for long-term patients and visitors for whom the payment of the full rate would cause hardship.

I have made it clear I want to see progress made in this area and I am working with my Department and the HSE in this regard. In March 2018, I requested the HSE to conduct a review of hospital car parking charges with a view to establishing clear national guidelines in the area. My Department and the HSE are currently engaging on a draft implementation plan to accompany the review report.

### **Vaccination Programme**

1308. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the actions that have been taken to reduce the spread of measles and the risk of Ireland losing its measles-free status (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36576/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have recently announced my intention to establish a Vaccination Alliance of policy makers, healthcare professionals and patient advocates to examine vaccine hesitancy, the reasons behind it and what we can do to combat it. I also intend to travel to the Global Vaccination Summit later this month to discuss the issue with my European colleagues.

The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) is responsible for the surveillance of notifiable infectious diseases such as measles. As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1309. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if the delay in reimbursing Tagrisso for the treatment of a small group of cancer patients will be reviewed (details supplied); the necessary steps to ensure availability of the drug; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36577/19]

1355. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the reimbursement status of Tagrisso; the recommendation and decision taken by the HSE leadership team with regard to the reimbursement of the drug in July 2019; when it will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36905/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1309 and 1355 together.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act and the national framework agreed with industry, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE, the company must submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the reimbursement list.

Reimbursement is for licenced indications which have been granted market authorisation by the European Medicines Agency or the Health Products Regulatory Authority.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

I am advised by the HSE that it has received two applications for the reimbursement of osimertinib:

1) The treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic EGFR T790M mutation-positive NSCLC.

In respect of this indication, the HSE received a health technology assessment (cost utility analysis) for this application in May 2018. 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 reimbursement for this indication.

The 2013 Act provides for a period of representations after such notifications, before the HSE can make its final decision. The HSE have received representations from the manufacturer and they are under consideration by the HSE leadership team in advance of a final reimbursement decision.

2) The first-line treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer with activating epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations.

In respect of the second indication, a health technology assessment was completed on 6 August 2019 with the NCPE recommending that '*osimertinib not be considered for reimbursement unless cost effectiveness can be improved relative to existing treatments.*' The HSE will assess this application for reimbursement in line with the 2013 Health Act.

### **Medicinal Products Availability**

1310. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the progress being made to make intranasal naloxone spray available to healthcare professionals and drug workers which reverses the effects of opioid overdose within minutes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36578/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

*Question No. 1311 answered with Question No. 1294.*

## Dental Services

1312. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which a person (details supplied) can qualify for corrective dental treatment through their medical card or otherwise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36592/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

## European Health Insurance Card

1313. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; if their eligibility can be applied retrospectively under a heading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36602/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** It is my understanding that this case concerns the application of charges for services received under the EHIC scheme. The person concerned, as is normal practice in situations where a person presents for necessary treatment while on a temporary stay without an EHIC, is advised to contact the competent institution in their Member State of Affiliation regarding the reimbursement of the charges incurred.

Separately, it is my understanding that an application for a medical card was made but remains incomplete. The person concerned is advised to engage with the HSE to seek to complete their application. However, it is important to note that Medical card eligibility is not applied retrospectively.

## Services for People with Disabilities

1314. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if speech therapy can be restored to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36603/19]

**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.

## Medicinal Products Availability

1315. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Duodopa, which is particularly advised to patients with Parkinson's disease who require pump therapy, is no longer available to such patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36609/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for

decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines, in accordance with the provisions of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

### **Proposed Legislation**

1316. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when the Bill to give effect to the proposed changes to the fair deal scheme will come before the Houses of the Oireachtas; the full extent of the proposed changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36616/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The proposed policy change to the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), to cap contributions based on farm and business assets at 3 years where a family successor commits to working the productive asset, has been approved by Government. My Department developed draft Heads of Bill while considering a number of complex ancillary policy and operational matters which may need to be addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is intended that this proposed policy change, the 3 year cap, will be extended to eligible existing participants in long term residential care so that they are not disadvantaged, but that there would be no retrospective recoupment of contributions for those who have paid contributions over and above the 3 year period.

The General Scheme of Bill for the NHSS was approved by Government on the 11th June 2019 and subsequently published. The changes to the Scheme will come into effect as soon as the legislative process is successfully complete. I intend to progress this as quickly as possible, however, the timeline for completion of the legislation will also depend on how it passes through the Houses. The General Scheme has been sent to the relevant Joint Committee and I look forward to participating in pre-legislative scrutiny when scheduled by the Committee.

### **National Maternity Hospital Status**

1317. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the discussions with St. Vincent's and Holles Street hospitals in relation to the governance of the new maternity hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36623/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Deputy may wish to note that the Mulvey Agreement, which was agreed following extensive discussions between the National Maternity Hospital and the St Vincent's Healthcare Group, will provide the basis for the governance arrangements for the new maternity hospital on the St Vincent's Hospital campus. The terms of the agreement provide for the establishment of a new company - National Maternity Hospital at Elm Park DAC - which will have clinical and operational, as well as financial and budgetary independence in the provision of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services.

### **Hospital Consultant Contracts**

1318. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the consultant contract negotiations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36624/19]

1319. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health when the inequity of new

consultant pay introduced in 2012 will be corrected as per the recommendations of the de Buitléir report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36625/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1318 and 1319 together.

The Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine private activity in public hospitals was published on the 26 August 2019. The recommendations in the report have implications for contracts under which consultants working in the health service would be employed. It is my intention to consult with key stakeholders and with my colleagues in Government on the Report, in advance of any negotiations with consultants representative bodies on a new contract. My Department officials and I have met with the IHCA in recent months to discuss a range of issues. It is my view a process should be commenced with the various bodies in the near future. However, any solution has to be realistic and affordable.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

1320. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has received an update from the HSE on the provision of home help hours; if there are difficulties regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36626/19]

**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.

### **Cannabis for Medicinal Use**

1321. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if there are further changes expected to the licensing of marijuana planned in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36627/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy is aware, on 26th June I signed legislation which will allow for the operation of the Medical Cannabis Access Programme (MCAP) on a pilot basis for five years. This new legislation means that commercial medical cannabis suppliers whose cannabis products meet the specified requirements set out in the legislation and which have been listed in Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs (Prescription and Control of Supply of Cannabis for Medical Use) Regulations will be able to supply these products to the Irish market. Once suitable medical cannabis products are made available by suppliers, the Access Programme will make it possible for a medical consultant to prescribe, in line with the published clinical guidance, a listed cannabis-based product for a patient under his or her care for the following medical conditions, where the patient has failed to respond to standard treatments:

- spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis;
- intractable nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy;
- severe, refractory (treatment-resistant) epilepsy.

It should be noted that currently no medical cannabis products are available for use under the MCAP as it is expected that it will take some time for commercial suppliers to arrange to have their products made available on the Irish market.

The Medical Cannabis Access Programme is based on the recommendations of the HPRA's report "Cannabis for Medical Use-A Scientific Review", and on the 'Clinical Guidance on Cannabis for Medical Use' which has been drawn up by an expert group of doctors, pharmacists, patient representatives and scientific experts, to support the Medical Cannabis Access Programme. The guidelines contain detailed information on the use of medical cannabis, including the clinical indications for which cannabis may be prescribed under the access programme. Currently there are no plans to extend the scope of the clinical indications under the pilot programme.

Up to date information relating to the Medical Cannabis Access Programme, which includes an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) document, is available on the Department's website.

Pending full operation of the MCAP, and for medical indications not included in the MCAP, doctors may continue to utilise the Ministerial licensing route to prescribe medical cannabis for their patients, should they wish to do so. In line with the Chief Medical Officer's advice, the granting of a licence for cannabis for medical purposes must be premised on an appropriate application being submitted to the Department of Health, which is endorsed by a consultant who is responsible for the management of the patient and who is prepared to monitor the effects of the treatment over time.

### **Disability Services Funding**

1322. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if he has received briefing material or held meetings on the budgetary deficits in the disability sector; if the organisations have written to him to raise concerns in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36628/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As Minister for Health, my primary concern is to ensure the continuity of appropriate person-centred disability services is maintained and delivered in an equitable manner consistent with the care and support needs of individuals.

Significant resources have been invested by the health sector in disability services over the past number of years. In 2019 alone, the Health Service Executive has allocated €1.9 billion to its Disability Services Programme.

My Department and the HSE have put significant effort and resources into assisting the disability sector to manage priority needs within the funding available. As the Deputy may be aware, voluntary organisations provide up to 75% of disability services on behalf of the HSE, through section 38 and section 39 service level agreements.

A number of service providers have written to my Department highlighting their individual challenges, which include deficits accrued over many years. These deficits belong to the individual organisations, while the HSE are working with the providers to ascertain the full extent of the liabilities.

The Deputy may recall specific concerns around Rehab, which received some attention earlier in the year. Minister McGrath and I have met with this organisation on a number of occasions. Rehab and the HSE have committed to working together intensively with a view to making substantive progress in reaching a solution to the issues, and the HSE remains committed to exploring further avenues to a resolution of the financial position of this and other organisations.

The Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations

in publicly funded health and personal services published their Report earlier this year. I am continuing my examination of the recommendations of the Report in the context of strengthening the relationship between the State and the voluntary organisations in the best interests of service users.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

1323. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36631/19]

**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.

### **Patient Data**

1324. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of children admitted for alcohol and drug related illnesses in hospitals in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, including inpatient visits and to accident and emergency units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36638/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

1325. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when treatment will be made available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36646/19]

**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.

### **Primary Care Strategy Roll-out**

1326. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of the roll-out of the recommendations of the primary care eye services review group report; the amount of funding set aside for the recommendations; the amount drawn down to date; the recommendations accepted in full; and the recommendations that have not yet been implemented. [36665/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE published the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review Group in June 2017. The overall aim of the Review is to reorganise primary care eye services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service at primary care level, thereby also releasing capacity in the acute sector to provide more complex services. As the issues raised are service matters they have been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **HSE Waiting Lists**

1327. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the operation of the common waiting list as required under the consultants' contract; the manner in which this is implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36687/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **General Practitioner Contracts**

1328. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in implementing the Programme for a Partnership Government commitment to provide for salaried general practitioners in view of the severe shortage of same; when he plans to make this available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36689/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Programme for Government includes a commitment to mandating the HSE to employ GPs on a salaried basis where needed, and to put in place support structures and staff.

Any proposed model involving salaried GP positions would require careful consideration to ensure the required level of service could be provided for medical card and GP visit card holders.

The recently-concluded Agreement between the Department of Health, the HSE and the IMO regarding GP Contractual Reform and Service Development includes a recognition that a strategic review of the contractual terms for the GMS and other publicly-funded GP services is required to meet the challenges facing the health system and to put in place arrangements which

will ensure a sustainable GP service as a core element of primary care, focused on facilitating integrated provision of care in the most appropriate settings. The review is scheduled to begin this year.

## Health Reports

1329. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the six-month delay in publishing the de Buitléir report on the separation of public and private work in public hospitals; when his response to the report will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36691/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** While developing a single-tier public hospital system is one of the most important reforms envisaged in Sláintecare, it is clear that such a step is complex, would take time and would cost money.

The recommendations in the Report of the Independent Review Group raised a number of legal, financial, policy and operational implications that required further consideration. These included policy questions beyond the terms of reference of the Independent Review Group, for example the opportunities for broader Sláintecare reforms offered by the development of a single-tier public hospital system. My Department officials also held discussions with officials in other relevant Government Departments, including the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I published the Report of the Independent Review Group on 26 August 2019 in order to stimulate public debate and as a basis for consulting with key stakeholders.

The Government has not yet made a decision in relation to the recommendations of the Independent Review Group. I intend to return to Government with proposals to respond to the recommendations in the Report, as soon as consideration with relevant Government Departments of the main issues has concluded.

Ultimately, any decisions on expenditure issues which have been raised by the recommendations in the Report, including remuneration issues, would have to be made in the context of the wider implementation of Sláintecare and of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020.

## Health Services Staff Training

1330. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the report from the Medical Council of 3 July 2019 on its annual national trainee experience survey (details supplied); if urgent attention will be given to addressing these findings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36692/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I received a copy of the Medical Council's "Your Training Counts" Report for 2017 from its Chief Executive on 28th June. While the Report highlights a number of issues that impact negatively on the training experiences of doctors and interns, including extended working hours and bullying, it also identifies a number of positive trends.

The Medical Council in publishing the Report noted that it informs dialogue and future collaboration between the individuals and organisations involved in medical education and training in Ireland with a view to continually improving the training experience. I welcome the Council's Reports and congratulate the Council for its proactive approach to identifying issues

relating to the training experience and addressing them through constructive engagement with the Training Bodies and sites.

With regard to working hours, significant progress has been achieved in the past 5 years on achieving compliance with the provisions of the European Working Time Directive in relation to the maximum average working week of 48 hours and the granting of daily, weekly and fortnightly rest as provided for in the Directive. In relation to bullying, I am pleased that the Council is proactively addressing this issue. I am also aware that the HSE is currently focused on addressing bullying within its workforce, including the medical workforce in conjunction with the IMO.

I will be meeting with the President of the Council later this month, the 19th, to discuss the Report and related issues it has raised.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

1331. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the child scoliosis waiting lists by hospital and length of time waiting in three-monthly intervals; the steps he is taking to deliver on his undertaking to clear the waiting lists; the timescale to which he is working; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36699/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I sincerely regret that children can experience a long waiting time for treatment for scoliosis, and I am conscious of the burden that this places on them and their families.

Children's Health Ireland (CHI) published the update on the Scoliosis 10-Point Action Plan on 12th July 2019. This marks the second update to the plan, following an interim progress report which issued in October 2018. The plan, which was co-designed by clinicians and managers in paediatric orthopaedics and with the three scoliosis advocacy groups - Scoliosis Advocacy Network Group (SANG), Scoliosis Support and Awareness Ireland and Scoliosis Ireland - set out how the additional funding provided by the HSE is invested to support children and young people with scoliosis.

The July publication provides an update on the progress made to date up against the 10 action points and demonstrates the completion of four of the actions with a commitment to implementing the remaining six actions this year.

CHI advise that their priority for 2019 is to ensure that capacity is available to schedule patients that require surgery based on clinical priority. The addition of a new orthopaedic consultant post and the extension of theatre opening hours will continue to support the management of general orthopaedic waiting lists and enable consultants to better manage both spinal referral patients, and general orthopaedics, in order to reduce the number of patients waiting for a surgical procedure.

CHI further advise that as part of the Action Plan, additional Multidisciplinary Team staff appointments have been made across CHI increasing support to the service. In this regard, 88% of HSE funded posts, as per the 2019 National Service Plan, are in place, with the remaining posts at various stages of the recruitment process.

In terms of activity, across CHI a total of 418 scoliosis-related surgical procedures were performed in 2018, compared with 371 in 2017 and 224 in 2016. To date this year, CHI have carried out 251 such procedures.

My Department continues to closely monitor the progress of the Scoliosis 10-Point Action Plan through established Governance structures, including through fortnightly meetings where issues including performance, operational challenges, and future planning can be addressed.

In relation to the particular query raised in relation to the child scoliosis waiting list by hospital and length of time waiting in three monthly intervals, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **HSE Funding**

1332. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deliver on promised multi-annual funding for the HSE in order that it can plan for the delivery of services; the reason this has not been done to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36700/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Sláintecare Implementation Strategy commits to reforming the funding system to support new models of care and drive value to make better use of resources. My Department is examining the feasibility of introducing a multi-annual budgeting process including examination of international best practice in relation to the implementation of multi-annual budgeting in healthcare systems. This work will inform the interdepartmental working group which is due to meet later in the year.

### **Home Care Packages Data**

1333. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of the HSE forecast of the level of demand for home care services in 2019; the actual level of services funded in the service plan; the way in which he plans to fund the significant level of unmet demand which exists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36701/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **National Maternity Hospital Status**

1334. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in reaching agreement with the owners of St. Vincent's Healthcare Group for the location of the proposed new national maternity hospital at Elm Park; the details of progress made since he announced in December 2018 that agreement had been reached; and the timescale to which he is working in relation to same. [36702/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department continues to engage with St Vincent's Healthcare Group and the National Maternity Hospital to develop a legal framework to protect the State's significant investment in the new hospital. The development of the framework is a complex task; however, the Deputy can be assured that we are continuing to make progress in that regard. It is anticipated that, following the finalisation of the legal framework, the project will go to tender in early 2020.

*Question No. 1335 answered with Question No. 829.*

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Nursing Staff Recruitment**

1336. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if the commitment he gave that all graduating nurses and midwives in 2019 would be offered positions provided in locations in which there were approved vacant posts will be fulfilled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36713/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**HSE Staff Data**

1337. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of healthcare assistants hired by the HSE by month and HSE location since January 2017. [36714/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Speech and Language Therapy Staff**

1338. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of speech and language therapists hired by the HSE by month and HSE location since January 2017. [36715/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**Occupational Therapy Staff**

1339. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of occupational therapists hired by the HSE by month and HSE location since January 2017. [36716/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**HSE Staff Data**

1340. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of physiotherapists hired by the HSE by month and HSE location since January 2017. [36717/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

**HSE Staff Recruitment**

1341. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of medicals being carried out for nursing-grade posts within the HSE in each month from January 2017, by each acute hospital. [36718/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1342. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of medicals being carried out for administration posts within the HSE in each month from January 2017, by each acute hospital. [36719/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Nursing Staff Data**

1343. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Health the nursing staff in the HSE by grade and percentage of the total amount that work in full or part-time positions. [36720/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Nursing Staff Recruitment**

1344. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if a reply will issue to the matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36722/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** With regards to offers of contracts in specific hospitals on graduation, my position has not changed.

Every graduate nurse and midwife should be offered a position in the Irish health service. This needs to be done in the context of the overall HSE recruitment budget. All hospitals are currently in the process of making every effort to retain graduates on this basis, and retaining graduate nurses through funded vacancies, service development posts, agency displacement and through anticipated rates of attrition.

Every effort is made to offer contracts within the existing service that a graduate is working within, and if not within the existing hospital, within their hospital group.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy with regards to your constituent specifically.

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

1345. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 144 of 10 April 2019, if the position of clinical nurse specialist for multiple sclerosis in University Hospital Limerick has been filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36772/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the

HSE to reply to you directly.

### **HSE Funding**

1346. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to establish a funding package to sustain and satisfy the long-term funding requirements of a service provider (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36774/19]

1347. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has established a core funding package to finance the services of an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36775/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1346 and 1347 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

1348. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a primary health centre in Dunfanaghy, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36812/19]

1349. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of a primary health centre in Donegal town, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36813/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1348 and 1349 together.

As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

### **Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland**

1350. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the details of expenditure in the NMBI relating to the organisational staff development programme; the costs associated with this development programme to include all payments made to date and future expected payments to complete the programme; the number of staff undertaking this training, their role, grade and tenure in the NMBI permanent, contract, agency in tabular form; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [36815/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to an operational matter I have referred it to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland for attention and direct reply.

### **Hospice Services Provision**

1351. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the actions being taken to ensure that the South Westmeath Hospice facility is protected and adequately funded going forward; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the HSE had planned to close the facility by the end of August 2019; and the reason for the decision in view of the fact that a large percentage of the funding to build the hospice facility was raised within the community. [36837/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I met a delegation from the South Westmeath Hospice Committee on Tuesday 3 September to discuss their concerns about the HSE's proposal to realign palliative care support beds located on the St Vincent's Care Centre campus in Athlone.

A working group is being established by the HSE, which will include representatives of palliative care staff and members of the South Westmeath Hospice Committee, in relation to services on the current campus and to identify the future delivery of the service as part of a planned 50-bed Community Nursing Unit to be constructed in Clonbrusk, Athlone, as a public private partnership project.

No decision has been made in relation to these proposals pending consultation with key stakeholders to identify the optimum service delivery arrangements to meet local needs.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

1352. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of additional accommodation facilities to administer the cross-border directive; and if his attention has been drawn to the impact which the lack of adequate facilities is having on the administration of this service and the lengthy delay this is causing in refunding patients. [36838/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE is responsible for the operation of the Cross Border Directive and the management of the HSE Cross Border Directive (CBD) office is an operational matter for the HSE. Officials of my Department recently met with the HSE to discuss this matter and have requested the Executive to examine current resourcing of the CBD office, and to identify necessary actions to mitigate waiting times arising from current demands for the Scheme. As the HSE have operational responsibility for the CBD office I have also referred the Deputies questions to them for direct reply.

### **Health Services Funding**

1353. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health his views on the pre-budget submission of an organisation (details supplied), in particular its demand for €18 million in investment for community supports and home care for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36876/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The implementation of the 2014 National Dementia Strategy is being led by the National Dementia Office in the HSE, which has made substantial progress in developing evidence-based care pathways for people with dementia. Actions are being implemented progressively as resources allow and Dormant Accounts funding is allowing a number of key projects to proceed. The HSE is working with key partners, including the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, to implement specific elements of the Strategy, including the *Understand Together* awareness campaign and the attendant community activation programme.

With regard to the specific pre-budget submission referred to by the Deputy, the level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2019 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision**

1354. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the actions being taken to address the shortage of child and adolescent acute mental health beds in view of recent figures (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36879/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 1355 answered with Question No. 1309.*

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1356. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the drug reimbursement applications in cases in which the HSE has decided it will approve in tabular form; the next steps to be taken following such a decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36906/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospitals Capital Programme**

1357. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the current and-or expected position in regard to the outstanding phase or phases of the Naas Hospital development programme; the extent to which progress in this regard is anticipated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36908/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining 250 projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan includes a number of projects at Naas General Hospital, including the development of new units for endoscopy, day procedures, physical medicine and oncology, for

which planning permission has been granted.

The Capital Plan also includes a new acute mental health unit, for which the design team been appointed and the design is being progressed with a view to making an application for planning permission in the first half of 2020.

The delivery of capital projects is a dynamic process and is subject to the successful completion of the various approval stages, in line with the Public Spending Code, which can impact on the timeline for delivery. In some instances, this can necessitate an extension of the planning permission, as in the case of Naas General Hospital.

### **Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

1358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when Repatha will fall within the criteria for reimbursement by the HSE (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36909/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

1359. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if a review of the nursing home subvention scheme is planned; if the disincentives to renting out a home that is owned by a person who is in a nursing home will be examined to examine if the scheme can be altered in order to free up more of the empty homes nationwide to the private rental sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36949/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** Under NHSS rental income is considered income for the purpose of the financial assessment, and is assessed at 80% less any allowable deductions. Allowable deductions include income tax and, therefore, any income tax arising from rental income should be deducted; other deductions include some health expenses, levies required by law to be paid, and interest on some loans in respect of a person's principal private residence.

Action 17 of the Strategy for the Rental Sector commits the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government (DHPLG) to examine the treatment, under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme's financial assessment, of income from the rental of a person's principal private residence where they move into long term residential care. My officials are working with DHPLG officials and examining a number of possible options. I am not in a position, however, to provide detail on these as discussions and detailed examination are ongoing and any potential proposals have not been finalised.

### **Control of Horses**

1360. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department or Cork City Council refuse to remove stray, unregistered horses from lands in an area (details supplied) in Cork city; the reason the horses have not been re-

moved by the council in view of the fact that they are on land not designated for equines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34878/19]

1371. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department or Cork City Council refuse to remove stray horses from lands in an area (details supplied) on welfare grounds in view of the fact there is no available drinking water on site; the reason requests by farmers for the animals to be removed are being ignored in view of the fact the land is needed to harvest silage; the reason farmers in the area are being forced to accommodate the animals in further view of the fact that perimeter fencing was purposefully cut to allow the horses to enter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34877/19]

1372. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason stray horses on lands in an area (details supplied) have not been removed despite the erection of a sign by his Department in December 2018 informing the owners of the animals to remove them within a certain timeframe that has passed or face them being impounded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34879/19]

1373. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason stray unregistered horses are allowed to remain on lands in an area (details supplied) presenting a biosecurity risk to the cattle of farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34880/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1360 and 1371 to 1373, inclusive, together.

The Control of Horses Act 1996 provides powers to Local Authorities to deal with stray and abandoned horses and for the designation by each Local Authority of control areas in which horses cannot be kept without a licence. Members of An Garda Síochána have also been assigned powers commensurate with those of Authorised Officers under the Act.

Land owners have responsibility to ensure appropriate fencing, boundaries, notices and signage are in place to control movement of stray equines.

In the area of welfare, officials of my Department may intervene under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. In addition, local authorities are empowered to appoint officers of the Authority as authorised officers to enforce the Animal Health and Welfare Act within the Authority's functional area.

My Department officials are aware of the situation in Holyhill to which the Deputy refers and a Department Veterinary Inspector has undertaken regular inspections to monitor any welfare issues with the horses concerned. Veterinary Officials have also been liaising with other agencies including the Gardai in an effort to resolve the matter. Additionally, the situation has been monitored by the ISPCA who have remained in contact with the local Department office.

A number of horses and a donkey were seized recently from the Holyhill location in question under the Control of Horses Act 1996.

My Department has also taken a proactive approach in tackling challenges that arise in the case of horse ownership in urban areas by developing suitable facilities and in educating the young people involved in the care and welfare of horses. This work is done in close collaboration with the local authorities involved.

1361. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the funding allocation will be reviewed for budget 2020 for all schemes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35527/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Discussions on the 2020 Budget are currently underway between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and all budget lines in the Vote are being examined as part of that process. My intention is to ensure that all resources made available to my Department, now and in the future, will be managed to advance Government priorities and provide optimum outcomes including in relation to the funding of schemes which underpin farm income and deliver environmental benefits.

### TAMS Funding

1362. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if €120 million for TAMS for 2020 will be allocated (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35550/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The level of expenditure under the suite of seven TAMS II measures is being monitored with approvals and payments continuing on an on-going basis.

The annual budget allocation for next year will be decided as part of the Estimates process for Budget 2020.

### Future Growth Loan Scheme

1363. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers and food businesses that have applied to the future growth loan scheme which opened in March 2019; the number of farmers and businesses sanctioned financing to date; and the value of same, in tabular form. [36822/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Future Growth Loan Scheme has been open for loan eligibility applications through the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland's (SBCI) website since 17th April. The Scheme was developed by my Department and the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation, in partnership with the Department of Finance, the SBCI and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

It will be delivered through participating finance providers and make up to €300 million of investment loans available to eligible Irish businesses, including farmers and the agri-food & seafood sectors. The loans will be competitively priced with an initial maximum loan interest rate of 4.5% for loans less than €250,000. The loans are for terms of 8-10 years and unsecured up to €500,000. This type of innovative finance, which has been previously unavailable in the Irish market, will support strategic long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment.

A minimum loan amount of €100,000 applies up to a maximum of €3,000,000 per applicant. However, considering the needs of Irish farmers, a minimum of €50,000 was negotiated specifically for them. This is a long-awaited source of finance for young and new entrant farmers, especially the cohort who do not have high levels of security. It will also serve smaller-scale farmers, who often do not have the leverage to negotiate for more favourable terms with their banking institution. Food companies have identified long term investment finance of up to ten

years as a critical need which is currently unavailable in Ireland. The effects of this innovative product will be felt all along the food production chain, from primary producer to processor.

There is a two-step application process. An eligibility application to the SBCI, which confirms the applicant is eligible for the unsecured finance as per the terms of the Scheme, and a loan application to the participating bank. At close of business on 30th of August 2019, SBCI had approved 987 eligibility applications. A breakdown of those progressed to sanction at bank level is as follows:

-	No.	Value
Total number of loans sanctioned at bank level	168	€27.4m
Loans sanctioned to Farmers	105	€12.1m
Loans to sanctioned to food businesses	12	€3.8m

### TAMS Funding

1364. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding to support farmers will be introduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35548/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 provides funding for capital expenditure under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS). TAMS II has been very successful in terms of uptake with the number of approvals that have issued to date exceeding 22,100. All of these approvals represent committed expenditure. Until such time as these approvals are acted upon or expire, the budget for TAMS must include provision for the potential expenditure involved. Current estimates indicate that the total budget of €395m available under TAMS II for the suite of seven measures covering a wide range of investments will be fully spent under these approvals. There are no plans, therefore, to introduce the additional investment items proposed at this time.

Capital allowances may be claimed in respect of plant and machinery at a rate of 12.5% over eight year. For certain energy efficient equipment, an Accelerated Capital Allowance of 100% applies.

### Forestry Sector

1365. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the knowledge transfer course associated with the rural communities forestry programme is adequately assessed in circumstances in which points were assigned as opposed to issues such as geographical location or age profile; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34727/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Forestry Knowledge Transfer Scheme was developed as part of the Forestry Programme 2014-2020, with the aim of improving knowledge of forest management amongst the 20,000 private forest landowners in the country. A pilot scheme in was held 2017 and, following its success, the scheme was formally launched in 2018, with over 600 forest owners participating. This year, 18 organisers have been approved for a total of 37 Forestry KT groups comprising over 700

participant forest owners.

The scheme is voluntary and it is up to potential organisers themselves to decide if they wish to host a group or groups. Organisers may apply to host up to five groups and their applications are scored to ensure they meet a minimum standard, that the applicant organisers can show that they have the required experience to host a KTG and that they understand the requirements of the scheme, rather than their location.

The next step is to consider the total cumulative cost of funding all the applications. Where the total cost is below the available budget, then the organisers who have met the minimum score are invited to submit applications for all their requested groups. If the total budget is exceeded, an allocation protocol applies. This allocation process is set out in the Scheme terms and conditions, reducing the allocation of those organisers who requested five groups to four and so on until all organisers receive an allocation of at least one group.

Applications for the 2019 Scheme were of a very high standard. Following the scoring and allocation process, I was very pleased to allocate a total of 37 groups to organisers based in locations around the country.

### **Greyhound Industry**

1366. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 1067 of 17 April 2018, if he is a member of a syndicate (details supplied) that owns a dog; if not, if he was a member of the syndicate in the past; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34753/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I wish to confirm that I do not own nor have I ever owned the named greyhound.

### **Greyhound Industry**

1367. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the members of a syndicate (details supplied) that is involved in greyhound racing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34754/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Irish Coursing Club (ICC) has been the keeper for the Irish Greyhound Stud Book since 1923. Details of the ownership of greyhounds, including syndicate members, are kept in the Stud Book.

As the information being sought is personal data, belonging to individuals other than the person making the request, the ICC is prohibited by the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018 from disclosing any personal data relating to individuals other than to the individuals themselves.

### **Greyhound Industry**

1368. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a dog (details supplied) is being used for breeding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34755/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Bord na gCon

is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Bord na gCon has informed me that, following a recent call to the Greyhound Care Line, established by Bord na gCon in July 2019, their welfare department began an investigation into the wellbeing of the named greyhound. Bord na gCon, following its investigation, was able to confirm that the greyhound is with new owners in the UK and that they understand that the greyhound is not being used for breeding purposes but is being kept as a household pet.

### **Ministerial Advisers Data**

1369. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34838/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine) Orders, 2016 and 2018 the following are employed as special advisers to me as Minister of this Department:

Ms Áine Kilroy and Mr Jonathan Hoare are currently serving as my advisers, in line with Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. Their contracts terminate at the end of my term as Minister. The current salary scale for Ministerial Advisers is €83,090.00 - €102,159.00 p/a.

The Adviser to the Minister of State of my Department is Ms Avril Cronin. Her contract terminates at the end of the Minister for State's term. The current salary scale for an adviser to a Minister of State is €65,356.00 - €79,681.00 p/a.

Additional information relating to the appointment of advisers is provided to the Oireachtas upon their appointment.

### **Fish Discards**

1370. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the discarding of fish remains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34868/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The landing obligation (also referred to as the 'discards ban') was introduced as part of the current Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The objective of the landing obligation is to eliminate the wasteful and unsustainable practice of discarding fish. The landing obligation was phased in and was fully implemented on 1st January 2019. The Landing obligation, as part of the CFP framework, is a key tool for the long term conservation and sustainability of fish stocks around our shores and the long term sustainability of fishing in Ireland and throughout EU waters.

The discarding of fish offal from fish processed on board, however, is not covered by the landing obligation. If the Deputy would like to further pursue this issue, I would suggest contacting the National Parks and Wildlife Service and/or the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as the national bodies responsible for seagulls.

**Beef Industry**

1374. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of cattle that were traded in a mart and then slaughtered within 30 days of the sale in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the number of herd owners that purchased the livestock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34881/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the following table.

Year	No of animals traded in a mart and slaughtered within 30 days	No of herdowners that purchased the livestock
2016	121,574	2,022
2017	132,377	1,941
2018	123,726	1,799
2019	52,228	1,230

**Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme**

1375. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the difference between raised bog and Atlantic lowland blanket bog under the definitions set out in the basic payment and the areas of natural constraints schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34882/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The 2015 “Guide to Land Eligibility” sets out that non-agricultural area is not eligible land for the purposes of the Basic payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints scheme. Raised bog is not considered to be agricultural area and is therefore not eligible for payment under these schemes.

Blanket bog can be considered as agricultural area and is eligible for payment, provided it is in a state suitable for grazing and there is evidence of an agricultural activity during the year of the claim and the other scheme conditions are met. In all cases, the area must be reduced to take account of ineligible features in the parcel e.g. scrub, wet areas, fenced off areas, etc.

**Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme**

1376. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if boglands suitable for grazing are eligible under the basic payment and areas of natural constraints schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34883/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Any land which is considered as agricultural area and is in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation and is used for an agricultural activity in the year of a claim is eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, provided all other scheme conditions are met.

Blanket bog may be considered as agricultural area and be eligible for payment provided

other scheme conditions are met. Raised bog, however, is considered as non-agricultural area and therefore is not eligible land.

### Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme

1377. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if boglands that show evidence of grazing are eligible under the basic payment and areas of natural constraints schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34884/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In order to be eligible land under the Basic Payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, the land must be agricultural area. Blanket bog can be considered as agricultural area and, where the land is in a state suitable for grazing and there is evidence of grazing in the year of the claim, the area can be considered as eligible.

Raised bog, however, is considered as non-agricultural area and therefore is never considered as eligible, whether used for turf production or not, under the Basic Payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme.

### Beef Industry

1378. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to change the four movement rule for cattle in view of the fact it is no longer required for animal health protection reasons, particularly due to the negative effect the rule can have on the price of cattle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34907/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A Quality Payment System (QPS) related to the beef grid was agreed between Meat Industry Ireland (MII) and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) in 2009. The payment is based on the classification of the carcass in which a price differential is set between certain classification grades.

My understanding is that any additional bonus payments and the conditions attached to qualification for such payments are determined by processors and their retail customers. There are a number of conditions which pertain to such payments, including include age limits and restrictions on the number of movements allowed. These are commercial arrangements and my Department has no role in their establishment, nor in collection or analysis of the payments which are made.

At the recent Beef Stakeholder talks it was agreed that an in-depth review of market and customer criteria, in relation to the four in-spec bonus criteria will be carried out, in response to farmer stakeholder concerns. Full details of the conclusions from these talks are available on my Department's web-site: <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/beef/StakeholderConclusions210819.pdf>.

### Beef Industry

1379. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to ensure that the board of an organisation (details supplied) is more representative of the suckler cow breeder in view of the role of the organisation in the determining of star ratings under the beef data and genomics programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[34908/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation Society Ltd is registered with the Companies Registration Office in Dublin under Registration Number 4914R, through the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts, 1893 to 1978. The ICBF has registered offices at Highfield House, Shinagh, Bandon, Co Cork.

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) is a not for profit co-operative established by shareholders to improve cattle breeding in Ireland. A full list of the current ICBF shareholders can be found at the following link [https://www.icbf.com/wp/?page\\_id=338](https://www.icbf.com/wp/?page_id=338).

The ICBF board includes representatives of farm bodies, breed societies, AI and Milk Recording Organisations, and my Department.

The management of ICBF is the responsibility of its Board, which is broadly representative of all sectors of the Irish livestock industry. Matters pertaining to corporate governance at the ICBF are determined by their own procedures and also in accordance with the rules of the Companies Registration Office. Under the relevant regulations, as Minister for Agriculture, I may make one appointment to the board at any given time. However, neither I nor my Department have any role in determining the overall composition of the board of ICBF.

### **Beef Industry**

1380. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to place a limit on the maximum payout per farmer in EU temporary exceptional adjustment aid; his further plans to front load the payment on the first ten cows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34909/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Payment rates and limits under the Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM) are as follows:

Bovine animals aged over 12 months presented to a slaughtering establishment in the period 24 September 2018 to 12 May 2019 inclusive at a rate of €100 per animal subject to a maximum of 100 such animals per eligible herd; and/or Beef breed female animals with progeny born in the year 2018, which were sired by a beef breed bull, at a rate of €40 per animal subject to a maximum of 40 such animals per eligible herd.

These and all details relating to Beef Exceptional Aid Measure are set out in the Terms and conditions published on my Department's website: <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/beefexceptionalaidmeasure/BEAMTANDC150819.pdf>.

### **Farm Inspections**

1381. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of inspections carried out on farming premises in 2018, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34945/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In the context of delivering the various Direct Payment Schemes and Rural Development measures, my Department is required to carry out on-the-spot inspections annually. These inspections cover the areas of land eligibility and other scheme-specific eligibility criteria. Inspections to ensure compliance with Greening requirements in the areas of Crop Diversification and Ecological

Focus Areas (EFAs) are required. In addition, inspections to ensure compliance with the Cross Compliance requirements, as set down in EU legislation (Directives and Regulations), and the standards for good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC), in the areas of environment, climate change and good agricultural condition of land; public, animal and plant health and animal welfare are required.

The EU regulations governing the inspections require that specific percentages of cases must be inspected. In addition, the regulations provide for the ‘stacking’ of inspections, i.e., cases selected a Land Eligibility inspection under one scheme can count towards the percentage inspection requirements for another scheme. My Department also endeavours to minimise the number of ‘gates crossed’, as much as possible, by ‘stacking’ inspections, for example, Animal Identification and Registration inspections will be combined with Eligibility inspections, where feasible.

The following tables details the number of holdings subject to inspections in respect of 2018 Scheme Year applications. The data is being provided at national level as the annual inspection programme, including the risk analysis selection process, operates on a national basis and, therefore, any comparison on a county basis is meaningless.

**Land/Scheme Eligibility** - covering the Basic Payment Scheme; the Greening Payment; the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme, the Areas of Specific Constraints (Islands) Scheme; the Young Farmers Scheme; the Protein Aid Scheme and the Beef Data and Genomics Programme.

The EU regulations provide that Land Eligibility inspections can be undertaken by means of field visits on the ground or by means of Remote Sensing using up-to-date satellite imagery. Where it is not possible to make an accurate determination using the satellite imagery, a field visit will be required to verify the position on the ground. My Department currently inspects in the region of 85% of land eligibility cases by means of Remote Sensing.

Type of Inspection	Number of Farm Holdings subject to Inspection - 2018 Scheme Year
Ground Inspection	1,224
Remote Sensing Inspection	6,845
Remote Sensing Field Visit	1,015

A total of 1,030 farm holdings were subject to a Scheme Eligibility inspection under the 2018 Sheep Welfare Scheme. This scheme does not have a land eligibility element to the inspection process.

**Cross Compliance Inspections** - Applicants under the various EU funded schemes are obliged to comply with the requirements of Cross Compliance set out in the governing EU regulations under the various Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and the standards for Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).

Type of Inspection	Number of Farm Holdings subject to Inspection - 2018 Scheme Year
Full Cross Compliance Inspection	1,466
Animal Identification and Registration Inspection	4,324

A total of 853 holdings were subject to a Local Authority Nitrates inspections under an agreement between my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

As outlined above my Department endeavours to ‘stack’ inspections where this is feasible.

The following tables relate to inspections in respect of other Rural Development measures to meet requirements under the EU regulations.

Scheme	Number of Farm Holdings subject to Inspection - 2018 Scheme Year
GLAS (Green, Low Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme)	2,500

Scheme	Number of Inspections in 2018
OFS (Organic Farming Scheme)	91

Scheme	Number of Farm Holdings subject to Inspection in 2018
TAMS (Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes)	1,059

A further 372 farm holdings were inspected in 2018 in respect of applications to exceed the 170kg nitrogen/hectare limit.

### Beekeeping Sector

1382. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are restrictions applying regarding the establishment of honey bee hives; if there are rules, regulations and recommendations regarding location; if there are advices regarding their compatibility with heavily populated urban settings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34951/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Regarding the apiculture sector, my Department has responsibility for honeybee health and food safety for honey. Selecting or advising on locations for establishment of beehives for the beekeeping sector is not within the remit of my Department. Local or national beekeeping associations may be helpful in advising on the best or most suitable locations for the siting of honeybee hives.

### Tax Reliefs Availability

1383. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) can avail of agricultural relief and or business relief; if so, the rules regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34952/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** While taxation policy is primarily the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Finance, I work closely with him to ensure that it is consistent with the Government’s priorities for the agri-food sector.

Budget 2019 saw the publication of the “*Progress Implementation Update of the Agri-taxation Review 2014*”. This report shows the excellent progress made between the two Departments over recent Budgets with the almost complete implementation of the 25 recommendations, which has resulted in positive changes for Irish agriculture, especially in the areas of land mobility and succession. The Update shows that taxation support to the sector averaged

€930 million per annum in the years 2012 to 2016, or an average of or €240million per annum in specific agri-taxation measures.

The operation of the taxation system is solely the responsibility of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The person named should therefore contact the Revenue Commissioners directly and/or seek professional advice on the matter.

### **Young Farmers Scheme**

1384. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35042/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was selected for an inspection under the 2018 Young Farmers Scheme (YFS), which was carried out on the 13/03/2019. A letter issued on the 09/04/2019 outlining the findings of the inspection which determined that the Young Farmer was not in financial control of the holdings, as required under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme.

The person named submitted comments and additional documentation on the findings of the inspection and this was examined prior to the inspection outcome being finalised. A Formal Notice (FN) letter issued on the 29/04/2019 which advised that the inspection outcome remained as previously notified. The person named has sought a review of this decision and this is currently being examined by the relevant District Inspector. The outcome of this review will be notified to the person named once completed.

In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, they can appeal the decision to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

### **Food Safety Standards Inspections**

1385. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 973 of 26 March 2019, the status of a case (details supplied); if follow-up actions need to be taken by the applicant or his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35050/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Officials from the Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service of my Department carried out a follow up inspection at the pig-meat processing plant in question on August 1st 2019.

The purpose of the inspection included updating DAFM Management on on-going developments at the processing plant and also to facilitate further discussion on Third Country Market Access.

During the inspection, a number of outstanding issues were identified and plant management were notified that these issues would need to be addressed in order to achieve an acceptable standard for compliance with EU Regulations and for access to Third Country markets.

The Food Business Operator indicated their commitment to improved compliance and agreed to furnish my officials with plans for the required upgrades and developments relating to a number of areas within the plant.

## Deer Culls

1386. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to deal with the increasing population of the deer herd here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35058/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Over the last decade, available evidence suggests that the geographic distribution of all species of deer has increased, but neither the precise distribution nor the population density of these species is currently known. Deer appear to be a localised issue in many areas. In this context, there is a significant challenge in attempting to balance the demands of agriculture, forestry and conservation with the need to ensure that deer populations occupying the same land resources are managed at sustainable levels, and in a responsible and ethical manner. It is critical that landowners take ownership over this issue and organise properly to implement deer management measures on their lands in the correct and sustainable manner.

In 2015, my Department, together with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, published *Deer Management in Ireland – A Framework for Action*, which recommends a series of actions on deer management and conservation in a number of areas, including addressing the impact of deer in places where they are abundant. The Irish Deer Management Forum was established to implement the various actions listed in the Report. The Forum itself comprises representatives from the main stakeholder areas such as landowners, forestry, hunting and conservation organisations, as well as representatives from both Departments. The Report provides for a review of the workings of the Irish Deer Management Forum after three years. Both my Department and the Department of Arts, Culture and Gaeltacht are currently examining the future direction of the Forum and its aims in the context of representation on the Forum, agreed work plans and funding mechanisms.

Adoption of best practice is fully supported by both Departments and the majority of deer management stakeholders. Best practice guidance, adapted to Irish Conditions was published by the Irish Deer management Forum during 2018 and can be accessed via <http://idmf.ie/best-practice-guides/>.

A number of initiatives have been carried out in Co. Wicklow with a view to defining locally-led approaches to cooperative deer management. My Department is currently supporting a project led by the Wicklow Deer Management Partnership and Wicklow Uplands Forum, aimed at improving cooperation between landowners and local hunters. This project builds on previous experience in Wicklow through projects such as the Ballinastoe Deer Management Project, the Calary Deer Steering Group and the Calary/North –East Wicklow Deer TB survey. These projects provide a good example for other local groups to follow, in areas affected by deer related issues.

The Manor Kilbride Deer Management Group in West Wicklow has also produced very useful and practical code of practice for landowners, to guide successful deer management implementation on farmland, and to formalise agreements between landowners and hunters.

Teagasc, the Wicklow Deer Management Project and a number of other stakeholders have agreed to examine methodologies for to measure the impact of deer in agriculture, and to improve awareness of deer issues and mitigation options among farmers.

My Department introduced a Deer Fencing and Tree Shelter Scheme to protect forests from predation by deer in 2018 as deer can cause serious damage to trees, particularly in native woodlands. Additionally, my Department has also engaged with the Society of Irish Foresters,

Teagasc and Third Level Institutes in the delivery of deer management training to professional Foresters and Contractors through a series of seminars and field training events. This work is ongoing.

Deer Hunter Licensing and Competence are matters for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht and the representative bodies, clubs and associations for licensed hunters within the State.

### Departmental Funding

1387. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount his Department and associated agencies have allocated in assistance payments and grant funding to counties Longford and Westmeath since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35141/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

These figures include direct payments to farmers under various schemes as well as grant funding to local authorities and other organisations on a range of measures. Please note that the bulk of payments are made late in each year, which is why the figure for 2019 appears low when compared to previous years.

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, therefore, referred the Deputy's question to the Agencies and requested that a response should issue within 10 days.

Assistance Payments/Grant Funding	Longford€	Westmeath€
2016	33,568,844	51,482,802
2017	34,323,589	52,106,473
2018	36,297,261	53,750,850
2019	38,640	316,972

### Harbours and Piers Development

1388. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a pier (details supplied) in County Kerry will be extended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35201/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the Marine Works (Ireland) Act 1902, and piers, lights and beacons constructed under the auspices of the ex-Congested Districts Board.

The responsibility for the development, and maintenance of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways rests with each Local Authority in the first instance and their parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter. In the case

of Renard Point, Kerry County Council is the relevant local authority.

As part of its annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, my Department has provided limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership.

Between 2011 and 2018, €1.6million in funding has been granted under the programme to Kerry County Council, including €221,000 in funding for development works and repairs to Renard Point over the same period.

I have approved funding of €2.2m for the Local Authority element of my Departments 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Kerry County Council has secured €127,500 of funding for two projects under this year's programme.

No application was received under this year's programme in relation to Renard Point. Should any application be submitted by Kerry County Council in relation to Renard Point under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Local Authority and available exchequer funds.

### **Animal Slaughtering Data**

1389. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of cattle slaughtered in each individual factory that fell outside the parameters, weight and age for the quality assurance bonus during the first and second weeks (details supplied) of the protests held by farmers outside meat plants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35303/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department collects data on slaughterings at approved slaughtering plants in accordance with the relevant price reporting regulations which are reported in aggregated format on the Department's website. The parameters for in-spec or QPS bonuses are derived from commercial agreements, which my Department has no role in developing or administering, and, therefore, this data is not monitored by my Department.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

1390. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35333/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Department has spent €359,052 on the renewal of Lotus notes licences during the period 2009 to date in 2019. Based on current usage, the amount projected to be paid by the Department for the next 5 years is expected to be in the order of €243,000. These figures are inclusive of VAT.

### **Teagasc Courses**

1391. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35364/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The issue raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Teagasc who are responsible for the delivery and operation of the Green Cert course.

Accordingly, the question has been forwarded to Teagasc who have been requested to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Departmental Agencies Reports**

1392. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a full copy of a report (details supplied). [35390/19]

**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 release of the report referred to by the Deputy is a matter for Bord na gCon, and the request has been passed to them for their direct reply.

### **Agriculture Schemes**

1393. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding is still available for the weather crop-related loss scheme; the number of applications made to date; the number of applications that have been successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35436/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The 2017 Weather Related Crop Loss Support Measure was introduced in response to the period of protracted wet weather in September 2016. The measure provided financial assistance to farmers in approved cases as a contribution towards the direct losses arising from damage to certain eligible crops. The closing date for the scheme was 25 August 2017.

A total of 167 applications for support were received in the Department. To date payments totalling €406,878.30 have issued to 90 applicants.

### **Aquaculture Licences**

1394. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding a licensing process (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35471/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** All applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and (in the case of marine aquaculture) the 1933 Foreshore Act. The assessment process takes full account of all National and EU legislative

requirements and reflects the full scientific, environmental, legal, public policy and engineering aspects of each application. The legislation also provides for a period of public consultation which has now concluded for Kilmakilloge Harbour.

The report referred to by the Deputy remains in draft format and is not included in the documents currently under consideration as part of the aquaculture licence applications process for Kilmakilloge Harbour. As the licence applications are currently under active consideration by my Department as part of a statutory process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

### **Agriculture Scheme Appeals**

1395. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a review by a director of an agriculture appeals decision in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35473/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department.

I have been advised by the Agriculture Appeals Office that a request was received on behalf of the person named for a review of the Appeals Officer's decision regarding his appeal.

Following a comprehensive review of the case, a letter issued to the person named on 23 August 2019 advising of the outcome.

### **GLAS Expenditure**

1396. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the target payment under GLAS will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35528/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Agri-environment policy is included in the CAP reform negotiations currently under way and any future schemes will be dependent on the outcome of these negotiations.

### **GLAS Payments**

1397. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the GLAS scheme will be reopened to all farmers; if payments will issue to all farmers in a calendar year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35533/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) opened in three tranches commencing in 2015. The scheme is fully subscribed with GLAS 3 participants in their third year of participation in the five-year GLAS scheme and the overall RDP budget on track to be fully spent. There are no further tranches of the scheme planned.

All GLAS payment claims must pass a suite of checks before advance payments can issue and balancing payments can only commence when all regulatory controls, including inspec-

tions, have been met. 99% of 2018 scheme year advance payments have issued and less than 3% of balancing payments remain to be processed.

The GLAS Advance payments in respect of the 2019 scheme year cannot commence until after 15 October 2019.

### **TAMS Eligibility**

1398. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if additional items (details supplied) will be included for grant aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35538/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The TAMS II Scheme has been very successful in terms of uptake with the number of approvals that have issued to date exceeding 22,100. All of these approvals represent committed expenditure under the TAMS II measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020. Until such time as these approvals are acted upon or expire, the budget for TAMS must include provision for the potential expenditure involved. Current estimates indicate that the total budget of €395m available under TAMS II for the suite of seven measures covering a wide range of investments will be fully spent.

There are no plans, therefore, to introduce the additional investment items proposed at this time.

### **Forestry Grants**

1399. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding payment for ecosystem services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35543/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A review of the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020 was completed in February 2018 and, as part of this review, higher grant and premiums rates were introduced for broadleaf planting types. This has resulted in an increase in broadleaf planting from 21% of total planting in 2017 to 27% in 2018. Furthermore, the minimum mandatory requirement for broadleaf planting per afforestation site was increased from 10% to 15%

A number of other measures to increase biodiversity were also introduced as part of the Mid-Term Review as follows:

**Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) Scheme:** This redirects plantations away from the 'normal' clear fell / reforestation model and into continuous cover forestry. Therefore, as trees are felled singly or in small groups (typically with smaller machinery) and the gaps left are planted up or fill in with natural regeneration, the overall canopy cover is left intact, protecting the soil and the woodland ecosystem. This is compared to the clearfell system where all the trees are felled in one go, with lots of machinery, potential impact on the site and the complete change in habitat from forest to open. So, the CCF Scheme is encouraging a more environmentally- (incl. biodiversity) sustainable way to manage forests for wood production, based on the ongoing realisation of small quantities of valuable stems, versus on big windfall at the end of the rotation. (However, CCF doesn't suit all sites or all investment / financial models.)

**Woodland Improvement Scheme - 2nd Thinning:** This scheme is focused on undertaking

a silviculturally-appropriate 2nd thinning to improve the quality and value of retained trees (by removing poorer quality stems and redirecting growth onto better quality ones). However, it also has a biodiversity benefit as it opens up the canopy and allows increased levels of light infiltration onto the forest floor, encouraging ground vegetation and the scrub understory. This increases the habitat biodiversity, leading to more insects, birds, etc.

**Deer Fencing Scheme:** This scheme will protect the forest crop from damage from excessive browsing, including shoot damage and stem damage / bark stripping. In parallel, it will also exclude excessive grazing of other components of the woodland ecosystem, especially the ground vegetation and scrub layer, both of which can be badly denuded if deer numbers are very high. In addition excluding deer will allow the natural regeneration of trees and scrubs, as seed falling onto the site can germinate and become established, which increases the woodland biodiversity generally.

**Host a Hive initiative:** Native woodlands provide a rich source of pollen and nectar for the honey bee both from the trees themselves and from the wide array of woodland flowers in the ground flora and shrub layer. As a contribution towards the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, my Department have contacted woodland owners involved with the National Woodlands Scheme (NWS) and asked if they would be interested in hosting a bee hive in their native woodland. To this end, they have been invited to contact the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Associations (FIBKA) and the Irish Beekeepers' Association clg (IBA clg) through their local branches. This association could allow members of these organisations to establish hives within new native woodlands planted under NWS. This initiative is also supported by the Native Irish Honey-bee Society (NIHBS), which promotes the conservation and re-introduction of the native Irish honey bee throughout Ireland.

**Woodland Environmental Fund (WEF):** The WEF initiative provides an opportunity for businesses to partner with the Government and Irish landowners and get behind the national effort to plant an additional 5 million native trees between now and 2020. Under WEF, businesses can be associated with individual native woodlands and use the environmental benefits linked to these forests to demonstrate that they are meeting their corporate social responsibilities. The WEF ties in with the Department's existing afforestation scheme which covers 100% of the cost of establishing native woodlands and also pays an annual premium to the landowner of up to €680 per hectare payable each year for 15 years (€16,000/ha). The WEF involves an additional once off top up payment of €1,000 per hectare paid by the business to the landowner.

## Forestry Grants

1400. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if new schemes (details supplied) will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35544/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The existing Reconstitution Scheme (Chalara Ash Dieback) is currently on hold pending a review. I expect to be announcing details of a revised scheme in the very near future.

As part of the midterm review of the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020, completed in February 2018, two new measures were introduced under the Woodland Improvement Scheme which are open to ash plantations. These measures include support for continuous cover forestry and a grant for carrying out a second thinning.

## **Forestry Grants**

1401. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an investment grant will be introduced (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35546/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A review of the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020 was completed in February 2018.

The review did not include the introduction of grants to support the purchase of specialised harvesting and processing equipment for small scale private forests for the remainder of the current forestry programme and I have no plans to introduce such grants at this time.

## **Forest Roads Scheme**

1402. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding additional funding to local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35549/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Primary responsibility for improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads rests with Local Authorities. State grants, mainly originating from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, are provided to supplement contributions by local authorities from their own resources. Therefore, the funding of public roads is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

My Department does provide funding for the installation of central tyre inflation systems on timber lorries. The aim of this measure is to help reduce the risk of damage to roads and also wear and tear on the lorries themselves.

My Department is working closely with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government with regard to an amendment to the Planning and Development Amendment Act 2018, providing for this Department to be the sole consenting authority for forest roads, where a new entrance onto a public road is to be opened or there is material widening of an existing entrance. Currently, in such situations, planning permission is required from the local authority. The required legislation, making my Department the consenting authority, will be in place within a matter of weeks.

It is worth noting that local authorities still retain sole responsibility for granting permission to entrances from forest roads opening onto national roads and that they will be consulted on applications involving non-national public roads received by my Department.

## **Basic Payment Scheme Appeals**

1403. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a BPS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35552/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The closing date for the 2019 Basic Payment Scheme was 15th May 2019. As with previous years, the closing date was widely advertised to ensure that all applicants were aware of the deadline.

In cases where a herd number is awaited, a facility is in place to enable farmers to make their BPS application in advance of the herd number being issued. A number of supports are in place for farmers who wish to make such applications. For example, the Department's BPS phone helpdesk is available to farmers with these types of queries as they are making their applications. In addition, my Department also provided BPS application clinics around the country in the run up to the BPS application deadlines. At these clinics, farmers were provided with one-to-one assistance by a member of my Department's staff in submitting their applications. This service included Department officials assisting applicants in submitting applications while awaiting herd numbers. A similar drop-in service was available to farmers in my Department's Portlaoise office all through the application period. Finally, it is also open to all applicants to engage the services of an agricultural advisor should they wish to seek assistance in making such an application.

The 2019 Basic Payment Application in respect of the person named was received on 12 July 2019. Applications received after 15 May can be accepted on the basis of a sliding scale of penalties for each day after the 15 May that an application is received. In this case, the 12 July submission date resulted in a 100% late penalty.

The person named has appealed this penalty to my Department. This appeal has not been upheld on the basis that the information provided did not meet the Force Majeure or Exceptional Circumstances criteria laid down in EU legislation.

A letter recently issued to the person named setting out the position and outlined his right of further appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1404. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35568/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department has a dedicated Data Protection Unit in place since November 2015, which has been, inter alia, promoting Data Protection (DP) and GDPR awareness since its inception. This Unit has been actively informing staff of their obligations under the various Data Protection legislations using a judicious mix of internal resources (such as, eLearning tools, seminars and targeted sectorial Data Protection talks) and external companies.

My Department's Learning and Development Unit has procured courses in Data Protection since 2016. Two companies have provided general Data Protection training to staff, via a tender process, Irish Computer Society & All One Corporate Solutions. This training is on-going and has been in place since 2016.

The breakdown of the various Data Protection external companies utilised by the Department (including related DP conferences) and their associated costs are outlined as follows.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
CMG Training & Events	€424	€730	€1,671	
IPA	€810			

	2016	2017	2018	2019
All One Corporate Solutions		€400	€13,750	€8,700
Law Society of Ireland	€1,400	€95		
Irish Computer Society	€4,600	€12,650		
SOAS University of London	€5,814			
Happening Conference & Events Ltd		€1,425		
IAAP			€2,000	
Irish Academy of Computer Training				€880
PDP Training/Conferences		* €35,920	€2,735	
Public Affairs Ireland			€2,200	
	€13,048	€51,220	€22,356	€9,580

\* 47 staff attending Data Protection Conference

### Aquaculture Licence Administration

1405. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 2083 and 2084 of 23 July 2019, if his attention has been drawn to concern and anger that exists among the community concerned regarding the way in which the statutory public consultation process with respect to the application was conducted; if he is satisfied that all legal obligations required of applicants of such applications were carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35599/19]

1406. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 2083 and 2084 of 23 July 2019, the name of the publications in which the public notice element, which is a legal requirement to be undertaken by applicants of such applications, was printed; the dates on which they appeared in each; if the notice appeared in Irish in view of the fact that the area in question is located within the Gaeltacht; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35600/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1405 and 1406 together.

My Department considers all applications for aquaculture licences in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable national and EU legislation. The licensing process involves consultation with a wide range of scientific and technical advisers as well as various Statutory Consultees. The legislation also provides for a period of public consultation.

In accordance with applicable legislation, notice of the applications in Ballyness Bay were published by the applicants in the Donegal Democrat on various dates between 14th of March and the 26th of March. From the publication date of the relevant Notice, the public had four weeks to make written submissions or observations to my Department on the applications specified in that Notice. During that time, the application documentation was available for inspection in the Garda Stations specified in the Public Notices and on the Department's website.

The legislative requirements governing Aquaculture Licensing are adhered to fully by my Department.

In addition, the legislation governing aquaculture licensing provides for an appeals mechanism. Appeals against licence decisions are a matter for the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) which is an independent statutory body. Full details of the appeals process can be obtained at: <http://www.alab.ie/appealsprocess/>.

As these applications are currently under consideration by my Department as part of a statutory process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the specific applications at this time.

### **Forestry Grants**

1407. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to make grants available to persons to replant land on which trees have been felled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35603/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department provides generous grants and premiums for the establishment of new forests under the Forestry Programme 2014 - 2020. The full cost of establishment is covered and 15 annual premium payments are made to the landowner. Total payments under the afforestation scheme for a native woodland forest, for example, can amount to over €16,000 per hectare.

The proceeds of a landowner's timber asset at clearfell more than covers the cost of reforestation. According to the Department's "Felling Decision Support Tool", the value of a crop of Sitka spruce, yield class 20, felled at year 43 and thinned on three occasions is over €30,000 per hectare whereas replanting costs are considerably lower than this. In any case, the clearfell proceeds are tax-free for the landowner which is part of national forestry policy, part of which is intended to cover the cost of reforestation.

### **Harbours and Piers Development**

1408. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to renovate a harbour (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35623/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the Marine Works (Ireland) Act 1902, and piers, lights and beacons constructed under the auspices of the ex-Congested Districts Board.

The responsibility for the development, and maintenance of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways rests with each Local Authority in the first instance and their parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter. In the case of Fenit Harbour, Kerry County Council is the relevant local authority.

As part of its annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, my Department has provided limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying

out small scale projects for the development and repair of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership.

Between 2011 and 2018, €1.6 million in funding has been granted under the programme to Kerry County Council, including €247,500 in funding for development works and repairs at Fenit Harbour over the same period.

I approved funding of €2.2m for the Local Authority element of my Departments 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Kerry County Council has secured €127,500 of funding for two projects under this year's programme.

A key element in the determination of the projects to be funded is the priority placed on them by the Council, and while an application was received in relation to proposed structural repairs to the fishery storage area and the installation of a bollard to the head of the pier at Fenit, the two approved projects received a higher prioritisation by the Council.

Should any application be submitted by Kerry County Council in relation to Fenit Harbour under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Local Authority and available exchequer funds.

### Departmental Customer Charters

1409. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35636/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The data requested by the Deputy is set out in the table that follows.

Year	Number of customer service complaints received by my Department's Quality Service Unit
2017	43
2018	30
2019 (to-date)	10

The data set out in the table relates to complaints received by the Quality Service Unit of my Department as part of my Department's Customer Service Complaints Procedure. It is important to note that this Customer Service Complaints Procedure concerns complaints regarding customer service, it does not cover requests for reviews or appeals against actual decisions taken in the operation of a scheme or service, as these have a separate appeals process.

My Department is committed to providing a user-friendly, high quality service to all farmers. Where it is considered that my Department falls short of this, my Department's Customer Service Complaints Procedure can be availed of by farmers. There are three steps in the customer service complaints process:

1. Complaints should first be directed to the senior officer in charge of the business area within the Department to which the complaint pertains.
2. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response received from the Head of the rel-

evant business area, the complaint can be sent to the Quality Service Unit who will examine any customer service aspect of the complaint. The Quality Service Unit will have the matter fully and impartially investigated by an officer who was not involved in the matter giving rise to the complaint.

3. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after steps 1 and 2 above, it is open to the complainant to contact the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman examines complaints from people who feel they have been unfairly treated.

These procedures and relevant contact details are set out on our website and are also available in printed form if requested.

### **Agriculture Schemes**

1410. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to address matters with regard to the BEAM plan (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35671/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** All details relating to Beef Exceptional Aid Measure are set out in the Terms and conditions published on my Department's website:

*<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/beefexceptionalaidmeasure/BEAMTANDC150819.pdf>*

The scheme, which has been agreed with the EU Commission, was designed to ensure that the aid is effectively used and targeted towards those most affected by the market disturbance in the sector. It is not possible to change the terms of the scheme at this point.

Eligibility under the scheme is determined at herd level. Registered farm partnerships with multiple herd numbers will be able to make an application for the scheme under each individual herd number.

I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to the 15th of September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the new closing date.

### **Felling Licences Applications**

1411. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason an application for a felling licence (details supplied) applied for in May 2018 has not been decided on yet despite being told on 7 September 2018 that it would be decided by 18 December 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35686/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** An application for a tree felling licence for the person named, was received in May 2018. As the application takes in Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) it was referred to the Inland Fisheries Ireland board, the local authority and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

My Department places great importance on the careful assessment of applications to ensure that any proposed felling does not adversely affect the surrounding environment. In addition to this, where felling sites are near or within SACs, particular attention must be paid to the con-

servation objectives of these sites. Measures must be taken to ensure that any possible effects are mitigated.

The proposed site overlaps the Maumturk Mountains SAC and is near the Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex. For this reason, the application was referred to my Department's Ecologist who has determined that a Natura Impact Statement is required. My officials will be in touch with the applicant shortly setting out the information that is needed in the Natura Impact Statement.

### **Felling Licences Applications Data**

1412. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of outstanding felling licence applications on hand in his Department lodged more than four months ago; the number of these that relate to 2018; the reason for the delay in making decisions on felling licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35687/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The commencement of the Forestry Act, 2014 in May, 2017 brought about significant changes in the consent process for forestry operations. Felling licences are now valid for up to 10 years and may cover several felling events, such as thinning then clear felling on the same plot. Land owners considering future operations have the opportunity of applying for a tree felling licence well in advance of any operations taking place. This was likely a contributory factor to the doubling in the number of felling licences applied for from 2017 to 2018, from 3,300 to 6,600.

In 2018 and to end July 2019, 8,764 felling licences have been issued, 80% of which were issued within four months, with 90% issued within six months. The number of felling licences issued this year has doubled on that issued in the same period in 2018. That is, 1,819 issued in 2018 and 3,639 issued in 2019.

There are a number of reasons why decisions on felling licences may be delayed. In the first instance, applications may be returned to the applicant as they are missing certain information or required documentation is not provided. Following on from that, having been reviewed by the district inspector and because of the specifics of the site in question, my Department's archaeology or ecology services may be required. This would be where the proposed felling site contains or is near to an archaeological monument or near to or within a Natura site. Further, if a site is within a Special Area of Conservation or a Special Area of Protection, the input of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) must be obtained before a decision may issue. All information from referrals and submissions must be carefully considered before an approval issues and this means that the process is somewhat longer for those cases.

There are currently 673 felling licence applications on hand. In relation to 2018, the number on hand is 249, which means that over 96% of 2018 applications have been processed.

### **Agriculture Scheme Appeals**

1413. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a review under the BDGP scheme for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35743/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department.

I have been advised by the Agriculture Appeals Office that a request was submitted on be-

half of the person named for a review of the Appeals Officer's decision regarding his appeal. A comprehensive review of the case was undertaken by the Director of Agriculture Appeals.

The review has been finalised and a letter issued to the person named on 26 August 2019 advising of the outcome.

### **Agriculture Scheme Eligibility**

1414. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will allow farmers (details supplied) that sold cattle during the reference period to enter into the beef exceptional aid measure scheme; if not, the reason these farmers will not be covered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35754/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** All details relating to Beef Exceptional Aid Measure are set out in the Terms and conditions published on my Department's website:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/beefexceptionalaidmeasure/BEAMTANDC150819.pdf>

The scheme, which has been agreed with the EU Commission, was designed to ensure that the aid is effectively used and targeted towards those most affected by the market disturbance in the sector. It is not possible to change the terms of the scheme at this point.

With regard to mart sales please, the terms and conditions of the scheme provide that, where an animal has been presented for slaughter by an agent or by a dealer within 30 days of purchase, including those purchased in the mart, payment may issue to the immediate previous herd owner or in respect of the previous eligible herd number, where that herd owner is an applicant.

I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to 15th September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the extended closing date.

### **Agriculture Schemes**

1415. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the restriction has been put on farmers to reduce the herd by 5% if they wish to qualify for the beef compensation scheme BEAM; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35760/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Beef Exceptional Assistance Measure is an exceptional aid provision which was given effect through Commission Implementing Regulation 2019/1132. While Member States were invited to give an opinion on the draft Regulation through the Commission's Common Market Organisation (CMO) Management Committee, the Regulation was within the Commission's own legal competence, and was not for negotiation with Ireland or indeed other Member States, in terms of its content.

The implementing regulation requires that "the measures taken by Ireland shall be aimed at reducing production or restructuring the beef and veal sector" among other objectives. The full Regulation is available online at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1132&from=EN>.

The requirement under the scheme to reduce bovine livestock manure nitrogen by 5% over the period of the scheme assists in the building of economic and environmental resilience in the sector and will not require a reduction in herd size in all cases. Please see further details on my Department's website <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/beam/>.

I am delighted to see that a large number of farmers have already applied online for this key support. Some 20,000 farmers have already submitted their applications but there are over 70,000 farmers who are potentially eligible for a payment and I have decided to extend the deadline to 15th September to facilitate applications from as many of these as possible. I also want to ensure that my Department is in a position to make payments to applicants at the earliest possible date and therefore I would urge eligible farmers to make their application by the new deadline.

### **GLAS Payments**

1416. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35768/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are no outstanding GLAS payments due to this applicant.

### **Agriculture Scheme Payments**

1417. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application for the dairy equipment scheme by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35843/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted an application under the Dairy Equipment Scheme in Tranche 13 of TAMS II. The application was unsuccessful at ranking and selection stage of Tranche 13 and has been rolled over to the current tranche, Tranche 14.

A further ranking and selection process is currently being carried out, following which the applicants will be advised as to whether they have been successful or have rolled over to the next Tranche which closes on the 4th October.

### **Greyhound Industry**

1418. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a post-mortem has been carried out on a dog (details supplied); if not, the reason therefor; and if a regulation that post-mortems be carried out on all dogs that die at greyhound tracks to be carried out by an independent vet will be considered. [35854/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Bord na gCon

is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Bord na gCon has informed me that it is aware of a greyhound fatality at Shelbourne Park Greyhound Stadium on Saturday, August 17th 2019. It is my understanding that the greyhound in question received immediate care from the designated veterinary surgeon on duty at the track. Examinations indicate that the greyhound passed away due to a cardiovascular problem. A post-mortem was not carried out on the greyhound in question. It is not standard practice to carry out post-mortems on greyhounds that pass away at stadia. Instances of fatalities in greyhounds at stadia are extremely rare and are regrettable when they do occur, with best veterinary care and advice followed in each case.

### **Emergency Services Provision**

1419. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the outrage amongst fishing communities and emergency services in Greencastle, Inishowen, County Donegal and further afield at the decision not to proceed with the sea survival centre at the National Fisheries School at Greencastle, County Donegal despite it being officially announced, planning permission attained and tenders issued for construction; and if this decision will be reviewed and reversed. [35949/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** This proposed project is currently under review in the wider context of the availability of existing professional sea survival training facilities within the State and the significant cost, both construction and operational, of such an additional facility. The existing modern professional sea survival training facilities, based at the National Maritime College of Ireland, Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, are unique in Ireland and designed both for fundamental safety training and specialised survival training, to increase survival ability in emergency situations. These purpose built, state of the art, facilities are available for the provision of all necessary and required training for fishermen in Ireland.

At the present time, there is no provision for or plans to proceed with this additional project and funding has not been provided in Bord Iascaigh Mharas's (BIM) Vote in 2019, for this proposed additional facility. Technical details in relation to the proposed project are a matter for BIM including in relation to announcements, planning and tendering for the project.

### **Forestry Grants**

1420. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing a payment to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35950/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The first grant payment application for the contract in question was received in late July 2016 by my Department.

The eastern part of Plot 1 is on unregistered land and my Department's Forestry Division awaits proof of ownership for this land before payment can be made.

Section 3.2 of the Forestry Standards Manual (November 2015) states the following:

“For unregistered land, the proof of ownership takes the form of an Indenture or Memorial

from the Registry of Deeds, such documentation should be submitted along with a map stamped by the applicant's solicitor showing the area of the proposed plantation. The owner's solicitor must also provide a letter confirming that the area of the plantation is included in the Deeds, and the ownership is unchanged since the last entry".

If the person named would like to receive any further detail about the situation with their afforestation contract, they should contact the First Grant Section of the Forestry Division in my Department at Tel. No.: 053 9163525.

### **Single Payment Scheme Appeals**

1421. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made in respect of a review request lodged on behalf of persons (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in making a decision on the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35966/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As previously indicated to the Deputy, this case relates to the persons named not having submitted Single Payment Scheme (SPS) applications for scheme years 2013 & 2014 and a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application in 2015. An appeal letter and supporting documentation was submitted by an agricultural advisor on behalf of the persons named.

The establishment of the right to a payment under BPS is dependent on the reference years 2013, 2014 and 2015. Any decision to accept applications for those years has to be carefully considered given the considerable time that had elapsed up to September 2018, when the appeal was submitted. This is particularly the case when a decision will need to be made as to whether BPS entitlements can also be allocated.

It should be noted that applications under the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Basic Payment Scheme were submitted online and on time by the approved agricultural advisor on behalf of the persons named.

The original documentation and further material requested by my Department has been fully examined. This appeal has not been upheld on the basis that the information provided does not meet the Force Majeure or Exceptional Circumstances criteria laid down in EU legislation.

A letter recently issued to the persons named setting out the position and outlining their right of further appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

### **Fishery Harbour Centres**

1422. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to assist with the installation of seabins; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36069/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department, under statute, owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl.

The Sea Bin in Howth Fishery Harbour Centre came about as a result of a fund raising exercise initiated by a local Marine Biologist. The Department funded the installation and will continue to maintain the Sea Bin into the future.

I would also advise the Deputy that my Department has for some four months now been trialing a similar Sea Bin in Dingle Fishery Harbour Centre. Ultimately, my Department sees the possible potential for these devices to augment and complement the on going operations to remove unwanted debris from the waters within the harbours.

Harbour Management in Howth and Dingle will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Sea Bins and consider the most appropriate locations within the Harbours to maximise their capabilities.

The installation of Sea Bins will form part of the resource efficiency action plan of my Department for the Fishery Harbour Centres, as part of the *Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's* Green Government Initiative. The Fishery Harbour Centres also work closely with BIM's Fishing for Litter and Clean Oceans Initiatives and within my Department's Climate Action Plan.

Future decisions on the wider roll out of these devices, will be made having considered the overall assessments of their operational impacts.

### GLAS Appeals

1423. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS appeal application by a person (details supplied). [36074/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was rejected from the GLAS scheme following the result of an on farm inspection and has sought a review of that decision which is currently underway as part of the internal appeals process.

The applicant will be informed of the outcome, in writing, once the review is completed.

### Harbours and Piers Development

1424. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when construction works on the middle pier upgrade at Howth Harbour will commence; the length of time the project will take to complete; the estimated cost of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36128/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute.

Between the years 2010 to 2018, as part of my Department's Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, in excess of €10 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at Howth Fishery Harbour Centre (FHC).

My Department is proposing to extend the Middle Pier Quay in Howth FHC to improve access, maintenance and berthing facilities. Additional berthing space would, in addition to relieving vessel congestion issues, enable greater segregation between the activities of fishing vessels and the marine tourism and leisure activities which are mainly concentrated on the West Pier. This segregation is desirable both from an operational and a health & safety point of view.

Tenders for the project issued on 27th June 2019 and the final date for receipt of submissions

is 4th October 2019. The tender evaluation process period is expected to be completed by the end of November 2019.

The final cost of these extension works will only be determined following the public tender process, and it is envisaged that the works themselves could take up to 18 months to complete.

As is the case for all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres, any decision with regard to initiating capital works projects can only be considered on the basis of available exchequer funding. Therefore, the decision in regard to this project will only be made when the budgetary position for 2020 becomes clearer.

### **Departmental Internships**

1425. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36140/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I can confirm that no scheme for unpaid internships exists within my Department. Therefore, unpaid internships have not taken place in my Department in any of the five years in question.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

1426. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36220/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is acutely aware of the risks arising from potential cybersecurity attacks and breaches and takes a very proactive approach to preventing, detecting and responding to these threats.

My Department's computer systems are independently certified to meet the ISO 27001:2013 Information Security Standard. It has invested considerable resources to protect the information that it needs to support the wide range of activities that it carries out and has experienced and trained staff dedicated to the prevention/detection of and the response to any cybersecurity threats

My Department maintains a risk register and has trained staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register.

### **Departmental Operations**

1427. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36236/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Divisions within my Department are required to have Business Continuity Plans (BCP) and these documents identify the Division's priority work and set out the strategy to maintain these services in the event of a crisis. These plans were mobilised in recent years when severe weather events prevented access to many Government buildings. In addition, each of the six main DAFM geographic locations have a location-specific BCP that deals with overarching business continuity planning for all the Divisions located in that area.

The Department maintains a Disaster Recovery site for its IT operations. However, in terms of work locations, given the number of DAFM offices around the country, it does not maintain recovery sites *per se*. Instead, staff and critical work can be redistributed within their geographical location or even between locations if necessary. This flexibility is possible largely because my Department has invested in an IT infrastructure that does not limit staff to a specific desk or building. Staff can access critical systems from any DAFM office. This is so that, in the event of a disaster, staff can maintain priority services from other DAFM offices or remotely.

This infrastructure is, itself, underpinned by a comprehensive IT recovery plan which includes mirroring of resources and frequent back-up of information.

### Agriculture Schemes

1428. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the dates can be altered to allow an entry to the beef exceptional aid measure scheme in relation to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36271/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** All details relating to Beef Exceptional Aid Measure are set out in the Terms and conditions published on my Department's website:

*<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/beefexceptionalaidmeasure/BEAMTANDC150819.pdf>*.

The scheme, which has been agreed with the EU Commission, was designed to ensure that the aid is effectively used and targeted towards those most affected by the market disturbance in the sector. It is not possible to change the terms of the scheme at this point.

I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to 15th September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the extended closing date.

### Meat Processing Plants

1429. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of instances in which mechanical grading was suspended in meat plants in cases in which a machine is found to be working outside of tolerance and manual grading is instigated to date in 2019; when the report on the replacement of the outdated grading machines will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36273/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** To date in 2019, there have been 300 inspections conducted by DAFM officers in factories operating mechanical classification. During these inspections, there were approximately 30,000 carcasses checked for classification. During that period, mechanical classification machines were turned

off on 6 occasions and factories instigated manual grading of carcasses.

The independent report on the modernisation trial of the mechanical classification system will be published in due course.

### **Agriculture Scheme Payments**

1430. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason balancing payments for AEOS, ANC and GLAS have not been paid from 2015 to 2018 to a person (details supplied); when the payments will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36274/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The position in relation to AEOS, ANC and GLAS payments for the person named is as follows:

AEOS: The person named completed their AEOS contact on 31 December 2015. The position in relation to AEOS payments for the 2015 scheme year is currently being examined. The applicant will be contacted directly if any balance is due.

ANC: Payments in respect of the person named are under review and my Department will contact the applicant when the review is complete.

GLAS: The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and was paid for the 2016 and 2017 scheme years. An issue arose in relation to an increase to the eligible areas for some commonage claims which delayed processing of the 2018 scheme year payment. This issue is being investigated and the 2018 GLAS payment will be processed once the issue has been resolved. Any balancing payments due in relation to commonage claims for the 2016 and 2017 scheme years will be processed in due course.

### **Calafóirt agus Céanna**

1431. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara céard iad na pleananna atá aige le cé dhomhain mhara a thógáil i Ros an Mhíl, Contae na Gaillimhe; cén obair atá déanta go dtí seo ar an togra seo; cén obair bhreise atá ceadaithe; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [36391/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Tá sé Lári-onad Cuain Iascaigh ainmnithe faoi úinéireacht an Stáit, suite i mBaile Chaisleáin Bhéarra, Daingean Uí Chúis, an Dún Mór Thoir, Binn Éadair, na Cealla Beaga agus Ros an Mhíl, ar úinéireacht ag mo Roinnse agus déanann an Roinn iad a chothabháil agus a chur i bhfeidhm, faoi reacht.

Cuireann an Roinn maoiniú ar fáil ar bhonn bliantúil do na Lárionaid Chuain Iascaigh, lena n-áirítear Ros an Mhíl, faoin gClár Forbartha Infreastruchtúir Cuanta Iascaigh agus Cósta. Tá dul chun cinn déanta le blianta anuas ar chlár céimnithe chun bonneagar Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl a fhorbairt agus tá infheistíocht shuntasach déanta ann. Ar an iomlán, tá tuairim is €29.5m infheistithe i bhforbairtí caipitil i Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl idir 2000 agus 2018.

Is tiomantas suntasach i leith an chalafóirt an méid infheistíochta atá déanta ina leith agus d'éascaigh sin pontúin nua do bháid farantóireachta a dhéanamh agus a shuiteáil, oibreacha dreideála agus caladh bád a chur ar fáil. Tá pointe bordála breá ann do mhuintir Árann agus do

lucht turasóireachta na n-oileán a chuireann leis na seirbhísí a chuirtear ar fáil agus le sábháilteacht na ndaoine a bhaineann úsáid as Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl.

Tá an fhéidearthacht maidir le tionscadal calafoirt domhainfharraige ag Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl á mheas ag an Roinn le tamall anuas. Choimisiúnaigh an Roinn comhairleoirí DKM chun Anailís Costais is Tairbhe a dhéanamh ar a bheadh i gceist le cé domhainfharraige a fhorbairt ag Ros an Mhíl. Cuireadh dréacht-thuarascáil ar aghaidh chuig an Roinn i Meitheamh 2017. Rinneadh an tuarascáil a mheas ach níor glacadh léi go foirmeálta riamh.

Ó dréachtaíodh an tuarascáil sin, tá athrú tagtha ar roinnt de na bunphrionsabail a bhí mar thaca leis an gcéad anailís a rinneadh. In 2018, choimisiúnaigh an Roinn comhairleoirí in-nealtóireachta ina dhiaidh sin chun athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na réitigh dearaidh, ar na roghanna scoipeála agus ar ghnéithe oibríochta a d'fhéadfadh a bheith i gceist lena leithéid de thogra amach anseo. Fuarthas an tuarascáil sin in Aibreán 2019 agus tá sí á meas go hiomlán i láthair ag an Roinn. Aithníodh sa tuarascáil an gá atá le fiosruithe eile suímh ag Ros an Mhí, agus táthar i mbun na bhfiosruithe sin i láthair na huaire.

Mar a bhíonn le gach forbairt sna sé Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh, ní dhéanfar aon chinneadh eile amach anseo i ndáil le tús a chur leis an tionscadal seo i Ros an Mhíl a mheas ach ar an mbonn maoiniú státchiste agus tosaíochtaí náisiúnta iomaíochta a bheith ar fáil.

### Calafóirt agus Céanna

1432. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén méid infheistíochta atá déanta ag a Roinn i ngach calafort iascaigh ón mbliain 2000 i leith agus í briste síos de réir gach calafoirt; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [36392/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Tá sé Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh ainmnithe faoi úinéireacht an Stáit, suite i mBaile Chaisleáin Bhéarra, Daingean Uí Chúis, an Dún Mór Thoir, Binn Éadair, na Cealla Beaga agus Ros an Mhíl, ar úinéireacht ag mo Roinnse agus déanann an Roinn iad a chothabháil agus a chur i bhfeidhm, faoi reacht.

Is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta go ndearnadh infheistíocht breis is €232 milliún idir na blianta 2000 agus 2018 chun obair chothabhála, forbartha agus uasghrádaithe a dhéanamh ag na sé Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh mar chuid de Chlár Forbartha Infreastruchtúir Cuanta Iascaigh agus Cósta na Roinne. Déantar briseadh síos sa tábla thíos ar an maoiniú a fuair gach Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh.

\* Ba chóir a thabhairt ar aird nach ndearnadh Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh d'ionad Dhaingean Uí Chúis go dtí 2007, agus go bhfuil caiteachas a thabhaigh an Roinn i gCuan Dhaingean Uí Chúis idir 2000 agus 2006 san áireamh sa bhfigiúr do Lárionad Dhaingean Uí Chúis.

Lárionad Cuain Iascaigh	Caiteachas Iomlán (2000 - 2018)
Baile Chaisleáin Bhéarra	€66,587,099.42
Dún Mór	€23,020,680.74
Ros an Mhíl	€29,451,675.73
Na Cealla Beaga	€82,062,229.37
Binn Éadair	€12,194,841.93
Daingean Uí Chúis	€18,766,103.31
Iomlán	€232,082,630.50

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Farm Retirement Scheme**

1433. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the plans in place for retiring farmers (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36395/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Early Retirement Scheme was suspended in 2008. It was re-opened briefly in September 2009, with limited additional funding to accommodate farmers who had applications completed or close to completion at the time of the original suspension in 2008. I can confirm that there are no plans to re-open this scheme or to introduce another scheme at this time.

In recent years, the priority of my Department has shifted to the encouragement of generational change for farmers by assisting the development of our young farmers. There are a range of supports in place including specific agri-taxation measures to incentivise this generational change. These agri-taxation measures specifically aimed at young farmers include 100% stock relief on income tax for certain young trained farmers and stamp duty exemption on transfers of land to young trained farmers.

Under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme, there is also an enhanced capital investment scheme for young trained farmers under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes. This Scheme provides them with grant aid at a rate of 60% of the cost of the investment, compared to the standard grant rate of 40%, and I believe it is an important support and encouragement to young farmers starting in agriculture for the first time.

With regard to the future of the CAP post-2020, one of the major initiatives which I will continue to

support is to combine EU measures with national measures such as taxation and other incentives, to

stimulate generational renewal. This is vital to protect the future of farming in Ireland.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1434. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of meetings he has held to date with producers and processors in the seafood sector dealing with Brexit matters only; his plans to meet with the sector again to further advance preparations for Brexit and the necessary contingency planning for all eventualities post 31 October 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36460/19]

1435. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the level of supports being considered by his Department for the marine sector in a post-Brexit scenario; the plans being considered for producers and processors within the package being prepared for his Department; if the necessary EU approval and or funding has been obtained for this support package; his views on whether the level of support for the marine sector is on a par with supports currently available for other sectors of business, industry and producers here; if so, the comparisons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36461/19]

1436. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to make known the levels of supports, preparatory planning, contingency planning and post-Brexit strategies he plans to put in place for the marine sector; if he has prepared for all post-Brexit scenarios for the marine sector here; when such supports will be available for

the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36462/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1434 to 1436, inclusive, together.

Both my officials and I have had intensive discussions with the European Commission, other relevant Member States and stakeholders regarding the potential negative impact of a disorderly or no-deal Brexit on the Irish fishing industry and the wider seafood sector as whole. These discussions intensified in recent months and were based on preparatory work already done.

I have met with the Irish Fishing Industry regularly, some ten times, since 23rd June 2016 with the main focus on Brexit along with other meetings in which Brexit was also on the agenda. My most recent meeting was on 5th September and there will be Brexit information Seminars on the 10th of September in Dublin, the 27th of September in Wexford and the 30th of September in Cork.

The key issues in a no-deal situation which I have stressed in all discussions are the potential loss of access for Irish and other EU vessels to the UK fishing zone, the need to ensure ongoing protection of fish stocks in the waters around Ireland from a subsequent increase in fishing activity and potential supports for the seafood sector to meet the challenges they may face. It is also important to be aware that, in such a no-deal situation, the EU and Ireland could also face a loss of quota share.

Throughout the discussions, I emphasised the necessity for a co-ordinated European response to ensure that there would be proportionate and equitable use of mitigation measures for the fishing fleet overseen by the Commission.

The outcome of these discussions can be seen in the EU Brexit Contingency plan that was published on 10th April. This highlights fisheries as one of the most immediately critical issues facing the EU in a no-deal Brexit. We now have identified and agreed co-ordinated and fully prepared measures that will be immediately available to address a no-deal Brexit situation on 31st October, if the UK were to decide to deny EU vessels access to UK waters. As I have stated previously, I am seeking additional EU funds to support these mitigation measure if they become necessary. Such financial discussions are still ongoing and there are many variables at play but I can assure the Deputy that the seafood sector will, along with agriculture be a key priority for this Government.

### **Grant Aid**

1437. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if grant aid is available for the preservation of honey bees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36480/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department provides a range of supports to the bee sector. The 2019 Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector provided grants to support the activities of beekeepers including towards capital investments in specialised buildings and equipment for the beekeeping sector.

My Department also provides some support for beekeeping through the national Scheme for the Conservation of Genetic Resources where the focus is on conserving native bees.

In addition, the Department also provides an annual grant to the National beekeeping federations to pursue the craft of beekeeping to the highest standards and also to inform the general public about the environmental role that bees play in maintaining Irish biodiversity and crop production.

### **Agriculture Scheme Eligibility**

1438. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the number of cows will be altered to allow entry to the beef exceptional aid measure scheme in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36481/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** All details relating to Beef Exceptional Aid Measure are set out in the Terms and conditions published on my Department's website:

*<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingschemesandpayments/beefexceptionalaidmeasure/BEAMTANDC150819.pdf>*

The scheme, which has been agreed with the EU Commission, was designed to ensure that the aid is effectively used and targeted towards those most affected by the market disturbance in the sector. It is not possible to change the terms of the scheme at this point.

I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to 15th September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the extended closing date.

### **Brexit Supports**

1439. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a comprehensive package of market support measures to assist the agricultural sector due to the adverse impacts of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36491/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. I have stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agri-food and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

I am also keenly aware that the recent months have been very difficult for beef farmers in particular. There has been a prolonged and exceptional period of depressed prices since last autumn, with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, among other factors, contributing to this market disturbance.

In advance of Brexit and in recognition of the impact of the uncertainty around Brexit, amongst other factors, on the Irish beef sectors and prices, the Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM), with funding of up to €100 million from the EU and the Exchequer, has opened for applications. I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to 15th September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the extended closing date.

## Brexit Preparations

1440. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has secured agreement from the European Commission to ease the state aid limitation on the provision of support for the agricultural sector due to the difficulties that will arise from Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36494/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Our practical preparations for all potential scenarios, including a no-deal Brexit, continue to be progressed and refined through the whole-of-Government co-ordination structures that have been in place for some time.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, the Government will implement a range of economic responses that will seek to mitigate the impact on vulnerable sectors and groups. This approach will include:

- Targeted supports for vulnerable but viable sectors and enterprises;
- Labour market and activation interventions to support employees affected;
- Continued increased capital investment in accordance with Project Ireland 2040 which will act as a stimulus to the economy;
- Continued engagement with the European Commission and other Member States in respect of financial supports and flexibilities under State Aid rules and the Common Agricultural Policy.

I and my officials have been working very hard for quite some time to sensitise other Member States and the European Commission to the potentially very severe impacts of Brexit on the Irish agri-food and fisheries sectors, and to the likelihood of specific supports being required in order to deal with these impacts. The institutions of the European Union are very well aware of the likelihood of a significant impact of a disorderly Brexit on Ireland's economy. This has been part of the discussion from the beginning, and indeed, this is explicitly recognised in the Commission's own communications on contingency planning.

I have stressed the need to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on farmers and processors, including through traditional market supports and exceptional aid under the CAP's Single Common Market Organisation regulation, as well as increased flexibility under State Aid regulations, which has already been the subject of discussions with the Commission. Commissioner Hogan has clearly stated the EU's readiness to respond and support Ireland, and we will remain in contact on these issues as the situation evolves.

As regards state aid, my Department operates the State aid rules and regulations governing the agriculture sector, where the state aid limits under the agriculture de minimis regulation recently increased from €15,000 to €20,000 per undertaking over a rolling three-year period. This figure can be increased to €25,000 in certain circumstances. The increase in the de minimis threshold limits allows for greater flexibility and efficiency, notably in times of crisis and situations demanding a swift response by the public authorities.

I have said that the State will not be found wanting when it comes to supporting the Irish agri-food sector and farmers when it comes to Brexit. The increase in the agriculture de minimis limits is an important step. I am continuing to explore options under the State aid rules with the European Commission to support the agri-food industry at this time.

With regard to increases or exemptions to state aid limits applicable to other sectors, this

is a matter for the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, who are the competent authority for the implementation of the general State aid rules and regulations in Ireland.

### **Beef Industry**

1441. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to reconvene beef talks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36504/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday 9th September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from Court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

### **EU Directives**

1442. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 719 of 11 June 2019, the progress made in transposing and enforcing the EU unfair trading practices directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36506/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Directive (EU) 2019/633 on Unfair Trading Practices in Business-to-Business Relationships in the Agricultural and Food Supply Chain (UTP Directive), was agreed on 13 March 2019. Transposition of the Directive is required within 24 months from publication on 17 April 2019.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) has responsibility for the current national legislation - the Consumer Protection Act 2007 (Grocery Goods Undertakings) Regulations 2016 - under which UTPs are addressed. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the independent statutory body responsible for the enforcement of competition and consumer protection law and it is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Grocery Goods Regulations, investigating complaints and, where appropriate, taking enforcement action.

An Inter-departmental working group has been established between officials from my Department and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI). The group has met five times to date. This working group is finalising preparations for the launch of a stakeholder consultation process which will invite submissions from interested parties on the transposition and enforcement of the EU Directive.

This consultation will be launched in the near future.

### **Aquaculture Licence Data**

1443. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the aquaculture licences issued pursuant to section 19A(4) of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36511/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department does not issue aquaculture licences pursuant to Section 19(A)4 of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997.

Section 19(A)4 of the Act permits an operator who has applied for a renewal of an aquaculture licence to continue operating, subject to the terms and conditions of the original licence held, pending a determination in respect of the licence renewal application in question.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1444. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the plans he put forward at the most recent EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting in relation to the need to provide adequate assistance to the agrifood sector here due to the adverse impacts of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36537/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The most recent EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council took place in Brussels on 15 July 2019. While Brexit was not a formal Council agenda item, I raised the issue of the threat of a negative Brexit outcome on Ireland's agri-food sector, in particular the beef sector, during discussions on the EU-Mercosur trade item.

I have been very active in keeping my EU colleagues and the European Commission apprised of Ireland's concerns about the impact of Brexit on our agri-food and fisheries sector. Over the last two years, I have held a series of bilateral meetings with key Member States, including the Netherlands, Germany, France, Denmark and Austria in an effort to build alliances and assess the degree to which these Member States would support our efforts to have the agri-food and fisheries impacts of Brexit specifically and adequately taken account of in the future relationship negotiations. I have also met with the Fisheries Commissioner Karmenu Vella and I speak regularly with the Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan, to press Ireland's agri-food concerns.

I will continue to remain vigilant in pressing Ireland's concerns at every conceivable opportunity at this critical stage of the Brexit process.

### **Foreshore Licence Applications**

1445. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an official from his Department will contact a person (details supplied) that wishes to develop an area of foreshore on the Shannon estuary near Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36559/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department has contacted the person referred to by the Deputy.

The proposed development is a matter that comes within the remit of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government. This information and relevant contact details have been conveyed to the person named.

## GLAS Applications

1446. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider accepting an appeal submitted by a person (details supplied) in respect of the GLAS scheme particularly in view of the medical circumstances of the applicant and their spouse; and if the person will be permitted to have their NMP plan submitted. [36765/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into the GLAS 1 scheme with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and received payments for 2015 and the 2016 Advance payment.

The applicant was notified on 13 March 2018 that the GLAS contract had been terminated for failure to submit a Nutrient Management Plan as required under the Terms and conditions of the Scheme. A number of reminders had issued to the applicant and his advisor prior to this.

The applicant was informed of the option of appealing the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office (AAO), within three months of the date of this letter. The Department was not notified of the submission of an appeal in this case.

The applicant subsequently submitted an application for Force Majeure through their Advisor to GLAS Division on 29 May 2019 in relation to the clawback of GLAS payments following rejection from the scheme. This application was not accepted as the application did not meet the requirements under Force Majeure as laid out in the terms and conditions of the scheme.

## Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

1447. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications received under the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme 2 by county and tranche in tabular form; the number of approved applications by county; the number of payment claims logged by county; the number of payment claims approved for payment by county; the funds allocated to the scheme under the 2014-2020 RDP; the amount expended to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36817/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The budget for TAMS II for the duration of the RDP (2014-2020) is €395m. Payments to date under the TAMS II scheme now exceed €164m. There are over 11,000 approved applications with farmers who have yet to complete the approved works and submit payment claims.

TAMS II applications and payment claims are broken down in tabular form by county in the following link:

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-09-06\_pq1447-6-9-2019\_en.docx">TAMS II</a>]

## Beef Industry

1448. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of producer organisations in the beef sector that have registered with his Department; the name of each; and the financial supports in place to fund the setting up of such organisations. [36818/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Funding pro-

viding support for the establishment of Beef Producer Organisations is available under the current Rural Development Programme. This funding is available to support the engagement of Department-approved facilitators to assist with the application process for recognition of producer organisations. Funding is available for each group of up to a total of €3,000.

My Department is currently engaging intensively with a number of interested groups with a view to progressing applications for the establishment of DAFM recognised Beef Producer Organisations.

### Diplomatic Representation

1449. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of each embassy worldwide which has agricultural attachés stationed; and the number of attachés stationed in each embassy by city and country. [36819/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Irish embassies that currently have an agricultural attaché and the number of such attachés stationed in each such specific embassy are shown in the following table.

Permanent Representation of Ireland to the E.U, Brussels, Belgium – 3 attachés
Embassy of Ireland, London, United Kingdom – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Rome, Italy – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Paris, France – 1 attaché
Ireland’s Permanent Mission to UN Organisations Geneva, Switzerland – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Washington DC, USA – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Beijing, People’s Republic of China – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Abu Dhabi, UAE – 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Tokyo, Japan - 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, México - 1 attaché
Embassy of Ireland, Berlin, Germany - 1 attaché

### Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

1450. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications to tranche 14 of TAMS; the number of approved applicants; the number of applicants whose applications were refused; and the number of approved applicants that have received funding by county in tabular form. [36820/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The total number of new applications received in Tranche 14 of TAMS II was 2,377. When combined with the 675 applications rolled over from the previous tranche, this brings the total number of applications for consideration in that tranche to 3,052.

These applications are currently going through administrative checks. Approvals have begun to issue and will continue on an ongoing basis. The detailed information requested will be provided directly to the Deputy when all applications have been fully assessed.

### Brexit Staff

1451. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of full-time and part-time staff assigned to the dedicated Brexit unit within his Department by staff grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36823/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Reporting to the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for *EU and International Affairs and Rural Development*, the number of full-time and part-time staff assigned to my Department's dedicated Brexit Unit, by grade, is listed in the following table.

#### Brexit Unit

Grade	No. of Staff
Senior Inspector (Principal Officer Equivalent) Head of Division	1
Assistant Principal	3
Administrative Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	2 (1 HEO 80% work pattern)
Executive Officer	1 (80% work pattern)
Clerical Officer (currently vacant)	1
Grand Total	9

While the staff shown in the above table work in the Brexit Unit within my Department, it should be noted by the Deputy that staff at various levels across my Department are involved in a wide variety of Brexit-related duties and activities.

### Plant Protection Products

1452. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for his decision not to grant a derogation for the use of a plant protection product (details supplied); the alternative substances that are available to tillage farmers to control the barley yellow dwarf virus; and the supports that will be put in place for this purpose. [36824/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2013, the EU Commission introduced a partial ban on some neonicotinoids, including clothianidin, due to concerns about potential impacts on pollinators. Following further studies, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that, due to the potential risks, use of these neonicotinoids should be confined to permanent greenhouses. In April 2018, the EU Standing Committee on Pesticide Legislation recorded a qualified majority vote in favour of the EU Commission proposal to ban the use of clothianidin on outdoor crops which came into full effect on 19 Decem-

ber 2018.

During discussions at EU level throughout the period to the vote in 2018, the importance of clothianidin as a seed dressing for some crops was considered, including for sugar beet and cereals. However, the EFSA evaluations identified risks for all treated crops grown outside, particularly the potential for exposure of pollinators through uptake of neonicotinoid residues in soil by succeeding crops. EFSA were therefore very clear in identifying risks to the environment associated with the use of these chemicals.

My Department makes product authorisation decisions on the basis of the latest scientific information and must be guided by this evidence. After careful consideration, it was decided not to grant the emergency authorisation requested for this product.

This approach supports our commitment to a sustainable agriculture sector which is based on the fundamental protection of biodiversity, including pollinators, the environment and human health.

With regard to the issue of crop management options, Teagasc supports the Irish tillage sector by delivering science-led solutions that underpin both the profitability and environmental sustainability of our cropping systems. Teagasc have specific advisory information available in this regard and the further development of cultural control options continues to be explored.

### **Bord Bia Funding**

1453. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the funding application by Bord Bia to the EU to market Irish suckler beef as a premium product and increase the return for the primary producer. [36825/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the EU Promotion of Agricultural Products Regime, Bord Bia has submitted an application for an Information and Promotion Campaign on EU Suckler Beef, with the strapline “*EU Suckler Beef - Wholesome, Raised as Nature Intended*”. The destination markets are Germany and Italy. The duration of the programme is three years, with a budget of €2.9 million, of which 70% would be co-funded by the EU.

The application is currently under scrutiny in Brussels as part of a competitive process, with the EU Commission Decision on successful applications expected to be published in Q4 2019. If approved, the Irish Suckler Beef Promotion programme would start early in 2020.

### **Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments**

1454. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason 15% of 2019 ANC payments will not be issued to approved farmers until December 2019. [36826/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme is a key financial support for farmers throughout the country. With this in mind, I have increased the budget for the Scheme in 2019 to €250m.

Payments under EU funded schemes are subject to various EU regulations. In this instance, EU Regulation No 1306/2013 as amended by what is referred to as the omnibus regulation sets out many of the rules relating to the timing of payments. Under this amended Regulation, it is

permitted to pay advance payments under the ANC before 1 December. The rate set out in the Regulation for these advance payments is 75%.

My Department submitted a request for a derogation from the relevant regulations to the EU Commission, to allow us to continue making full payments under the ANC in mid-September as had been allowed under the Regulation in previous years. This request has not been acceded to, although the advance payment rate has been increased to 85% on foot of this request.

My Department is now finalising arrangements to commence payments under a range of schemes in the coming months, to ensure that these important financial supports are delivered to farmers in an efficient manner.

### **Beef Industry**

1455. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the latest attempts to reconvene beef talks with all stakeholders; and the efforts taken since protests started to find a resolution to the impasse. [36827/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I share the Deputy's concerns about the ongoing serious difficulties facing the beef sector.

There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday 9th September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from Court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

### **Beef Industry**

1456. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has formally submitted an application to the EU Commission for market disturbance funding for beef farmers under Article 219 of the CAP in view of the fact that prices have fallen further since May 2019. [36828/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I have had ongoing discussions with Commissioner Hogan regarding the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit. I have stressed the need for the Commission to be ready to deploy a range of measures to mitigate the potential impacts on the agri-food and fisheries sector. Avoiding a no-deal Brexit continues to be the Government's overriding policy priority.

I am also keenly aware that the recent months have been very difficult for beef farmers in particular. There has been a prolonged and exceptional period of depressed prices since last autumn, with the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, among other factors, contributing to this market disturbance.

In advance of Brexit and in recognition of the impact of the uncertainty around Brexit, amongst other factors, on the Irish beef sectors and prices, the Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM), with funding of up to €100 million from the EU and the Exchequer, has opened for

applications. I recently extended the closing date for BEAM applications to 15th September. There is a helpline in place to deal with individual farmers queries and my Department will be holding a number of online clinics in the run up to the extended closing date.

### **Beef Industry**

1457. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on latest analysis by an organisation (details supplied) that farmers receive just half the total value realised for beef animals. [36829/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** This issue was raised at the recent beef stakeholder talks chaired by an independent chairperson and facilitated by my Department. Significant progress was made on a range of issues after long and detailed negotiations, including in relation to improvements in transparency along the supply chain, and in communications between industry and farmers and a review of some market specifications.

Full details of the Backweston Agreement are available at:

*<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/beef/StakeholderConclusions210819.pdf>*

My Department is actively progressing relevant commitments, including, for example, starting the procurement process for an in-depth review of market and customer criteria and an independent study of price composition along the supply chain.

There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday 9th September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from Court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

### **Beef Industry**

1458. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the proposal by a farm organisation (details supplied) for an investigation to be carried out in the beef sector in order to establish processor and retailer margins along the supply chain. [36832/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Progress was made on a range of issues after long and detailed negotiations in August, including in relation to improvements in transparency along the supply chain, and in communications between industry and farmers and a review of some market specifications.

The agreement includes commitments on:

- Review of the grid;
- Review of the in-spec criteria for the quality payment system bonus;

- Availability of carcass images to farmers;
- Appeals system for carcass classification in manually grading factories;
- Publication of an expert report on new technology in mechanical carcass classification and
- Promotional initiatives for the beef sector;
- Market transparency initiatives, including more detailed price reporting, and the transposition of the EU Directive on Unfair Trading Practices.

Full details of the Backweston Agreement are available at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/beef/StakeholderConclusions210819.pdf>

There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday 9th September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from Court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

## **EU Regulations**

1459. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a proposed European Commission regulation (details supplied) regarding greater transparency in the way in which prices are reported throughout the chain; the timeline for this measure to be adopted at EU level and likely transposition period for member states and here; and the reporting requirements involving operators in the regulation. [36833/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I welcome initiatives to improve market transparency on EU agricultural markets. Since 2016, the various Market Observatories (milk, meat, crop and sugar) have been rolled out and all aim to monitor the development of production, consumption patterns and market volatility in the EU focusing on the provision of short term analyses, as well as analyses and economic outlook to help economic operators to manage their business more effectively.

A draft amended Commission implementing regulation, published in May this year, aims to further increase market transparency by collecting more detailed price data at various points along the food supply chain. My Department will implement the regulation when it has been finalised at EU level.

## **Beef Industry**

1460. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of suckler cows by county in tabular form. [36834/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The definition of suckler cows used for statistical purposes is beef cows who have calved at least once in their lifetime. The table below shows the number of suckler cows per county at the end of 2018:

2018

County	Sucklers
Carlow	15,013
Cavan	43,625
Clare	67,299
Cork	69,482
Donegal	38,607
Dublin	3,552
Galway	96,959
Kerry	43,227
Kildare	16,995
Kilkenny	30,966
Laois	32,380
Leitrim	25,591
Limerick	32,493
Longford	24,591
Louth	11,117
Mayo	71,276
Meath	31,254
Monaghan	30,325
Offaly	29,640
Roscommon	50,298
Sligo	29,316
Tipperary	52,594
Waterford	18,959
Westmeath	33,748
Wexford	30,699
Wicklow	21,391
Total	951,397

### Farms Data

1461. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications to the 2019 national reserve and young farmers scheme by county in tabular form. [36835/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The number of applications to the 2019 National Reserve and the 2019 Young Farmers Scheme by county is set out in the table below.

In addition to the figures shown, there are further applications under these schemes which were submitted under temporary reference numbers where an application for a herd number has been made and is currently being processed. Therefore, the figures provided are subject to change.

County	Young Farmers Scheme	National Reserve
CARLOW	122	9
CAVAN	412	34
CLARE	416	41

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County	Young Farmers Scheme	National Reserve
CORK	1,155	92
DONEGAL	373	37
DUBLIN	44	2
GALWAY	894	76
KERRY	534	58
KILDARE	145	8
KILKENNY	334	20
LAOIS	300	14
LEITRIM	246	15
LIMERICK	413	54
LONGFORD	173	14
LOUTH	97	2
MAYO	814	57
MEATH	300	31
MONAGHAN	251	27
OFFALY	286	17
ROSCOMMON	379	30
SLIGO	242	32
TIPPERARY	563	37
WATERFORD	249	8
WESTMEATH	209	13
WEXFORD	371	20
WICKLOW	154	6

### **Beef Industry**

1462. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the outcome of recent talks with farming organisations and meat industry representatives in relation to the serious difficulties facing the beef sector; if particular measures have been implemented following the talks; if so, the actions he plans to take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36902/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I share the Deputy's concerns about the ongoing serious difficulties facing the beef sector.

Progress was made on a range of issues after long and detailed negotiations in August, including in relation to improvements in transparency along the supply chain, and in communications between industry and farmers and a review of some market specifications.

The agreement includes commitments on:

- Review of the grid;
- Review of the in-spec criteria for the quality payment system bonus;
- Availability of carcass images to farmers;
- Appeals system for carcass classification in manually grading factories;
- Publication of an expert report on new technology in mechanical carcass classification and
- Promotional initiatives for the beef sector;

- Market transparency initiatives, including more detailed price reporting, and the transposition of the EU Directive on Unfair Trading Practices.

Full details of the Backweston Agreement are available at: <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/farmingsectors/beef/StakeholderConclusions210819.pdf>

There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday, 9 September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

### **Beef Industry**

1463. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if talks will be convened with farming organisations, representatives of the meat industry and retailers in view of the ongoing serious difficulties facing the beef sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36903/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I share the Deputy's concerns about the ongoing serious difficulties facing the beef sector.

There has been significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the duration of this dispute and I believe that there is now a basis for the renewal of talks between the parties. These talks have been scheduled for next Monday 9th September.

We have reached a point where it is critically important for the future of the sector that stakeholders engage in a spirit of compromise to resolve a dispute that has the potential to inflict long term damage on the sector if it continues. It is clear that this can only happen if processors and protestors step back from court proceedings and illegal blockades, in order to allow space for meaningful talks to proceed.

### **Beef Industry**

1464. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he has endeavoured to resolve the concerns of beef producers with particular reference to the need to ensure that the industry is fully operational as Brexit approaches; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36912/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I share the Deputy's concerns about the ongoing serious difficulties facing the beef sector, particularly in view of the very significant threat posed to the sector by the possibility of a no-Deal Brexit in the near future.

Progress was made on a range of issues after long and detailed negotiations in August, including in relation to improvements in transparency along the supply chain, and in communications between industry and farmers and a review of some market specifications.

The agreement includes commitments on:

- Review of the grid;
- Review of the in-spec criteria for the quality payment system bonus;
- Availability of carcass images to farmers;
- Appeals system for carcass classification in manually grading factories;
- Publication of an expert report on new technology in mechanical carcass classification and
- Promotional initiatives for the beef sector;
- Market transparency initiatives, including more detailed price reporting, and the transposition of the EU Directive on Unfair Trading Practices.

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### **Brexit Preparations**

1465. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he remains satisfied that all possible actions have been taken by his Department in anticipation of a UK crash out from the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36914/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Brexit poses enormous challenges for the agri-food and fisheries sectors by virtue of their exposure to the UK market. The focus of my Department's activities has been to simultaneously put in place supports to help the agrifood sector to deal with the impact of Brexit, while, at the same time, taking the practical steps to prepare for the range of control and other activities that will be required. This work has concentrated in particular over the last twelve months on the preparations for a no-deal Brexit, and there is now a renewed focus on both fine-tuning our arrangements ahead of 31 October and ensuring effective communication on the matter with all stakeholders.

Since the extension to 31 October was granted, my Department has used the time to continue our Brexit preparedness work, within a whole-of-Government effort, in order to ensure the best possible outcome for the agrifood sector. My Department has placed a heavy focus on improving our infrastructure facilities at Dublin and Rosslare Port and at Dublin airport, having the necessary staffing in place, and refining and testing our IT systems to ensure they are operating optimally in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

In addition, my Department, in collaboration with other Government Departments and agen-

cies, continues to actively communicate with businesses trading with the UK and is encouraging relevant operators to register with the Department so that they are in a position to meet with the regulatory requirements required to continue trading with the UK post Brexit. My Department has prepared a Business Preparedness Checklist for the agri- sector and will host a series of stakeholder events on Brexit preparedness planning over the coming weeks.

I have also introduced a number of supports to assist the agri-food sector in preparing to address the challenges posed by Brexit over the last number of years, and the Government stands ready to respond to a possible hard Brexit through the implementation of measures that will seek to mitigate the impact on vulnerable sectors and groups.

Work on no-deal Brexit preparations is on-going and continues to receive the highest priority in my Department and across Government. We continue to work closely with the Commission, our EU partners, businesses and citizens to mitigate as far as possible the impacts of a no deal Brexit, and ensure that we are as prepared as we can be for the changes it will bring.

### **Electric Vehicle Grants**

1466. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a grant for the purchase of e-bikes similar to the e-car incentive. [35007/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There is currently a generous range of supports available to incentivise the uptake of electric vehicles. A grant of up to €5,000 is provided to support the purchase of new electric vehicles. In order to qualify for the purchase grant, the electric vehicle must be classified as M1 (passenger vehicle) or N1 (light commercial vehicle) and meet certain requirements including criteria relating to range and tailpipe emissions.

The purchase grant does not currently support e-bikes. While there are no plans to introduce such a support, the terms and conditions of the purchase grant, including the types of vehicle supported, are kept under review to ensure they meet their policy objectives.

### **Waste Disposal Charges**

1467. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce support for persons that have lifelong or long-term medical needs (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35098/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since mid-2017, a range of charging options have been operated, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, and provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances. Mandatory per kilogramme “pay by weight” charging was not introduced. A Price Monitoring Group (PMG) was established in mid-2017 to monitor the on-going cost of residential waste collection to homeowners across Ireland as the “flat-rate structure” was being phased out. While fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend has been relative price stability.

My Department has engaged with relevant stakeholders, including representative organisa-

tions and public bodies, in an effort to see how best to provide a financial support to persons with long-term incontinence with respect to the disposal of medical incontinence wear.

While there are complex issues at play in this area, which are understandable given the sensitive nature of the medical data in question, my Department is continuing to examine options to address this issue.

### **Building Energy Rating Compliance**

1468. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which the target of 50,000 retrofitted houses per year will be met in view of the fact that funding has run out for the deep retrofit pilot programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35460/19]

1504. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which he plans to achieve the goals as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 particularly in relation to the stated aim of upgrading half a million homes to B2 BER in view of the lack of funding of the SEAI for the full deep retrofit scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35532/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1468 and 1504 together.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme is a time bound pilot which aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. Having been initiated in 2017, the pilot predates the Climate Action Plan. The scheme was intended to run for three years and, as such, closed for applications on 19 July, which was in line with the published scheme Application Guidelines. However, grants will continue to be paid as approved projects are completed this year and next.

The Government's programme of mainstream and pilot grant schemes for retrofit is funded by my Department and operated by the SEAI. Since 2000, over 400,000 homes have received direct support under these schemes to improve their energy efficiency. This year, demand has been extremely high for these schemes, including the Deep Retrofit Pilot. The total budget allocation for SEAI retrofit grants in 2019 is €100 million.

The Climate Action Plan commits to reviewing and redesigning these grant schemes to ensure alignment with Government climate objectives and value for money. The plan also sets an ambitious target of 500,000 energy efficiency retrofits by 2030. Achievement of this target will be supported by the Project Ireland 2040 allocation of €3.7 billion as well as the range of measures identified in the plan.

I recently announced the establishment of a taskforce that will drive the achievement of this target. The taskforce will primarily be responsible for the development of a new retrofitting delivery model, which will, *inter alia*, group retrofits together to achieve economies of scale, ensure supports for households with lower incomes, and leverage private finance in addition to grant support.

### **Building Energy Rating Compliance**

1469. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the historical application costs per application for the now closed deep retrofit

scheme; the sum collected in application costs for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35563/19]

1470. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of applications received for the deep retrofit scheme since the pilot commenced to the date on which the scheme closed; the number approved; the number refused; the number pending on the closing date for applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35564/19]

1511. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the historical application costs per application for the now closed deep retrofit scheme; the amount collected in application costs for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35584/19]

1512. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of applications received for the deep retrofit scheme since the pilot commenced to the date on which the scheme closed; the number approved, refused and pending, respectively on the closing date for applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35585/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1469, 1470, 1511 and 1512 together.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was launched in 2017 as a time bound pilot to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. The scheme was intended to run for three years and closed for applications on 19 July in line with the published Application Guidelines.

The scheme is funded by my Department and operated by the SEAI. The pilot provides 50% funding for energy upgrades to an A BER rating with 95% funding provided for low-income households. The total budget for the scheme this year is €10 million – double the amount spent on the scheme last year. The latest data available indicates that €1.2 million has been paid in grants under the scheme in 2019.

The scheme operates via a lead applicant, or service provider, which could apply for support for projects involving five or more homes. SEAI evaluates each project against the scheme criteria and offers funding to successful applications via a grant approval letter of offer.

SEAI has not collected any application fees in respect of the scheme. The information required as part of an application are set out in the scheme application guidelines. This can entail a pre BER assessment and an air tightness test being undertaken for each home in the project. SEAI provides financial support towards the associated cost for projects that are successfully completed, per the scheme application guidelines.

The table below sets out the number of applications received, approved, withdrawn and pending on the closing date of the scheme. Applications are classified as “received” when all necessary information is provided. Projects are classified as “complete” when all homes in a project are fully completed and Building Energy Ratings for each are published.

Project Status	2017	2018	2019	Total
Total Applications Received	7	41	67	115
Approved: Complete	1	24	9	34

Project Status	2017	2018	2019	Total
Approved: In Progress		9	14	23
Pending: Under Evaluation			51	51
Withdrawn		7		7

The Government's Climate Action Plan commits to reviewing and redesigning the existing grant schemes to ensure alignment with Government climate objectives and value for money. The Plan also sets an ambitious target of 500,000 energy efficiency retrofits by 2030. Achievement of this target will be supported by the Project Ireland 2040 allocation of €3.7 billion as well as the range of measures identified in the plan.

I recently announced the establishment of a taskforce that will drive the achievement of this target. The taskforce will primarily be responsible for the development of a new retrofitting delivery model, which will, *inter alia*, group retrofits together to achieve economies of scale, provide supports for households with lower incomes and leverage private finance and grant support. Development of the new model will be informed by the experience from existing schemes in Ireland including the Deep Retrofit Pilot as well as best practice in other jurisdictions.

### Nuclear Safety

1471. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the radiation measurements taken in County Donegal in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster have been retained by his Department; and if so, if he will make them available to the public. [36477/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Between 1973 and 1992, the Nuclear Energy Board (NEB) was the organisation in Ireland responsible for matters relating to ionising radiation, including any radiation measurements taken in the aftermath of the Chernobyl incident.

Those functions are now the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the retention of specific records and their publication is solely a matter for the Agency.

A report on the effects of Chernobyl on Ireland is available on the EPA's website at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/radiation/chernobylitseffectonireland.html>.

### Waste Management

1472. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated first- and final-year cost of the introduction of a 15 cent levy on single-use coffee cups. [36894/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** This Government is committed to leading the way in reducing single use plastics and is working both at a national and European level to tackle this matter.

The Government's recent Climate Action Plan will step up ambition in this area and contains a specific action to scope a number of possible environmental levies including on single use plastics, as part of a review of the Environment Fund. Work is currently underway on this

action and a report outlining possible levy options is due to be submitted to me shortly.

Prior to the introduction of any new levy, further detailed research would be required, including a regulatory impact assessment, which would address implementation costs and revenue generation.

### **Environmental Schemes**

1473. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the consultation that took place on a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34748/19]

1474. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the consultation that took place on a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34749/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1473 and 1474 together.

The consultation/assessment process for both Projects NSAD-17-003 (Erriff Bank Protection) and Project SCF-17-0005 (Carrowniskey) included the following elements

- A screening for Appropriate Assessment for the proposed works;
- the submission of screening to the National Parks and Wildlife Service; and,
- consultation with the land owners and receipt of their consent to the works.

In view of the number of questions tabled recently by the Deputy in relation to fisheries projects, I have offered him a briefing with Inland Fisheries Ireland. I reiterate that offer.

### **Environmental Schemes**

1475. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the consultant report will be provided for a project (details supplied); the cost of the report; if the costs of the report came from the funding allocated under the National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34750/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A screening for appropriate assessment was carried out in relation to the proposed works included in project reference no. SCF-17-0026 (Crolly River). This assessment concluded that there would be no significant impact on the Natura Sites in the vicinity of the works. I can provide a copy of this assessment to the Deputy for his information.

This assessment cost €2,398.50 including VAT to prepare. This was not funded from the allocation provided specifically for the National Strategy For Angling Development.

### **Climate Change Policy**

1476. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the extent to which he remains satisfied that carbon emissions throughout the

EU are measured equally with a view to ensuring that the more developed countries in the EU do not have the advantage over expanding economies such as Ireland with a view to an evenly spread advantage or disadvantage throughout the EU and noting in particular the relatively low rate of heavy carbon emitting industry here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34768/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prepares inventories of past, and projections of future, greenhouse gas emissions for Ireland on an annual basis. Inventories and projections are compiled by the EPA according to international standards to meet EU and UN reporting obligations and to inform national policy development.

The EU Effort Sharing Regulation, which entered into force on 9 July 2018, sets out binding annual greenhouse gas emission targets for each Member State for the period 2021 to 2030. Ireland's target under this regulation will be for a 30% reduction on 2005 levels of non-ETS emissions by 2030.

Targets for Member States were established based on a range of criteria, including GDP per capita and the cost-effectiveness of domestic emissions reductions within each Member State. During the Effort Sharing Regulation negotiations, Ireland emphasised the need to prioritise a successful conclusion aimed at retaining a high environmental ambition for the EU, but also providing each Member State with the capacity to contribute to that ambition in a cost-effective and fair manner. I am satisfied that the regulation provides appropriate recognition of different Member State circumstances, and the need to provide flexibility to reduce emissions as cost-effectively as possible in the context of the overall EU target.

The recently published Climate Action Plan 2019 sets out for the first time how Ireland will reach its 2030 targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and put Ireland on the right trajectory towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The plan sets out, in Chapter 3, the expected emissions abatement contribution from existing commitments under Project Ireland 2040 and from Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) measures. The plan includes the necessary targets and measures, supported by detailed actions and roadmaps, to close the identified remaining gap of 58.4 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq in the non-ETS sector. The relevant table is reproduced below.

-	Carbon Budget	Compliance Gap
Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) Ceiling	378.3 Mt	-
Projected Emissions (Pre-NDP)	479.9 Mt	101.6 Mt
Contribution of Project Ireland 2040 NDP Measures	- 16.4 Mt	85.2 Mt
Contribution of LULUCF	- 26.8 Mt	58.4 Mt
Contribution of Climate Action Plan 2019	- 58.4 Mt	0 Mt

Ireland supports strong EU ambition in order to contribute to the Paris Agreement objectives. The Climate Action Plan confirms Ireland's support for increased EU climate ambition and the adoption of a net zero target by 2050 at EU level, including in the context of the importance of the EU reaffirming its role as a global leader in relation to ambitious climate action, and also in view of the upcoming UN Climate Summit later this month.

The transition to climate neutral economy will present both challenges and opportunities, and require additional changes across all sectors of the economy. Under the new Climate Action Plan I have committed to evaluate in detail the changes that would be necessary in pursuit of

this objective at a national level.

Under the Plan, I have also committed to bring forward a new Climate Action (Amendment) Bill which will make the adoption of carbon budgets a legal requirement, require the Government to set a decarbonisation target range for each sector over five year periods, and establish a 2050 target in law.

### Climate Change Policy

1477. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if afforestation, the use of bog lands as carbon repositories and wind generated electricity can each contribute to carbon reduction with a view to improving the progress of Ireland in line with international agreements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34769/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Climate Action 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 confirms that afforestation will have a key role to play in delivering emissions reductions and helping Ireland to achieve its 2030 targets. It commits, under Action 116, to implementing the Forest Programme 2014 to 2020 in line with the Mid-Term Review recommendations. Our commitment is to plant 440 million trees by 2040.

Better management of peatlands and soils under Actions 131 to 134 in the Plan will support the protection and enhancement of the carbon sink function of peatland landscapes, including through assessment and implementation of mitigation options on post-production, peat extraction sites, and the implementation of measures for peatlands conservation.

In relation to renewable electricity, the plan sets a target of increasing the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to 70% by 2030, indicatively comprised as follows:

- at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy
- up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy
- up to 8.2 GW total of increased onshore wind capacity

The exact level of offshore wind, onshore wind, solar and other renewable technology will be determined by a new system of competitive auctions where the lowest cost technology will be determined.

The plan includes a number of actions to deliver this target, including regulatory streamlining of renewables and grid development; development of the offshore renewables sector; implementation of the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme; and the development of an enabling framework for micro-generation.

### Renewable Energy Generation

1478. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the supports provided under the Climate Action Plan 2019 for the Tallaght

district heating scheme; the objectives of the scheme; the role of his Department in overseeing the development of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34825/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The South Dublin County Council Tallaght District Heating Scheme project is one of the seven successful projects under the first call for applications from the Climate Action fund.

The Climate Action Fund is overseen by an Advisory Board which is chaired by my Department and includes representatives from the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government; the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and independent experts.

The South Dublin County Council project will receive support up to a maximum level of €4.45 million. As part of the Climate Action Fund process, the project is currently at the validation stage which includes more detailed examination of the project, agreement of project outputs and payment timelines. It is expected this will complete later this year and the project will then proceed to delivery.

### **Ministerial Advisers Data**

1479. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34841/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** This information is published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on their website.

### **Mining Licences**

1480. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the basis for the ongoing policy that mining is not licensed in national parks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34896/19]

1481. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the basis for the decision that mining is not licensed in and around Croagh Patrick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34897/19]

1482. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider adopting a policy that no further mining licences will be granted in or near natural heritage sites in view of the environmental and natural heritage sensitivities of Natura 2000 sites of natural heritage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34898/19]

1483. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if she will consider adopting a policy that no further mining licences will be granted in areas of outstanding scenic amenity in view of planning policy directives issued to local authorities in relation to the preservation of areas of outstanding scenic amenity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34899/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard**

**Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1480 to 1483, inclusive, together.

It is the policy of my Department not to issue Prospecting Licences (PL) within the boundaries of National Parks as published by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). My Department has redrawn the boundaries of existing Prospecting Licences so that they do not overlap with National Parks' boundaries. As the boundaries of National Parks may change from time to time, my Department maintains regular contact with the NPWS to ensure that it is aware of up to date information on any boundary changes.

There are exceptional circumstances where it may be the case that NPWS may agree to the issue of a Prospecting Licence over an area which contains part of a National Park if it enhances their knowledge and be in the interest of the National Park.

In relation to Croagh Patrick, I understand that in May 1990 the then Minister for Energy made a decision to exclude this area from Prospecting Licensing because of the special cultural and religious significance of the area.

For any proposed prospecting works within or in close proximity to Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)), screening of any potential impact on such sites is undertaken by my Department in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011) and my Department consults with the NPWS in considering whether such works should be approved.

With regard to mining, there is a requirement for a number of statutory permissions to be obtained before any proposed mining activity receives permission to commence. These include Planning Permission from the Local Authority and an Integrated Pollution Control Licence (IPC) from the Environmental Protection Agency. As part of this process, the applicant must prepare a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to support their application to the Local Authority for Planning Permission.

These permitting processes take into account natural heritage sensitivities of Natura 2000 sites in the EIS as well as providing for statutory consultation with a wide range of bodies including this Department. It would be a matter for the Local Authority to take into account the preservation of areas of outstanding scenic amenity as part of the EIS process and this is not a matter for my Department.

The applicant must also apply to my Department for a State Mining Facility (i.e. a mining lease/ licence), the consideration of which also requires public consultation. A State Mining Facility would not be granted until both Planning Permission and an IPC Licence have been obtained.

### **Inland Fisheries**

1484. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to bring in a new statutory instrument to replace Statutory Instrument 906, which related to salmonid waters and was annulled; his plans to give particular protection to the salmonid rivers and lakes of the west of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34903/19]

1506. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a by-law to enable anglers on loughs Corrib, Mask and Carra to remove four coarse fish from the lakes at any one session of fishing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35554/19]

1507. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to reintroduce by-law 906, which was introduced initially by the Minister of State; if so, if it will be as was; if not, if it will be amended; when he plans to address the matter; if an appropriate assessment has been carried out in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35555/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1484, 1506 and 1507 together.

The existing Bye-law No. 806 of 2006 provides for persons to take and kill up to 4 coarse fish per day. These provisions apply throughout the State.

There is no reference in secondary legislation related to inland fisheries to “Statutory Instrument 906”. However, I assume the Deputy is referring to Bye-law 964 of 2018 which related to several lakes and which was annulled in the High Court following the initiation of legal proceedings. The preparation of a new Bye-law has recently commenced and its content and progress will be subject to legal advice and technical/scientific advice, particularly as regards EU legislation and other appropriate issues.

I would emphasise that, in the meantime, the lakes referred to by the Deputy and other lakes have long been designated, as a matter of policy, for management primarily for the benefit of wild brown trout and that policy designation remains. I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that Stock Management Plans in respect of these and other lakes for 2019 were agreed by its Board.

Salmon in all waters in Ireland are afforded specific protection via established fisheries policy, licensing, tagging, the opening and closing of fisheries based on the state of their stock and annual conservation legislation. Ireland’s protection of salmon is considered best in class internationally and aligns fully with the EU Habitats Directive and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) principles.

The salmon management regime also applies to sea-trout over 40cms in length and the potential to extend similar protection policies to other salmonid species could be considered to afford particular protection to salmonids generally.

### **Electric Vehicles**

1485. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the average number of new vehicles sold here in each of the past 10 years; the number of electric vehicles cars sold in each of the past ten years; his plans based on this to ensure a million electric vehicles will be registered here by 2030; the yearly targets for the sale of electric vehicles that inform this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34905/19]

1518. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has examined the roll-out of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles and incentives for persons to change to EVs in other jurisdictions, in particular Scandinavia, which may provide templates for action here to decarbonise transport systems; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35716/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1485 and 1518 together.

The following table provides data on new vehicles licensed for the first time over the last ten years in Ireland which is available from the Central Statistics Office. The data shown include the total number of new vehicles, the number of new battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and the number of new plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) licensed in each year. It should be noted that data on new PHEVs prior to 2015 is not readily available.

Year	New Vehicles	New BEVs	New PHEVs
2009	73,125	59	
2010	103,076	66	
2011	105,761	103	
2012	95,093	215	
2013	92,887	72	
2014	117,652	238	
2015	153,850	497	123
2016	181,293	411	286
2017	161,840	664	261
2018	157,865	1,328	727

As part of the Climate Action Plan, which was published in June of this year, the Government set a target of 936,000 electric vehicles to be on the road by 2030. While no annual targets were set out in the plan, the modelling that provides an analytical foundation for the plan indicates a level of circa 180,000 would need to be achieved by 2025.

The Climate Action Plan sets out a range of actions that will support the delivery of the Government's target. This includes a strong focus on developing the charging infrastructure necessary to stay sufficiently ahead of demand. The policies and measures put in place to develop the charging infrastructure will include examination of international examples with high electric vehicle uptake.

Under the first call for applications from the Climate Action Fund, I approved funding of up to €10 million to support ESB eCars to develop a nationwide, state-of-the-art electric vehicle fast charging network.

Last week, I announced funding to support the rollout by Local Authorities of up to 1,000 on-street public charge points for electric vehicles over the next 5 years. The SEAI will administer this support and are currently developing the detailed terms and conditions for the scheme which I expect to open for applications later this month.

A support scheme is also in place to support electric vehicle charging at home. This scheme provides grant aid of up to €600 to support the purchase and installation of a home charger, for purchasers of new and second-hand electric vehicles.

In addition, there is a generous range of supports available to support the purchase of electric vehicles. These supports include a purchase grant of up to €5,000; Vehicle Registration Tax relief of up to €5,000; Accelerated Capital Allowances; Benefit-in-Kind relief for battery electric vehicles; and a discount on tolls of up to 50%.

### Renewable Heat Incentive

1486. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding anaerobic digesters;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34987/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat has been developed to financially support the adoption of renewable heating systems by commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating and other non-domestic heat users not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System.

The first phase of the scheme, an installation grant for heat pumps, opened for applications in September 2018. Following EU State aid approval, I opened the second phase of the SSRH, an operational support for biomass boilers and anaerobic digestion heating systems, in June of this year. Under this phase of the scheme, eligible renewable energy technologies will be supported through a multi-annual payment, for a period of up to 15 years, on the basis of prescribed tariffs. Under Project Ireland 2040, the National Development Plan sets out an allocation of €300 million for the roll-out of the scheme for the period up to 2027.

Renewable electricity output from anaerobic digesters will also be eligible for support under the forthcoming Renewable Electricity Support Scheme. The high level design of this scheme was approved by Government in July 2018 and the scheme will require State aid approval.

In November 2018, I announced the seven successful projects from the first Call for Applications under the Climate Action Fund. One of the successful projects, the Gas Networks Ireland GRAZE Gas project, involves the installation of a Central Grid Injection facility for renewable gas produced from the anaerobic digestion of wastes, including agriculture wastes such as slurry.

My Department is also examining potential options to support the production of biomethane from anaerobic digestion and its injection into the gas grid.

### **Warmer Homes Scheme**

1487. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to expand the warmth and well-being pilot scheme being operated in Dublin 8, 10, 12, 22 and 24 to other parts of the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35052/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Warmth & Wellbeing Scheme is a joint policy initiative between my Department and the Department of Health under the Government’s Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty and the Healthy Ireland Framework. The main aim of the Scheme is to validate, in an Irish context, the strong international evidence that making homes warmer, drier and more energy efficient can have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of people living with chronic respiratory conditions. The scheme was launched in 2016 as a time bound pilot for 3 years, but has remained open for applications into 2019 in order to recruit a sufficient sample of participants for the health impact evaluation of the scheme. The Scheme is being delivered by a team comprised of officials from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and Health Service Executive (HSE). Over €23 million has now been invested in upgrading over 1,100 homes in the pilot area.

The process of evaluating the Scheme is on-going and is being overseen by a Steering Group comprised of my Department, the Department of Health, SEAI and HSE. Initial reports from the HSE have indicated that the upgrades are delivering benefits to the health and wellbeing of participants. An initial review of the energy impacts of the scheme has shown that the average Building Energy Rating of participating homes improved from a D2 to a B3 with carbon emis-

sions reducing by on average 2.2 tCO<sub>2</sub>/year.

It is expected that an interim report on the health impacts of the scheme, which is being undertaken by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, will be completed this year with the final evaluation scheduled for completion in 2021. The interim report will inform decisions in relation to the future of the scheme.

The retrofitting of 500,000 homes, to make them warmer and more energy efficient, is a key action under the Climate Action Plan. The Plan also commits to enhancing the approach and supports for households with lower incomes to improve the energy efficiency and comfort of their homes. This work will be informed by the experience from existing schemes in Ireland and other jurisdictions, as well as evidence gathered from pilot schemes including the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme.

### **Warmer Homes Scheme Waiting Times**

1488. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will facilitate the hiring of more contractors in order to reduce the waiting times for the SEAI warmer homes scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35053/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme provides energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty. These upgrades are provided free of charge to the homeowner. The Scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department. The initial Warmer Homes Scheme budget allocation for 2019 was €24 million. However, following a mid-year capital review conducted by my Department and SEAI, the budget has been increased to €39.8 million for 2019.

Approvals under the scheme can be granted within a number of days of the SEAI receiving a completed application. The home is then scheduled for a technical survey and subsequently allocated to a contractor to carry out the works. The most recent data available indicates that the average waiting times from date of application to date of works completion is 8 months for shallow measures and 11 months for deeper measures.

Although the budget for the scheme has been significantly increased in recent times, the current very high level of demand does directly impact waiting times. This is partly due to changes to the scheme introduced in June 2018 which expanded and enhanced the range of energy efficiency measures available to include ‘deeper’ measures which are more expensive and take longer to install. These deeper measures can include external or internal wall insulation, central heating and replacement windows when the technical assessment considers them necessary. Managing the enhanced package of measures has required careful monitoring and programme management by SEAI within available resources. In addition, changes to the eligibility rules introduced in 2018 expanded to the pool of eligible homeowners to include those in receipt of the Carer’s Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance.

The Warmer Homes Scheme is delivered through a panel of contractors, appointed through a competitive tendering process. The SEAI has informed my officials that it does not consider contractor capacity to be the biggest influence on waiting times at present. SEAI will however, be renewing its contract with Warmer Homes Scheme contractors in 2020, through a competitive procurement process.

## **Television Licence Fee Collection**

1489. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the legislative powers of enforcement enacted to support the successful bidder for television licence fees to reach higher levels of collection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35094/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Broadcasting Act 2009 provides for both civil and criminal enforcement powers to tackle TV licence fee evasion. The legislation is being amended to provide for a public procurement process for licence fee collection. A tender will issue as soon as the enabling legislation has been enacted. It is intended that the successful bidder will have a fixed term contract of 5 years which will incentivise investment in the collection system which will in turn help to reduce evasion levels.

In the meantime, An Post continues to act as my agent for licence fee collection. It will be open to An Post to tender for the contract.

## **Prospecting Licences**

1490. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he is satisfied with the standard of assessment of an ecological impact assessment carried out by a company (details supplied) in connection with the grant of a prospecting licence to a company to prospect for base metals in County Galway in view of the high sensitivity of the surrounding Natura 2000 sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35112/19]

1550. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of an application for a prospecting licence by a company (details supplied) to prospect for base metals in County Galway; his plans to grant the licence; the timeframe for same; the process involved in the grant or refusal of the licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36895/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1490 and 1550 together.

A Prospecting Licence application was made to my Department by MOAG Copper Gold Resources on 27 November, 2018. The application requests consent to prospect in a number of townlands in County Galway. This application was published in the Connacht Tribune on 6 June 2019 and was open for public consultation for a period of 30 days.

The application remains under consideration as the Department is assessing the submissions received by members of the public and is also awaiting additional information requested from the Company. It is expected that it will be a number of weeks before all of the issues raised have been fully considered and the additional information from the company is assessed. Following on from this, a final decision will be made on the application.

I am satisfied with the standards of ecological assessments applied to Prospecting Licence applications, including the assessments undertaken in regard to this application.

All applications for prospecting licences are subject to screening for Appropriate Assessment by my Department in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011). Should a licensee propose to undertake prospect-

ing activities within or near a designated Natura 2000 site, it is a requirement that an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, which would include an ecological assessment, shall be carried out and submitted as part of any application for approval to undertake such works. My Department also consults with the National Parks and Wildlife Service before any such proposed works are approved.

### National Broadband Plan Data

1491. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount expended on hosting meetings, entertainment and related services associated with the national broadband plan in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, by amount, service provider and services engaged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35116/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The NBP process has, by its nature, involved a significant level of interaction with each of the bidders that participated in that process since Competitive Dialogue commenced in July 2016. This has included over 800 hours of meetings with all bidders since that date. This procurement process is ongoing, with continued meetings with the Preferred Bidder to ensure all necessary financial and legal requirements are in place prior to financial close and award of contract. As part of this engagement the NBP team has incurred expenditure totalling approximately €5,450 for costs including light refreshments and room hire when necessary. There has been no expenditure on entertainment. A breakdown of the costs is set out in the following table.

Year	Costs incurred
2017	€993.00
2018	€2,285
2019 to date	€2,172

### Broadband Service Provision

1492. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter regarding the provision of broadband at a location (details supplied). [35119/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The premises referenced by the Deputy is in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department's website at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie). The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP. This intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. In May of this year I brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment.

A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed. In the first year of roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises at the end of the second year, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

In regards to eir's commercial roll out of high speed broadband to 300,000 predominantly rural premises, this is in line with a Commitment Agreement signed with my Department in April 2017.

With regard to the Deputy's reference to a nearby commercial deployment of high speed broadband, eir's deployment is an entirely commercial undertaking, and not part of the planned State Intervention network. Although the deployment is monitored under the terms of the Commitment Agreement, it is not funded by the State and it is not planned, designed or directed by my Department in any capacity.

Decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the roll out and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis. I have no statutory role or function in such commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

### **National Broadband Plan Data**

1493. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 2280 of 23 July 2019, if he will provide a schedule of the more than 300 meetings to date between the national broadband plan procurement team and representatives of the preferred bidder since the competitive dialogue commenced in July 2016 that were attended by and-or representatives of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35122/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As I advised the Deputy in reply to Question No. 2280 on 23 July last, the NBP process has, by its nature, involved a significant level of interaction with each of the bidders that participated in that process, including more than 300 meetings to date between the NBP Procurement Team and representatives of the Preferred Bidder since Competitive Dialogue, which forms part of the procurement process, commenced in July 2016. This procurement process is ongoing, with continued meetings with the Preferred Bidder to ensure all necessary financial and legal requirements are in place prior to financial close and award of contract.

The NBP Procurement Team has not met with the first named individual referenced by the Deputy. The team has met with the second named individual in the context of his direct involvement with the lead bidder Granahan McCourt and has had extensive engagement with the bid team.

### **Broadband Service Provision**

1494. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and

Environment if his Department has examined a technology in respect of providing broadband (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35172/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department keeps apprised of new technology advances on an ongoing basis through regular industry engagement, expert advice and international industry conferences. The recent emergence of Low Earth Orbit satellites as a technology is being monitored by my Department.

### Illegal Dumping

1495. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the expenditure on the anti-dumping initiative to date; the number of drones purchased for enforcement purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35281/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In recognition of the impact of illegal dumping on communities across the country, my Department developed the Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI) to identify high risk or problem areas, develop appropriate enforcement responses and carry out clean-up operations in partnership with local authorities and community organisations. My Department has provided funding of €1.2 million and €1.8 million to the ADI in 2017 and 2018 respectively. A further allocation of €3 million is being made available this year which will support over 280 projects across the country.

Details of this year's allocations and the projects funded by the ADI in 2017 and 2018, including SMART enforcement initiatives to target illegal dumping such as drones, can be accessed on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/waste/enforcement/anti-dumping-initiative/Pages/AntiDumpingInitiative.aspx>

### Departmental Expenditure

1496. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35336/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department uses the Lotus Notes application primarily to interact with the Lotus Notes application services provided by the Houses of the Oireachtas. The continued use of this application over the next 5 years is dependent on the continuing availability of these services. It is not expected that the cost of licence renewal will increase to any significant extent in the next 5 years above that paid in previous years.

The licence costs associated with Lotus Notes renewal for the years 2009 to 2019 is outlined in the following table.

Year	€
2009	0

Year	€
2010	4,413
2011	4,549
2012	4,765
2013	4,765
2014	4,623
2015	5,002
2016	5,002
2017	5,002
2018	5,002
2019	5,002

### Warmer Homes Scheme Eligibility

1497. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35359/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme provides energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty. The Scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department. These upgrades are provided free of charge to the homeowner. To be eligible to receive works under the scheme, an applicant's property must have been built and occupied before 2006. One of the aims of the scheme is to improve the energy efficiency of our built environment, in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding. This involves targeting supports in particular ways such as by limiting certain grants to homes built and occupied before 2006.

While the Department has no function in relation to individual grant applications, officials in the Department have contacted SEAI regarding this application.

The SEAI have examined the details for this property and have confirmed that the electricity meter was not connected until March 2006. Therefore it is very unlikely that the property was occupied before 2006. The scheme rules must be applied consistently to all applicants to ensure fairness as well as value for money for the Exchequer. Therefore the SEAI is unable to proceed with this application. I understand that the SEAI have written to the applicant directly communicating the position.

SEAI operate under a Customer Charter and a complaints and appeals procedure is in place. If after following this procedure an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can ask the Office of the Ombudsman for an independent review of the complaint. Further details are available here: <http://www.seai.ie/customer-charter/>

### Broadcasting Legislation

1498. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider adding the FAI cup final to the list of events that must be shown on free-to-air television; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35362/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard**

**Bruton):** The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) provides that Member States may designate sporting and cultural events of major importance to society as free-to-air. At a national level, the Broadcasting Act 2009 sets out the statutory process for designating events as free-to-air.

Under Section 173 (2) of the 2009 Act, I am obliged to review the list of designated events every three years. The purpose of the review is to consider the appropriateness of the current list of designated events and to examine whether to add any events of major importance to society.

The most recent review was finalised in 2017 and approval was received from the European Commission to designate the All Ireland Senior Ladies Football and Camogie Finals as events of major importance. As part of the review process, the Department carried out a period of public consultation and submissions were received for the inclusion of a number of different sporting events.

The events currently designated by Order (S.I. 465 of 2017) can be found at the following link: <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/consultations/Pages/Review-of-Designation-of-Major-Events-.aspx> .

The current list of designated events will be reviewed again in 2020.

### **Prospecting Licences**

1499. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if compensation will be payable under the provisions of the CETA trade agreement with Canada in the situation in which a Canadian company with a prospecting licence that found a viable quantity of minerals to mine was refused a mining licence on scenic and environmental grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35369/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Responsibility for international trade agreements, including the manner in which the compensation provisions of the Canada EU Trade Agreement might apply to particular situations, is a matter for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

### **Prospecting Licences**

1500. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if an environmental impact statement will be required before a current applicant for a prospecting licence or a renewal of a prospecting licence is permitted to carry out invasive operations such as trenching, boring and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35370/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In the case of all applications for Prospecting Licences or renewals of Prospecting Licences, my Department screens (i.e. assesses) the proposed prospecting activities submitted in relation to the areas specified and makes a determination as to whether the activities may have the potential to have a significant effect on the environment.

Screening of any potential impact on Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)) is undertaken in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011). For any proposed prospecting works within or in close proximity to such sites, my Department consults

with the National Parks and Wildlife Service before the proposed works are approved.

If, on the basis of a company's preliminary exploration activities and analysis, specific locations for drilling or 'drill targets' are identified, any such proposed drilling would be subject to a further screening assessment under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations and determination.

In the case of the application referred to by the Deputy there is no requirement at this stage for an EIA as no specific drill targets have been proposed.

### **Biofuel Obligation Scheme**

1501. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend the biofuel obligation to home heating oil; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35371/19]

1515. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has considered introducing a biofuels obligation in the home heating sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35630/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1501 and 1515 together.

The Biofuels 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.

My Department carried out a public consultation on the Biofuels Obligation Scheme that ran from December 2017 to January 2018. This consultation included a specific question in relation to the potential for an obligation scheme (similar to the Biofuels Obligation Scheme) in the heat sector. The majority of submissions received in response to this consultation did not support the introduction of such an obligation at that time. The submissions received in relation to this consultation are published on my Department's website.

As set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan, a public consultation will be carried out later this year on the development of the Biofuels Obligation Scheme in the period 2021-2030. This consultation will, similar to the previous consultation, raise the potential of an obligation in the heat sector. The submissions received in response to this consultation will help inform the development of a future obligation on the heat sector in Ireland.

### **Energy Conservation**

1502. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has no more funding available for its deep retrofit pilot programme; if applicants for the programme have been informed; the actions he will take to assist applicants in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35451/19]

1503. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of applications received by the SEAI for the full deep retrofit grant not proceeding due to lack of funding; if additional funding will be provided to the

scheme for 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35531/19]

1508. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the scheme for deep retrofitting (details supplied) will be properly financed and opened again; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35562/19]

1520. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the deep retrofit pilot grant programme; when he expects the completion of the evaluation of the programme; his plans to assist those wishing to refurbish their homes to make them as energy efficient and environmentally friendly as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36034/19]

1539. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding funding for the SEAI deep retrofit scheme; if all applications will be processed; if adequate funding is available to meet all commitments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36532/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1502, 1503, 1508, 1520 and 1539 together.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was launched in 2017 as a time bound pilot to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. The scheme was intended to run for 3 years and closed for applications on 19th July in line with the published Application Guidelines.

The scheme is funded by my Department and operated by the SEAI. The Pilot provides 50% funding for energy upgrades to an A BER rating with 95% funding provided for low-income households. The total budget for the scheme this year is €10 million – double the amount spent on the scheme last year. The latest data available indicates that €1.2 million has been paid in grants under the scheme in 2019.

The scheme operates via a lead applicant, or Service Provider, which could apply for support for projects involving 5 or more homes. SEAI evaluates each project against the scheme criteria and offers funding to successful applications via a grant approval letter of offer.

The 54 applications that were received before the July 19th closing date are currently under evaluation by the SEAI. I expect Service Providers to be informed of the status of their application later this month. All successful applications will be funded from within my Department's budget allocation for energy efficiency retrofit schemes in 2019 and 2020. Works on homes should not commence until a grant approval letter of offer is received.

The Government's Climate Action Plan commits to reviewing and redesigning the existing grant schemes to ensure alignment with Government climate objectives and value for money. The Plan also sets an ambitious target of 500,000 energy efficiency retrofits by 2030. Achievement of this target will be supported by the Project Ireland 2040 allocation of €3.7bn as well as the range of measures identified in the Plan.

I recently announced the establishment of a Taskforce that will drive the achievement of this target. The Taskforce will primarily be responsible for the development of a new retrofitting delivery model, which will, *inter alia*, group retrofits together to achieve economies of scale, provide supports for households with lower incomes, and leverage private finance and grant support. Development of the new model will be informed by the experience from existing schemes in Ireland including the Deep Retrofit Pilot as well as best practice in other jurisdictions.

*Question No. 1504 answered with Question No. 1468.*

### Warmer Homes Scheme Waiting Times

1505. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the waiting time under the warmer homes scheme from the date of application to the approval of the application by the SEAI; the number of applications received under the scheme in each year since 2014; the number approved and the amount drawn down, respectively; the number of applications on hand in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35536/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme provides energy efficiency upgrades to the homes of people living in or at risk of energy poverty. These upgrades are provided free of charge to the homeowner. The Scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on behalf of my Department. The initial Warmer Homes Scheme budget allocation for 2019 was €24m. However, following a mid-year capital review conducted by my Department and SEAI, the budget has been increased to €39.8m for 2019.

Approvals under the scheme can be granted within a number of days of the SEAI receiving a completed, valid application. The home is then scheduled for a technical survey and subsequently allocated to a contractor to carry out the works. The most recent data available indicates that the average waiting times from date of application to date of works completion is 8 months for shallow measures and 11 months for deeper measures.

The following table sets out the number of eligible applications received under the Scheme, the cancellations, works undertaken including costs, and associated waiting lists for 2014 – 2019 (to date).

Year	Eligible Applications received in each year	Cancelled - No works possible*	Works Completed in each year	Cost (€) of Works Completed in year	Waiting List at year-end
2014	12,284	N/A	9,056	19,283,531	3,247
2015	8,852	3,079	6,867	18,136,198	4,531
2016	8,146	2,574	6,743	20,680,000	3,153
2017	12,863	5,140	6,555	22,620,901	4,652
2018	7,408	1,699	5,328	35,512,000	4,355
2019 (as at 31 July)	4,106	119	2,355	19,225,861	5,762

\* 'No works possible' means that the measures provided under the scheme are not suitable for the home.

*Questions Nos. 1506 and 1507 answered with Question No. 1484.*

*Question No. 1508 answered with Question No. 1502.*

### Television Licence Fee Collection

1509. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a matter (details supplied) in relation to identification for public service workers will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35567/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My officials have been in contact with An Post who act as issuing agent for licence fee collection. An Post confirmed that Inspectors do not have braille ID, and advised that this issue has not been raised with any of their Inspectors. It is worth noting also that some persons who are legally blind may qualify for free licences under the household benefits scheme administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Where individuals are recorded on the TV Licence database as qualifying for free licences, no inspection visits are necessary.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1510. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35571/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In preparation for GDPR, my Department arranged training for all staff in the form of an e-Learning programme, which covers the general elements of GDPR, as well as information on Departmental data protection policies and procedures. This training continues to be available for new staff or existing staff who wish to refresh their knowledge of GDPR.

Targeted training courses have also been provided to staff in the Data Protection Unit in my Department and to certain staff who work in areas where an advanced knowledge of GDPR is required.

The information requested in relation to external consultants is outlined in the following table.

External Consultant	Amount
IACT	€14,776.00
CMG Professional Training	€2,934.67
Public Affairs Ireland	€2,160.00
PDP	€1,940.25
Institute of Public Administration	€1,350.00
Legal Island	€1,100.00
Olas	€790.00
Allone Solutions	€350.00
Irish Centre for European Law	€160.00
	€25,560.92

*Questions Nos. 1511 and 1512 answered with Question No. 1469.*

### Energy Schemes

1513. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the financial position of some applicants

of the deep retrofit scheme (details supplied); the way in which the scheme complies with the customer charter of SEAI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35586/19]

1529. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding will be granted for applications that were submitted prior to the closing date in July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36278/19]

1531. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the application made by persons (details supplied) for a grant under the SEAI grant-aided deep retrofit project that was made in the first half of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36328/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1513, 1529 and 1531 together.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was launched in 2017 as a time bound pilot to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. The scheme was intended to run for 3 years and closed for applications on 19 July in line with the published Application Guidelines.

The scheme is funded by my Department and operated by the SEAI. However, as Minister, I have no function in relation to individual applications to the scheme. The Pilot provides 50% funding for energy upgrades to an A BER rating with 95% funding provided for low-income households. The total budget for the scheme this year is €10 million – double the amount spent on the scheme last year. The latest data available indicates that €1.2 million has been paid in grants under the scheme in 2019.

All applications that were received before the July 19th closing date are currently under evaluation by the SEAI. I expect Service Providers to be informed of the status of their application later this month. All successful applications will be funded from within my Department's budget allocation for energy efficiency retrofit schemes in 2019 and 2020. Works on homes should not commence until a grant approval letter of offer is received.

### **Environmental Protection Agency**

1514. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if research studies have been carried out by a Department or the Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental impact and health risks of power plants; if a study of same has been carried out at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35612/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Environmental Protection Agency undertakes a range of regulatory tasks relating to the licensing, permitting, consenting or certification of activities that could have an impact on the environment or on human health. In this context, the Agency is the competent authority for granting and enforcing industrial and waste licences and undertakes an annual programme of audits and inspections of EPA-licensed facilities. Further information in this regard is available on the Agency's website at [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) As this matter comes within the remit of the Agency, the Minister has no function in relation to the licencing or oversight of the facilities referred to in the Deputy's question.

*Question No. 1515 answered with Question No. 1501.*

## Departmental Customer Charters

1516. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35639/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** There were fifteen customer complaints received by my Department in 2017. There were thirteen customer complaints received in 2018. To date in 2019 the Department has received twenty-one complaints. No issues or problems in registering complaints have been brought to my Department's attention.

## National Broadband Plan

1517. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the network to be built under the national broadband plan will be in public ownership as recommended by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35715/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In July 2016 the Government selected the gap funded model as the optimum ownership model for the NBP State intervention. The Government considered two ownership models, having narrowed the options from five models.

The NBP State intervention is the subject of the procurement process to engage a company to build, operate and maintain the NBP State intervention network. In May of this year I brought a recommendation to Government to confer Preferred Bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process and Government agreed to this.

The Government Decision means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder. This award is subject to contract close, including finalisation of financial and legal documents. As the procurement process has been carried out on the basis of a gap-funded model, a change in that model would require a new procurement process.

Work continues on finalising the contract and in parallel to this work, I am considering the recommendations contained in the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee which was published recently. I will bring my deliberations on the report to Government in due course.

*Question No. 1518 answered with Question No. 1485.*

## Community Involvement Scheme

1519. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the supports being offered in relation to a case (details supplied) in view of recent developments; the status of the matter; the agencies involved in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35994/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My understanding is that the Deputy is referring to the possibility of Monaghan County

Council making an application to the Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport under the Community Involvement Regional and Local Grant Programme, i.e. the Community Involvement Scheme, with the aim of facilitating the repair of the local roads affected by the events in and around Magheraclone. This is a matter in the first instance for Monaghan County Council and, when and if an application is made, for the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

My Department continues to work with Monaghan County Council and the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that the situation at Magheraclone is managed satisfactorily and resolved as promptly as possible and, in that context, I welcome the recent decision by the Local Authority to reopen the LP 4900 Road.

*Question No. 1520 answered with Question No. 1502.*

### **Energy Schemes**

1521. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position in circumstances in which a person had not applied for the SEAI deep retrofit grant before July 2019 in view of the fact they were awaiting planning permission with the aim of undertaking a deep retrofit in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36077/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was launched in 2017 as a time bound pilot to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. The pilot was intended to run for 3 years and closed for applications on 19 July in line with the published scheme Application Guidelines. The scheme is funded by my Department and operated by the SEAI. While the Deep Retrofit Pilot is now closed to new applications, a number of other grants for energy efficiency works remain available. Further information on the grants available from SEAI can be found on their website - [www.seai.ie/grants](http://www.seai.ie/grants). Since 2000, over 400,000 homeowners have received direct support under these schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. This year I have allocated €100m to these schemes.

### **Waste Disposal**

1522. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the role he has in approving WEEE operations; the basis on which an organisation do not operate in certain areas (details supplied) for WEEE or portable battery recycling; and the way in which the recycling of such items is organised in these areas. [36096/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Under the terms of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Batteries and Accumulators Directives, financing the recycling of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and portable batteries is solely a producer responsibility. Two collective compliance schemes, acting on behalf of producers of EEE and batteries, are operating in Ireland. These compliance schemes, WEEE Ireland and European Recycling Platform Ireland, are responsible for the recycling of all household WEEE and batteries deposited at designated collection points. These compliance schemes are also responsible for ensuring that recovered WEEE and batteries are recycled in an environmentally sound manner and for putting in place tracking and auditing systems for materials recovery in line with the requirements of the Directives. Compliance schemes operate under a Ministerial approval in accordance with Part 5 of both the European Union (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Regulations 2014 and the European Union

(Batteries and Accumulators) Regulations 2014. This approval sets out the terms and conditions under which compliance schemes are approved to act as both a WEEE and Batteries compliance scheme in accordance with an application to my Department. The purpose of this approval is to ensure clear service ownership, accountability and responsibilities with a view to ensuring that compliance schemes are discharging their statutory functions in an efficient and effective manner.

The market share of each compliance scheme's producer members impacts its designated geographic collection area in Ireland. The designation is based on a voluntary accord between the two schemes and is determined on the basis of the average percentage of the member's market share of EEE and batteries placed on the market.

European Recycling Platform Ireland currently collect in 8 functional areas - Fingal, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth and Meath with WEEE Ireland, the larger of the two schemes, providing a collection service in all other local authority areas. It should be noted that designated geographic areas are periodically re-organised in accordance with market share changes. The fact that compliance schemes operate on a "not for profit" basis allows for such co-operation and ensures that a nationwide WEEE and batteries collection service is provided to the public in the most efficient manner possible.

### Legislative Reviews

1523. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to update the Inland Fisheries Act 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36106/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Inland Fisheries Act 2010 is being reviewed as part of a broader initiative within my Department to consolidate and modernise all primary legislation governing inland fisheries. A significant and challenging work programme is underway in the Department on the proposed new consolidated legislation. This involves complex and technical considerations in order to update and consolidate a series of 14 enactments (including the 2010 Act) since the Fisheries Consolidation Act of 1959 (the Principal Act). In that context, it should be noted that the consolidation project is particularly challenging given that the 1959 Act is itself a consolidation of legislation dating back to the 1800s.

Work is on-going on a comprehensive draft scheme as part of the established legislative process.

### Departmental Internships

1524. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36143/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department offers unpaid internships to assist applicants gain work experience in their area and to further their skills in seeking employment. Unpaid internships have been granted as follows:

Year	Number of Interns
2019 (to 28 August)	4
2018	1
2017	1
2016	1
2015	1

### Mining Industry

1525. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the procedure in relation to the granting of permission for large-scale rocket blasting of rock; the purposes for which the practice is authorised; the person or body that authorises same; and the way in which it is managed and overseen with particular reference to the relevant legislation and or regulations governing same.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36163/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The use of blasting is the most efficient method for breaking large amounts of rock in mining and quarrying.

All operational mines and quarries are subject to conditions contained within their Integrated Pollution Control licences issued by the Environmental Protection Authority in regard to noise and vibration levels and environmental emissions resulting from blasting.

Mines and quarries are also subject to conditions contained within their Planning Permissions issued by the relevant local authority in regard to the times when blasting can take place. This comes within the area of responsibility of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The health, safety and welfare at work aspects of the use of explosives in mines and quarries is subject to oversight by the Health and Safety Authority under the provisions of the Safety, Health And Welfare At Work (Quarries) Regulations 2008 and the Safety, Health and Welfare At Work (Mines) Regulations 2018. These matters fall within the area of responsibility of the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

### Protected Disclosures

1526. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the safeguards in place to protect the identity of the person who has made the protected disclosure in instances in which protected disclosures are shared with external consultants; if the person who made the protected disclosure is notified in advance; if their consent is required to share the disclosure with external consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36201/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The premise of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 is to protect the identity of the Discloser insofar as is possible. My Department strives to protect the identity of the Discloser at all times. On occasion, in order for an effective investigation to take place, it may be necessary to release the Discloser’s identity. In this case the Discloser would be consulted with in advance.

## Cyber Security Protocols

1527. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36223/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Cyber Security Centre is part of my Department and has responsibility for the implementation of the Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive. My Department works closely with the NCSC on the department's own internal network security and implements its recommendations as appropriate. The NCSC encompasses the State's National/Governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE). CSIRT-IE is an internationally accredited response team.

The Department has recruited and employs appropriately trained and qualified personnel to the NCSC. Currently there is no active recruitment.

My Department applies the relevant cyber security protocols in its network, applications, data, operations, disaster recovery, business continuity and staff awareness through our Shared Service agreement with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). Under the arrangement, my Department relies on the resources of DAFM in relation to any cyber security incident.

## Cyber Security Protocols

1528. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is formal collaboration between agencies, Departments, law enforcement and the military with regard to cybersecurity and guidance on best practice and intelligence sharing in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36239/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The security of the State and its citizens is a matter of the highest priority for the Government, with cyber security posing a particular challenge due to its dynamic and cross cutting nature. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) was formally established in 2011 and is a part of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, and is the primary State body with responsibility for Cyber Security matters, including the operation of a Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT). The CSIRT is the national incidence response unit, and deals with a large number of incidents each year, across Government and critical national infrastructure.

The NCSC is composed of highly skilled, specialist technical staff with skillsets across a range of cyber security related disciplines. In addition to the incident response roles, the NCSC also has a role around improving the resilience of critical national infrastructure and also acts as a conduit for information on cyber security matters to its constituent base. This information includes general cyber security information via the NCSC's Alert & Advisory System, as well as very specific and targeted information, including threat intelligence, which is provided directly to entities. The NCSC also provides expert advice and analysis on cyber security issues and is

involved in coordinating the response to significant incidents.

Intelligence sharing between An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), and Critical National Infrastructure takes place on an ongoing basis, including via the Threat Sharing Group, which is a cross government forum for information exchange on cyber security and related matters. The NCSC also works very closely with international counterparts in identifying and managing any incidents or matters arising that pose a threat to the security of the State or infrastructure here, including by means of the exchange of threat intelligence information.

*Question No. 1529 answered with Question No. 1513.*

### **National Broadband Plan Implementation**

1530. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the residents of an estate (details supplied) will have high speed broadband access delivered under the national broadband plan in view of the fact that commercial operators are not delivering or have indicated there are no plans to deliver such services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36283/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since the initial publication of the High Speed Broadband Map (available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://www.broadband.gov.ie)) my Department has monitored the deployment of broadband infrastructure by commercial operators across the country and will continue to do so. The Map is dynamic. This means that either during the procurement, or following award of an NBP contract, the Map can be updated to reflect new commercial plans, or previous plans that have failed to materialise. This flexibility allows for an increase or decrease in the number of premises included in the State Intervention area. For example, should telecommunications operators' plans for premises in commercial areas of the Map (marked as BLUE on the Map) not materialise it may become necessary for my Department to intervene and include premises in the State Intervention.

As part of this ongoing monitoring my Department is currently conducting a consultation on the Map. Mabestown is one of the areas that have been identified as containing some premises where plans from commercial premises have not materialised. As part of this process my Department is seeking submissions from individuals such as those in Mabestown. Individuals can make a submission, providing details of any correspondence with service providers where they requested a broadband service, the Eircode of the premises and any other relevant information via the dedicated email address for the consultation [nbpmapping@dccae.gov.ie](mailto:nbpmapping@dccae.gov.ie) by 20th September 2019.

*Question No. 1531 answered with Question No. 1513.*

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme Data**

1532. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the uptake of SEAI grants in County Mayo since the grant was introduced to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36334/19]

1533. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of SEAI grant applications denied in County Mayo since the grant was introduced to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36335/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1532 and 1533 together.

This year the Government through the SEAI will invest €147.6 million in sustainable energy and energy efficiency, including free upgrades for low income households, up from €120 million in 2018. In 2018, 21,350 homeowners, 2,000 motorists, and 310 businesses received grant assistance from SEAI schemes.

The Better Energy Homes grants administered by the SEAI are funded by my Department. Grants are available to homeowners for insulation, heating controls, heat pumps, solar PV and solar thermal hot water heating systems.

The majority of the home energy grants are available to homeowners whose properties were built before 2006. Since the introduction of these grants nearly 400,000 homes across the country have received an energy efficiency upgrade, representing nearly one home in four across the country

The following document sets out the number of applications completed, and number of cancelled applications in Co Mayo for each measure under the Better Energy Homes Scheme since 2012. Applications can be cancelled for various reasons such as ineligibility for the scheme or change of mind by the homeowner.

A range of other home energy schemes are funded by my Department and administered by the SEAI. The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme provides a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households vulnerable to energy poverty who meet the defined eligibility criteria.

The following table sets out the number of homes in Co. Mayo that received energy efficiency upgrades under the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme between 2016 and 2019 (Year to Date).

Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme	2016	2017	2018	2019 YTD
No. of Homes Completed – Co. Mayo	290	455	216	130

The Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme was launched in 2017 as a time bound pilot to investigate the challenges and opportunities of deep retrofit in Ireland. The pilot was intended to run for 3 years and the scheme closed for applications on 19 July in line with the published scheme Application Guidelines. The Pilot provides 50% funding for upgrades to homes to an A BER rating with 95% funding provided for low-income households.

The following table sets out the number of homes upgraded to an A BER rating in Co. Mayo in 2018. Details for 2019 are not currently available as the projects are ongoing and not yet completed.

Deep Retrofit Pilot Scheme	2018
No. of Homes Completed - Co. Mayo	64

In addition, the Better Energy Community (BEC) Scheme also funds community based partnerships to improve the energy efficiency of the building stock in their area – homes, community facilities and businesses. The attached document contains details of the Better Energy Community projects funded in Co. Mayo in 2017 and 2018.

## **Better Energy Homes Scheme**

1534. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend the SEAI grant to homes built after 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36336/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** This year the Government through the SEAI will invest €147.6 million in sustainable energy and energy efficiency, including free upgrades for low income households, up from €120 million in 2018. In 2018, 21,350 homeowners, 2,000 motorists, and 310 businesses received grant assistance from SEAI schemes. The Better Energy Programme is funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The aim of the programme is to improve the energy efficiency of our built environment, in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding. This involves targeting supports where they can achieve the most energy savings. This includes limiting eligible homes to those built and occupied before 2006.

As new homes are already required to meet specific energy performance standards and to incorporate renewables under Building Regulations, grant support is currently focussed on improving the condition of existing dwellings. Grant funding further works in more recently built homes that already meet certain levels of energy performance would not represent a cost-effective use of Exchequer funds.

SEAI does however also offer grant assistance for heat pumps, Solar Thermal and Solar PV (including battery storage) for homes built and occupied before 2011.

## **Illegal Dumping**

1535. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the level of funding provided to Mayo County Council for clean-up projects in the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36337/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In recognition of the impact of illegal dumping on communities across the country, my Department developed the Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI) to identify high risk or problem areas, develop appropriate enforcement responses and carry out clean-up operations in partnership with local authorities and community organisations. My Department has provided funding of €1.2 million and €1.8 million to the ADI in 2017 and 2018 respectively. A further allocation of €3 million is being made available this year which will support over 280 projects across the country.

Details of this year's allocations and the projects funded by the ADI in 2017 and 2018, including allocations made to Mayo County Council can be accessed on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/waste/enforcement/anti-dumping-initiative/Pages/AntiDumpingInitiative.aspx>.

## **Local Authority Funding**

1536. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action

and Environment the level of funding provided to Mayo County Council for green initiatives projects in the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36338/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Funding is provided by my Department to Local Authorities on a range of green initiatives, including the Anti-litter and Graffiti Initiative, Anti-dumping Initiative and the Community Environment Action Fund. Funding has been provided to Mayo County Council under each of these initiatives during 2019.

In relation to the Anti-litter and Graffiti Initiative, I recently announced national funding of €771,500 for 2019. Mayo County Council has been allocated €20,000 from this fund to promote greater public awareness and education in relation to litter and graffiti, with a particular focus on voluntary initiatives by community and environmental groups, and on involving schools and young people in anti-litter and anti-graffiti action.

In August I announced €460,000 of funding for the Community Environment Action Fund, previously known as the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund. The Fund promotes sustainable development by assisting small-scale environmental projects at local level and is administered by Local Authorities. For 2019, Mayo County Council has received an allocation of €13,800 from this Fund. Applications for funding opened on 21 August and will be accepted by Local Authorities until Friday, 27 September 2019. For 2019, priority is being given to projects with a climate or biodiversity focus.

In relation to the Anti-Dumping Initiative, a national allocation of €3 million is being made available this year which will support over 280 projects across the country. The primary focus of this initiative is to identify high risk or problem areas, develop appropriate enforcement responses and carry out clean-up operations in partnership with Local Authorities and community organisations. Mayo County Council has been allocated €121,960 this year under this initiative.

### Postal Codes

1537. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if an Eircode postcode will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36390/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Eircodes are assigned to new property addresses using a valid postal address and verified geo-locations. An Post collects information on new and existing buildings, as well as changes to existing addresses and Ordnance Survey Ireland provides the geo-locations for these buildings. An Post GeoDirectory issue a new release of the GeoDirectory database file on a quarterly basis to Capita Business Support Services Ireland, trading as Eircode, in accordance with their licence agreement.

Each new postal address assigned an Eircode is published on the free to use Eircode Finder website, a notification letter is issued to the property occupant containing the Eircode of that address and an updated Eircode Database is provided to licensed businesses for their use. Eircode have informed my Department that 87,700 property addresses have been assigned an Eircode since the launch in 2015

My Department has requested Eircode to contact and liaise directly with the individual in question regarding the assignment of an Eircode for this new property.

In recognition of the fact that earlier assignment of Eircodes to new builds is desirable, my

officials are working with An Post, Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi), An Post GeoDirectory and Capita to improve and expedite the existing process.

### Departmental Bodies Data

1538. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of positions on the boards of agencies and commercial State companies under the remit of his Department, in tabular form; and the quorum required for a board meeting for each agency. [36400/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Name of Body	Positions on Board	Quorum for a Board Meeting
An Post	15	6
Bord na Móna	12	5
Eirgrid	10	6
ESB	12	4
RTÉ	12	7
TG4	12	7
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)	14	6
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	10	5
Irish National Petroleum Corporation (INPC)	3	3
Loughs Agency	12	6
National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA)	6	2
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	12	5
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI)	9	5

*Question No. 1539 answered with Question No. 1502.*

### North-South Interconnector

1540. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the procurement process in respect of the proposed North-South interconnector; if procurement is proceeding and planning applications not determined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36533/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** EirGrid is the designated Transmission System Operator and its role includes the operation, maintenance and development of the electricity transmission network in Ireland. The construction of the North South Interconnector, and all related procurement activities, is an operational matter for EirGrid and ESB Networks and one in which I have no function.

I am advised that due to the very long lead times that can arise in relation to projects of this nature and the benefits of a single joint procurement process to be undertaken and managed by ESB Networks, EirGrid sought approval from the regulators in Ireland and Northern Ireland to commence procurement. Following this approval, in September 2017 ESB Networks commenced a number of procurement processes in relation to the project.

In June 2019 ESB Networks awarded a framework contract for the design, test and supply of steelwork in relation to the project. I am advised that the design and testing part of the contract will commence shortly. However under the framework there will be no supply of materials until the planning process in Northern Ireland is complete.

### **Broadband Service Provision**

1541. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the outcome of analyses at national and international level on the provision of high-speed 5G wireless internet and possible health implications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36534/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have policy responsibility for matters pertaining to public exposure to non-ionising radiation. Irish policy in this area is informed by a substantial volume of internationally recognised scientific research and evidence. This includes the guidelines set down by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, ICNIRP.

These guidelines provide scientifically-based exposure limits that are applicable to both public and occupational exposure from electromagnetic fields (EMF), including 5G. ICNIRP guidelines apply up to a frequency of 300 gigahertz (GHz), well above the maximum frequencies being considered for 5G.

ComReg, the independent telecoms regulatory authority, ensures that licensed mobile operators comply with their licence conditions and do not exceed ICNIRP guidelines. ComReg carries out a Programme of Measurement of Non-Ionising Radiation (NIR) Emissions and details in this regard are available on the regulator's website.

In 2015, the Irish Government commissioned a report by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment of the Netherlands (RIVM). This was published in 2016 and is entitled "Electromagnetic Fields in the Irish Context". It examined and synthesised existing peer-reviewed research into clear findings, with particular focus on the potential health effects of electric and magnetic fields arising from high voltage power lines, and electromagnetic fields from base stations for mobile communication. This report reaffirmed the overall conclusion of an earlier 2007 report, "Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields", that there is insufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship between exposure to low-frequency electromagnetic fields and adverse health effects.

This is an area that is kept under review, and in this regard, I have recently assigned a new statutory function to the Environmental Protection Agency to provide general information to the public on matters pertaining to public exposure to non-ionising radiation, to monitor international scientific and technological developments and provide independent advice to my Department in this area.

## **National Broadband Plan Implementation**

1542. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the proposed national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36535/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Broadband Plan aims to ensure that every home, school and business in Ireland has access to high speed broadband. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment across the country, and a State intervention in those areas where commercial operators acting alone are unlikely to invest.

The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. In 2012, less than 700,000, or 30% of Irish premises had access to high speed broadband. Today, over 75% of the 2.4 million premises in Ireland can access high speed broadband.

In May of this year I brought a recommendation to the Government to confer preferred bidder status on Granahan McCourt, the remaining bidder in the NBP procurement process, and the Government agreed to this at its meeting on 7 May.

The Government Decision means that it is intended to award the State Intervention contract to the Bidder subject to contract close and the finalisation of financial and legal requirements; this work is progressing. Deployment of the NBP State Intervention network will commence shortly after that.

The Bidder has indicated that the NBP State intervention will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment.

A deployment plan will be made available by the Bidder once the contract is signed. In the first year of roll out, the Bidder will deploy approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) across all counties. It is anticipated that between 7 and 23 BCPs will be deployed in each county. BCPs will provide a community based high speed broadband service, enhancing online participation and allowing for the establishment of digital work hubs in these locations.

The Bidder is aiming to pass 133,000 premises at the end of the second year, with 70-100,000 passed each year thereafter until roll out is completed.

Work continues on finalising the contract and in parallel to this work, I am considering the recommendations of the Oireachtas Communications Committee report which was published recently. I will bring my deliberations on the report to Government in due course.

## **Departmental Staff**

1543. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the outcome of his considerations to provide additional staff in his Department in order to implement the Climate Action Plan 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36569/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I published the Climate Action Plan 2019 on 17 June last. 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 requires a significant step up in ambition, with a target abatement range for each of the key sectors

that contribute to Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions: Electricity, Enterprise, Built Environment, Transport, Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use, Waste and the Circular Economy, and the Public Sector.

The Plan sets out 616 individual actions to be delivered by Government Departments, agencies and other bodies. My Department will be directly responsible for delivering 160 of these actions, across the climate, energy and waste policy sectors.

New governance arrangements are being put in place to provide effective oversight of implementation of the Plan, including:

- a Climate Action Delivery Board, jointly chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, holding individual Departments and agencies to account

- the publication of a quarterly report on the implementation of actions set out in the Plan

- a statutory basis for establishing carbon budgets with clear sectoral targets

- a strengthened Climate Action Council

- a strengthened Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action to hold the Government to account on the implementation of climate policy

My Department currently has a total of 84 staff assigned to the climate, energy and waste policy functions, across ten separate divisions. This staff complement has significant experience in developing and implementing policy at international, EU, national, regional and local levels. In addition to its own staff, the Department also has access to scientific and technical advice in agencies under its aegis to assist it in delivering the Government's policy objectives.

Notwithstanding the resources currently available, my Department keeps its resourcing and staffing requirements under ongoing review, to ensure that it is effectively equipped to deliver the policy objectives that have been set for it by the Government, including the objectives and commitments set out in the Climate Action Plan.

### **Departmental Strategies**

1544. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the all-of-Government clean air strategy will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36570/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Clean Air Strategy will provide an overarching policy framework within which clean air policies can be formulated and given effect in a manner consistent with national priorities, and EU and other international policy considerations. The Strategy, which I intend to publish in the coming months, will provide the policy framework necessary to identify and promote integrated measures across Government that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner air, while delivering on wider national objectives.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

1545. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action

and Environment the involvement of his Department in an organisation (details supplied); the amount invested in same to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36644/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A representative from the Heat and Transport Policy division in my Department has regularly attended meetings of Hydrogen Mobility Ireland (HMI). My Department engages with HMI as a policy stakeholder, providing policy context and input; however, the Department is not an author of any outputs from the group nor does it have any governance function.

Earlier this year, industry representatives from HMI were invited to attend and present at a meeting of Working Group 4 of the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce. This working group, co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, was tasked with examining the role of incentives and infrastructure in the transition of the transport fleet to alternative (non-electric) fuels. Deliberations from this Working Group are helping to inform policy development recommendations of the overall LEVTaskforce, a Report from which is expected in the coming weeks.

No financial investment has been provided to HMI by my Department.

### **Better Energy Homes Scheme**

1546. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason low-income pensioners are precluded from availing of SEAI grants for wall insulation if they received support for attic insulation; the reason for same in view of the fact that wall insulation was not covered by the grant originally; his views on whether this is fair or reasonable for low income pensioners who struggle to afford to heat their homes; the reason a review of the scheme has not been published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36695/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme is funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households vulnerable to energy poverty. To date over 135,000 homes have received free upgrades under the scheme, leaving the occupants better able to afford to heat their homes to an adequate level.

The aim of the scheme is to deliver a range of energy efficiency measures in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding, focusing eligibility to those in receipt of certain payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, such as the Fuel Allowance, and limiting each home to one visit for an energy efficiency upgrade.

Last year, the measures provided under the scheme were extended to include external and internal wall insulation. Subject to survey by SEAI and assessment of potential for improved energy performance, the scheme can, in certain circumstances, include internal or external wall insulation. This permits the upgrade of more property types such as homes with solid walls, and also increases the energy savings and emissions reductions that the scheme can achieve and will also enable future fuel switching.

Demand for the scheme is extremely high, reflecting the shift to deeper measures, and is impacted by longer delivery times associated with these types of works and the available budget. The homeowners on this waiting list have never received any form of free upgrade from SEAI under the scheme.

The Climate Action Plan commits to reviewing ways to improve how current energy poverty schemes target those most in need. This review is underway and will consider the issue of revisits for additional works.

## Waste Management

1547. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding provided in 2019 for the anti-dumping initiative. [36706/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In recognition of the impact of illegal dumping on communities across the country, my Department developed the Anti-Dumping Initiative (ADI) to identify high risk or problem areas, develop appropriate enforcement responses and carry out clean-up operations in partnership with local authorities and community organisations. My Department has provided funding of €1.2 million and €1.8 million to the ADI in 2017 and 2018 respectively. A further allocation of €3 million is being made available this year which will support over 280 projects across the country.

Details of this year's allocations and the projects funded by the ADI in 2017 and 2018, can be accessed on my Department's website at the following link:

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/environment/topics/waste/enforcement/anti-dumping-initiative/Pages/AntiDumpingInitiative.aspx>

## Electric Vehicles

1548. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the funding provided to support an expanded number of electric cars and the associated infrastructure. [36707/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A total of €200 million is provided in the National Development Plan under Project Ireland 2040 to support the uptake of electric vehicles over the period 2018-2027.

My Department has allocated €29.5 million capital in 2019 to fund electric vehicle purchase grants of up to €5,000; home charger grants of up to €600; and a new support for on-street chargers of up to €5,000 per charge point.

In addition, the Climate Action Fund will provide up to €10 million to support the ESB in upgrading and expanding the public charger network in Ireland.

I recently announced funding to support the rollout by local authorities of up to 1,000 on-street public charge points for electric vehicles over the next 5 years. This new scheme will support the widespread roll out of electric vehicles. This will build on the 90 new high speed chargers (which charge at three times the power of fast chargers), 50 new fast chargers and over 500 upgraded charge points which will be supported under the Climate Action Fund. This will ensure that we build a network of circa 2,000 reliable public charge points nationwide by 2025, which will be enough to support a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles on the road.

In addition, we will introduce new regulations to require non-domestic buildings with over 20 car parking spaces to install charging facilities.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**National Oil Reserves Agency**

1549. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the projected receipts from the National Oil Reserves Agency levy for 2019 and each of the next five years; the projected proportion that will be available in excess of the operating costs of the agency; and if all excess funds have been earmarked for the climate action fund. [36708/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The projected receipts from the NORA levy over the next five years are on average €141 million per annum. Average NORA expenses over this period are projected to be €76 million per annum, leaving an amount in excess of operating costs of c.€325 million from 2019 to 2023. Under the National Development Plan, the Government has decided that the Climate Action Fund will have an initial allocation of €100 million and an annual allocation of at least €50 million thereafter. To finance this Fund, the Government has decided to repurpose part of the NORA levy. There are no plans to use the NORA levy for any other purposes.

*Question No. 1550 answered with Question No. 1490.*

### **Prospecting Licences**

1551. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of an application for a prospecting licence by a company (details supplied) to prospect for base metals in County Galway; his plans to grant the licence; the timeframe for same; the process involved in the granting or refusal of the licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36896/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** An application was made to my Department by Gold Note Minerals Ltd on behalf of BTU Metals Corporation for the renewal of three Prospecting Licences in respect of Prospecting Licence Areas (PLAs) 1431, 2295 and 3145, which cover a number of townlands in County Galway. This application was published in the Connacht Tribune on 25th July, 2019 and was open for consultation for a period of 30 days.

In considering applications for prospecting licences, my Department undertakes environmental screening of all the prospecting activities proposed to be undertaken under the licence if granted, including screening for Appropriate Assessment and, in the case where specific locations for drilling or 'drill targets' are identified, screening for Environmental Impact Assessment.

In view of the number of submissions received and the wide range of issues raised by members of the public in the context of the application, this application is still under consideration. It is expected that it will be a number of weeks before all of the issues raised have been fully considered. Following on from this a final decision will be made on the application.

### **Motor Industry**

1552. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the consultations he had with motor manufacturers on his plan to ban the sale of internal combustion engine cars in 2030; if he is satisfied they will have the capacity to provide the required number of cars for the Irish market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34906/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The transition of the national fleet to alternatively fuelled vehicles, particularly in the passenger car sector, is a necessary step-change to effect a substantial reduction in transport emissions. The switch to electric vehicles (EVs) is a key mitigation measure in the recently published *Climate Action Plan*, with an ambitious target of 180,000 EVs on our roads by 2025 and 936,000 EVs by 2030.

While these are very challenging targets, it is expected that we will see improvements in technology, reductions in purchase prices, increased driving range and model availability, coupled with Government incentives and investment in the recharging network. Accordingly, I am convinced that we can make real progress towards the target by 2030. In fact, we have seen significant growth in the number of EVs taking to the road in recent months. This year alone there are 5,000 extra EVs on the road bringing the total to over 12,500 (plug-in hybrid and fully electric passenger cars, vans, taxi/hackneys and motorcycles).

Analysis underpinning the *Climate Action Plan* assumes *c.* 10-15% of total car registrations will be electric between 2021 and 2025 with a significant ramp-up in EV registrations from the mid-2020s after *Total Cost of Ownership* parity has been reached. The *Plan* suggests that all new car registrations will be EVs in 2030. Undoubtedly, concerted efforts across several Government departments will be essential if we are to maintain a supportive environment to assist citizens in making the greener choice and moving away from conventionally fuelled vehicles.

In accordance with Action 79 of the *Plan* my Department will lead the development of a *Roadmap* identifying the optimum mix of regulatory, taxation and subsidy policies to drive significant ramp-up in passenger EVs and electric van sales from very early in the next decade. A Steering Group of key Government departments will be established before year-end to pursue this, which will be pivotal in placing Ireland on the necessary trajectory to meet our targets for EV deployment by 2030.

I expect that car manufacturers will be stepping up their production of electric and alternatively-fuelled vehicles over the next few years. A recently introduced EU Regulation sets a 2030 production benchmark of at least 37.5% of all new cars and 35% of all new vans being zero emission. This increase in manufacturing will mean that more vehicles will be available for Irish consumers to purchase.

Regarding consultation with the motoring industry, it should be noted that I receive multiple representations from the sector, and have also met with groups and stakeholders from the motor industry. Furthermore, the Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI) and representatives from the freight transport industry (FTAI and IRHA) were invited to contribute to the *Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) Taskforce*, co-chaired by my department, which aims to consider the range of options available to Government to accelerate the take-up of low carbon technologies in the road transport sector. These meetings and representations are generally considered as important contributions to information sharing and the formation of meaningful, well-balanced policies.

My Department and I will continue to work closely with Ministers Bruton and Donohoe and their respective Departments to map out the transition pathway necessary to achieve our collective ambition to alternatively fuel our vehicles and decarbonise the transport sector.

### **Motor Tax**

1553. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a person (details supplied) is not allowed to tax a van commercially but is required to have commercial insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34999/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** There is a requirement under motor tax legislation to provide evidence of insurance at the time of taxation of a vehicle in any motor tax class, if requested by a licensing authority (motor tax office). However, the requirement to have an approved policy of insurance in place in respect of a vehicle being used in a public place is provided for under the Road Traffic Acts and is, in itself, separate from the motor tax code.

Motor tax is based on both the construction and use of a vehicle. To be taxed as a goods vehicle, a vehicle must be constructed or adapted as a goods vehicle and must be used solely for the carrying of goods in the course of trade or business.

Under Article 3 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (S.I. 385 of 1992), a licensing authority must be satisfied that the licence (motor tax disc) being applied for is the appropriate licence for the vehicle concerned. It is open to the relevant motor tax office to seek whatever documentation it deems appropriate in support of an application for a particular rate of motor tax.

In the case of an application for the goods rate of motor tax, such documentation may include a certificate of commercial insurance, a Tax Clearance Certificate, evidence of registration for tax or registration for VAT (if turnover for VAT exceeds the relevant thresholds set down by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners) or, at the discretion of the licensing authority, any other appropriate documentation that would indicate that the applicant is in trade or business.

It is up to the individual concerned to provide whatever evidence is required by the licensing authority in order for it to be satisfied that the applicant is entitled to claim what is in effect a concessionary rate of tax.

### **Road Projects Status**

1554. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the funding for the proposed Narrow Water bridge between counties Louth and Down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35985/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** A commitment to undertake a review of the proposed Narrow Water Bridge project is included in The Fresh Start Agreement with a view to identifying options for its future development. A draft options paper has been prepared and is due to be the subject of further consultation with interested stakeholders before it is finalised.

When completed the options paper is due to be submitted for consideration by the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) when that body is reconvened.

Pending future decisions on the project, there is no specific allocation of funding for a Narrow Water Bridge scheme.

### **Sports Capital Programme**

1555. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding available for sports facilities; the way to apply for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34712/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Bren-**

**dan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding. The assessment of these applications is nearing completion.

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.

In relation to larger capital projects, the National Development Plan confirmed the establishment of a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. The scheme is designed to provide a transparent and robust system for funding sports capital projects where the Government contribution exceeds the amount which is currently available under the SCP. Initially, the scheme has a particular focus on National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities.

The LSSIF opened for applications on 19th November 2018 and the closing date for receipt of applications was 17th April 2019. 72 applications were received in total and my officials are currently assessing them. Details of all applications have been published on the Department's website.

In view of the detailed information contained in each LSSIF application, I am advised that it will take a number of months to have all of them assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of this year before allocations are announced. A decision on the timing of the next call for applications under the LSSIF will be made after the announcement of these allocations.

## Electric Vehicles

1556. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of fully electrifying the national public transport bus fleet. [34714/19]

**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 Deputy is aware that the national public transport bus fleet comprises publicly subvented and owned bus fleet under the Public Service Obligation (PSO) programme and also privately financed and owned bus fleet operated on a commercial basis by numerous operators across the country.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including the purchase of publicly subvented (PSO) bus fleet.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

## Road Network

1557. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if public lighting will be provided at a location (details supplied). [34745/19]

**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 and design, including the provision of public lighting, 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.

## Ministerial Advisers Data

1558. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34853/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In 2016 I appointed a Special Adviser and a Press Adviser to my Department.

I appointed a temporary Adviser on 1st July 2019 due to the absence of my Press Adviser for an extended period of sick leave.

My advisers are remunerated on the Principal Officer standard pay scale (PPC) in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s ‘Instruction to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments to the 32nd Dáil’, which provides guidelines for the appointment of Special Advisers.

Special Adviser	Salary Scale – Principal Officer PPC
Aisling Dunne	€87,325 - €107,399
Carol Hunt	€87,325 - €107,399
Richard Moore (temporary)	€87,325 - €107,399

The Minister of State in my Department does not have a Special Adviser.

## Noise Pollution

1559. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are plans to implement noise attenuation measures along a national primary road (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34924/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Directive 2002/49/EC on the assessment and management of environmental noise was transposed into Irish law by the Environmental Noise Regulations, 2006. This legislation requires Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and local authorities to undertake strategic noise mapping every five years for all major roads carrying in excess of 8,250 annual average daily traffic (AADT). Noise maps identify and prioritise cluster areas which will require further assessment and may require miti-

gation measures to be put in place.

Once strategic noise maps have been produced, the results are used for each local authority to develop Noise Action Plans as required by the Environmental Noise Regulations. Under the Regulations, the Noise Action Planning Authorities are required to consult with the public when revising their current Plans. I understand that the Cork Agglomeration Noise Action Plan 2018 - 2023 has been adopted by Cork City Council. This process included a public consultation period, providing interested parties with an opportunity to engage with the local authority.

Specifically in relation to the N40 on the south side of Cork City, I have referred your question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Fáilte Ireland**

1560. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason a tourist information office was moved (details supplied); if he is satisfied with the replacement office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35045/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The provision of tourist information offices are an operational matter for the Board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to them for further information and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Motor Tax Rates**

1561. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the motor taxation classification that is applicable to vehicles used by circuses and funfairs to transport funfair components and machinery from one site to another. [35087/19]

1562. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered introducing a new specific classification for the vehicles used by circuses and funfairs to transport funfair components and machinery from one site to another. [35088/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1561 and 1562 together.

Vehicles used by circuses and funfair components and machinery can either be taxed at the goods rate or the machine/workshop/contrivance rate, depending on the structure of the vehicle.

The goods rate of motor tax applies where a vehicle is being used to carry goods in the course of trade or business. The machine/workshop/contrivance rate applies where a vehicle is used for the transport of a machine/workshop/contrivance which is built into the vehicle or permanently attached to it.

There are no plans to introduce a separate motor tax class for such vehicles.

### **Insurance Costs**

1563. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to regulate insurance costs for hackney drivers that are starting out, particu-

larly in rural areas in which public transport is very limited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35097/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Insurance companies are private companies and the pricing of insurance products is a commercial issue for those companies. Neither a Government Minister, nor the Central Bank (which regulates the insurance industry generally) has the power to direct insurance companies on the pricing of insurance products. 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.

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 the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry - which encompasses taxis, hackneys and limousines, and for the management of the Rural Transport Programme which now operates under the Local Link brand.

The NTA has recently announced that it is embarking on two pilot schemes to test possible approaches to addressing some of the needs of people living in rural areas with particularly limited transport options: these are the Designated Local Area Hackney pilot scheme and the Community Transport Service pilot. In light of the NTA's initiatives in this area, I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1564. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of funding for a club (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35120/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. No application has been submitted by the club in question but the type of equipment referred to by the Deputy is eligible for funding under the programme.

Work is now nearing completion on the assessment of the remaining applications under the 2018 round of the SCP and no new applications are being accepted. Any organisation planning to make an application under a future round of the Programme should register on the Department's online application system OSCaR ([www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie](http://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie)) as soon as possible as applications are only accepted through this. I expect a new round of the SCP will be open for applications before the end of this year and all registered OSCaR users will receive an email notification in this regard.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1565. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the risk of potential traffic chaos at Rosslare Harbour in view of Brexit and the need to develop ports; his plans to provide special funding to develop the roads to, in and around Rosslare Harbour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35126/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** On the issue of Ports development, I can advise that strengthening access routes to Ireland's Ports through investment to upgrade and enhance the road transport network is, and remains, a Government priority. My Department is in consultation with TII regarding the relationship between Ports development and road infrastructure development in order to ensure that the best options for accessibility and connectivity are achieved.

The UK's exit from the EU highlights the importance of high quality international maritime connectivity and the importance of continuing investment to further improve the quality of Port facilities. This is relevant to all our Ports of National Significance, both Tier 1 and Tier 2 (Ports of Waterford and Rosslare), given their potential role in maintaining transportation linkages with crucial EU markets.

In terms of Brexit, a whole-of-Government approach has been adopted in relation to our key Ports through the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Committee to ensure that Ports have the necessary infrastructure in place for Brexit.

All three Ports of National Significance (Tier 1) – Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes – are currently undertaking major capital infrastructure programmes. These programmes will enhance national and international connectivity, and provide for future increases in trade and national Port capacity requirements by facilitating more vessels, larger sized vessels and increased tonnage and throughput. All of these developments must be financed by the companies themselves without recourse to the Exchequer.

Rosslare Europort as a division of Iarnród Éireann is effectively managing operations at the Port and looking at the potential of the Port to develop further and take advantage of any new opportunities. The Port is targeting growth and new business opportunities, and in 2018 received the approval of the Iarnród Éireann Board for a strategic plan to grow the Port's business. This includes investment plans for up to €25 million in customer facilities and Port infrastructure, Port assets, and new technology.

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, under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction, including the operation of individual roads, is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and regional roads, or for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads. TII also has responsibility for the management and distribution of the roads national capital programme budget.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a more detailed and direct reply on the issues raised concerning national road infrastructure developments. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Sports Capital Programme Data**

1566. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of grant funding allocated to counties Longford and Westmeath through the sports capital programme since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35138/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

Details of the allocations (listed on a county basis) under the Sports Capital Programme for the years in question are available on the Department's website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/471ed5-sports-capital-allocations/>

### Grant Payments

1567. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of grant funding his Department and associated agencies have allocated to counties Longford and Westmeath since 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35139/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The table below sets out the amount of grant funding my Department has allocated to counties Longford and Westmeath since 2016 for Greenways and Bike Week activities:

County	Greenways	Bike Week activities
Longford	€513,000.00 (Abbeyshrule to Ballymahon Greenway)	€27,950.00
Westmeath	€2,176,457.00 (Garrycastle to Whitegates Greenway)	€14,592.50

Details of all grants allocated under the Sports Capital and Local Authority Swimming Pools Programmes are published on the gov.ie website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/ef-c6c4-sports-capital-programmes-payments/>

In relation to regional and local roads, details of the 2019 grant allocations to Longford and Westmeath can be found in the 2019 Regional and Local Road allocation booklet available in the Oireachtas library. Details of grant payments for previous years are set out in the Regional and Local Road grant payment booklets which are also available in the Oireachtas library.

Since 2016, one small public service vehicle (SPSV) driver from Westmeath received a grant of €6,000 towards the purchase of an electric vehicle under the Electric SPSV Grant Scheme.

Under the Electric Vehicle Toll Incentive Scheme, electric vehicle drivers passing the toll on the M4 Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath to Kilcock, Co. Kildare are eligible for a discounted toll on each journey up to a maximum €500 annual threshold for private vehicles and €1,000 for commercial vehicles.

I have referred your question to the agencies under the aegis of my Department for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### Road Safety Authority Data

1568. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the income the Road Safety Authority, RSA, derives from driver tests annually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35155/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Information on driver testing income is included in the Annual Reports of the Road Safety Authority which can be read at <https://www.rsa.ie/en/Utility/About-Us/Reporting-on-our-progress/>. I would remind the Deputy that the driving test is not a profit-driven operation and that the cost of the test is not particularly high when measured against the cost of providing the service.

### **Driver Test Data**

1569. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions he has taken to address the failure rate in driver test centres of circa 50%; and when the matter was last discussed with the Road Safety Authority, RSA. [35156/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Road Safety Authority's Driver Testing Service sets out the minimum level of knowledge, skill and competency that an applicant must demonstrate if he or she is to become a fully licensed driver. An effective Driving Test provides learner drivers with a consistent evaluation process which ensures that candidates have attained a sufficient level of competency to drive unaccompanied.

Pass and failure rates are determined by two factors: the standards set out in the assessment itself and the level of skill and experience acquired by candidates in preparation for that assessment. The individual assessable components examined on the driving test are set out in a series of EU directives on driver testing and licensing, the current informing directive being EU Directive 2006/126/EC which sets minimum driving test standards, training and quality assurance for driver testers. Driving up overall pass rates by providing for a somehow 'easier' test, therefore, would be a breach of both EU law and indeed the very spirit of Irish road safety policy. An appropriately stringent test at a high standard is an essential component if we are to ensure safe and responsible behaviour on our roads.

Essential Driver Training (EDT) was introduced in 2011 with the express purpose of preparing candidates for the test in a more structured and focused way. The breakdown of pass and failure rates as captured in the Road Safety Authority's Annual Reports (<https://www.rsa.ie/Utility/About-Us/Reporting-on-our-progress/>) clearly indicates higher pass rates among learners who have taken the EDT lessons than those who have not.

### **Driver Test Data**

1570. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the process by which driver tests are organised, that is, by way of contract with a third party and the Road Safety Authority, RSA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35157/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As this is a matter for the Road Safety Authority I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Authority for direct response. Please contact my office if no reply has been received within 10 working days.

### **Driver Test Data**

1571. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the driver test failure and pass statistics for each county other than Dublin in each of the years 2016 to 2018. [35158/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is available on the Road Safety Authority (RSA) website at [www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Driving-Test-Centre/Pass-Rates/](http://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Driving-Test-Centre/Pass-Rates/).

### **Road Traffic Legislation**

1572. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the reappearance of rickshaws on the streets of Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35159/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As you may be aware, last year, the Cabinet gave approval for publication of a General Scheme of a Bill to amend the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 so as to provide for the regulation of rickshaws. Work is underway to advance the drafting of this Bill.

Rickshaws can be powered in a number of different ways - pedal powered, pedal-assisted and motorised. This Bill will introduce comprehensive new detention powers which will ensure effective enforcement of a ban on motorised rickshaws carrying passengers for reward. The Bill will also introduce a licensing regime for non-motorised rickshaws only. These new measures will ensure that rickshaws drivers and vehicles are vetted and registered and I am confident that this will significantly improve safety for passengers and for all road users.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1573. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided for a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35189/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. No applications has been submitted by the club in question but the type of equipment referred to by the Deputy is eligible for funding under the programme.

Work is now nearing completion on the assessment of the remaining applications under the 2018 round of the SCP and no new applications are being accepted. Any organisation planning to make an application under a future round of the Programme should register on the Department's online application system OSCaR ([www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie](http://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie)) as soon as possible as applications are only accepted through this. I expect a new round of the Programme will be open for applications before the end of this year and all registered OSCaR users will receive an email notification in this regard.

### **Project Ireland 2040**

1574. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the roads and other transport infrastructure being built and for which there are plans to commence building in the next five years; and the estimated cost and timetable for each project in tabular form. [35193/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Project Ireland 2040 provides indicative allocations over the next ten years for a range of public transport related projects and programmes.

As noted in Project Ireland 2040 individual projects and programmes remain subject to compliance with the Public Spending Code, including its requirements in relation to appraisal and Sanctioning Authority approval points.

Details regarding indicative allocations, current status and expected completion dates where

applicable are published on the Project Ireland 2040 Tracker as published by the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform and available at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>.

### **Sports Funding**

1575. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the budget available for the large-scale sport infrastructure fund; when the funding will be awarded; the number of applicants by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35273/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The National Development Plan confirmed the establishment of a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. The scheme is designed to provide a transparent and robust system for funding sports capital projects where the Government contribution exceeds the amount which is currently available under the Sports Capital Programme. Initially, the scheme has a particular focus on National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities.

The fund opened for applications on 19th November 2018 and the closing date for receipt of applications was 17th April. 72 applications were received in total. My officials are currently undertaking an initial assessment of the applications received. Details of all applications received have been published on the Department's website.

In view of the detailed information contained in each application, I am advised that it will take a number of months to have all of them assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of this year before any allocations are announced.

### **Public Transport Data**

1576. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the revenue raised from the start date of a contract with a company (details supplied) to date in 2019 on a route-by-route basis in the context of gross cost contract between the National Transport Authority, NTA, and the company; the figures from cash and Leap fares respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35274/19]

**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 issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with the relevant transport operator and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **National Sports Policy Framework**

1577. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress in each of the key performance indicators in the national sports policy to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35305/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** A comprehensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) covering all elements of the National Sports Policy

2018-2027 is currently being finalised in the context of the development of an Action Plan for the period to end 2022. This process includes in particular the development of KPIs for children and young people. As indicated in the policy, these will be set following publication later this month of the 2018 Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA) Study.

### **National Sports Policy Framework**

1578. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a nationwide audit of sport facilities will take place as per the national sports policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35306/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The current position is that my Department is engaging with Sport Ireland in relation to the possible integration of an audit of all sports facilities with the development of a comprehensive national database of Sport & Recreation Amenities, which the Agency is separately considering already. I believe that a comprehensive database of all general recreation amenities such as public parks, walks, trails, cycle paths and swimming areas, in addition to specific sports facilities, has considerable potential to benefit many different user groups. Such groups would include the general public, doctors / healthcare professionals, planners, tourists, persons with a disability, the emergency services and app developers. The full audit itself is likely to take a number of years to complete and consideration will need to be given to undertaking the work on a phased basis.

The question of how best to proceed will also be discussed by the Sports Leadership Group and other stakeholders such as Healthy Ireland and local authorities in the coming weeks. Following these discussions, it is hoped to have a strategy settled for how the audit will be undertaken before the end of this year.

### **Swimming Pool Programme Data**

1579. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress made on reviewing swimming pool provision; if the findings of such a review will be provided; and when the review will be concluded. [35307/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As indicated in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, a review of swimming pool provision will be undertaken as part of the development of a coherent national strategy for swimming. Arrangements for the development of this strategy are currently being progressed by my Department with an indicative completion timescale of the latter part of 2020.

In relation to existing programmes, the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP), as operated by my Department, provides grant aid to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. To date 52 pools have been completed and three swimming pool projects remain in the current LASPP. Swimming pools are also eligible for funding under the new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF). The closing date for receipt of applications under the LSSIF was 17th April 2019. 72 applications were received and my officials are currently assessing these. Details of all applications, including those for swimming pools, are available on my Department's website. Allocations under the LSSIF are expected towards the end of this year.

### **Departmental Websites**

1580. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason links from search engines or other sources to documents found on the website of his Department now link to a Departmental home page rather than the document itself; his plans to rectify the situation; the advice taken before the change was implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35332/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Government department websites are currently undergoing a significant change in how they present online content to citizens and businesses, with a view to making them easier to use and more accessible to all members of society. Over time, department websites are being moved to one single website, gov.ie, giving people a one stop shop for accessing information on government services and organisations.

It is generally seen as best practice to pursue the consolidation of public service information into one consistent accessible website. The most digitally advanced countries within the EU (see the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2018 - Denmark, Estonia, Austria, Latvia and Malta), have already moved to a single digital gateway approach. Furthermore, a 2016 market research exercise carried out by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform found that the concept of a single, online portal for government was positively received by both the general public and representative bodies alike. This view was again confirmed by a subsequent market research exercise carried out in late 2018.

Following a government decision to migrate all ministerial department websites to gov.ie, work has proceeded on this basis. So far, five departments have moved their website content to gov.ie - the Departments of the Taoiseach; Public Expenditure and Reform; Rural and Community Development; Transport, Tourism and Sport; and Finance.

As a part of the migration to gov.ie, content from websites are reworked and moved into the gov.ie website (for example, efforts are made to make the services content easier to understand through the use of plain English). Post migration, the internet addresses for the new content within gov.ie is different from the addresses of the content, including documents, on the old websites.

The migration of a website to a new one with a different address necessarily breaks links to the old website content from external sources. This is suffered for all website migrations, including the department websites in question. This issue is temporary in nature as search engines re-index content on the internet, and also as external sites (that are not search indexes) update their links to point to the new location of content. Over time, the issue of finding broken links and being redirected to a department's homepage on gov.ie will become less and less frequent, and will eventually cease to occur.

To reduce the impact of the temporary ill effects caused by these website migrations, the occurrence of visitors to broken links within gov.ie is monitored via site analytics. In conjunction with each department's content manager, work is continuously being undertaken where possible to redirect such broken links to the correct and new location within gov.ie. Furthermore, prior to website migration into gov.ie, work is undertaken to pre-emptively set up such redirects to popular content so as to reduce the likelihood of this issue arising.

Between search engine re-indexing and the ongoing efforts based on website analytics, the user experience of gov.ie in regards to the matter the Deputy refers will improve over time.

1581. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35348/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department had no expenditure on the renewal of Lotus Notes licences from 2009 to 2019 and it is not currently the Department's intention to have any expenditure, for this purpose, over the next 5 years.

### **Search and Rescue Service Provision**

1582. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of implementing the new national search and rescue, SAR, plan; his plans to fund the plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35358/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I published the National Search and Rescue (SAR) Plan on the 19 July of this year. The plan replaces the existing National Maritime SAR Framework dating from 2010. The Plan sets out the governance and oversight of SAR activities in Ireland and is intended to meet Ireland's international and national obligations in this area. It is an interdepartmental and interagency framework document which clarifies the roles, relationships and responsibilities of all the stakeholders in the SAR community in Ireland. It was developed as a direct result of recommendations arising from a recent independent review of SAR aviation oversight as well as a recent MCIB report. The key new elements of this plan relate to providing assurance in relation to mechanisms and procedures to ensure the safe conduct of SAR activities at all levels.

There are no estimates available in relation to the potential costs for each organisation in complying with these requirements or for the regulatory entities involved in ensuring compliance. It is possible that some organisations involved will incur additional costs. It is also clear that such costs are justified and necessary given the level of risk associated with SAR activities. There will also be some administrative costs associated with the creation of new structures such as the National SAR Committee and the National SAR Consultative Committee - which will be key to ensuring a coherent implementation of the plan. These costs will be met from within my Department's existing budget.

### **Vehicle Registration Data**

1583. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if it is mandatory for all second-hand private cars to receive a national car testing, NCT, certificate prior to being registered here. [35422/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The legislation and practices governing the importation and registration of motor vehicles in Ireland is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and the legal basis for the matter described by the Deputy is Chapter IV of the Finance Act 1992 and the Vehicle Registration and Taxation Regulations.

While my Department does not have a function in respect of the registration of vehicles, it should be noted that all motor vehicles are required to undergo mandatory roadworthiness inspections once the vehicle has reached a certain age, generally 4 years for passenger vehicles and 1 year for commercial vehicles. These rules also apply to an imported used vehicle which must also undergo a roadworthiness inspection before that vehicle can be used on a public road

(once that vehicle has reached the age previously indicated). As the roadworthiness testing regime is an EU-wide system (governed by Directive 2014/45/EU), the unexpired portion of a valid Certificate of Roadworthiness issued by another Member State will be recognised by the State.

### Tourism Industry

1584. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the impact on traditional bed and breakfasts of the use of purpose-built student accommodation for short-term lettings while the third-level institutions are not in session; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35466/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of developing national tourism policy, while the tourism agencies have operational responsibility for the implementation of this policy. Fáilte Ireland has operational responsibility in regard to regional tourism development and domestic tourism promotion. They also have responsibility for the regulation of certain types of tourist accommodation.

Fáilte Ireland has not conducted any research into the impact on B&B's of short-term letting of student accommodation while third level institutions are not in session.

In recent years, the lack of hotel capacity in certain areas has been an issue for Irish tourism. In today's market, offering a wide variety of tourist accommodation which increases capacity for tourists is important for the Irish Tourism Industry. Additional accommodation types enhances supply, which is particularly important in areas of high demand during peak periods. This also helps ensure that new and emerging consumer needs and preferences can be catered for, by providing alternative types of accommodation which is popular with tourists.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1585. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35583/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Details of the names of the external consultants that delivered training and provided advice to my Department in the context of GDPR preparedness, and the associated costs expended on each for the period 1st January 2017 to 31st August 2019 are set out in the table below.

Year	Company Name	Cost (€)
2017	BSI Cybersecurity and Information Resilience (Ireland ) Ltd.	118,075.39
2018	BSI Cybersecurity and Information Resilience (Ireland ) Ltd.	90,068.31
2019	Irish Academy of Computer Training Ltd. (IACT)	2,664.00

Year	Company Name	Cost (€)
2019	CMG Training	1,185.00

### Driver Test Data

1586. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the failure rate at driver testing centres (details supplied) in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35615/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information the deputy has requested is available on the Road Safety Authority website at <https://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Driving-Test-Centre/Pass-Rates/>

### Departmental Customer Charters

1587. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35651/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Please see table below in this regard:

Year	Number of complaints
2017	33
2018	32
2019	9
Total	74

My Department aims to deliver the best possible service to all customers. Complaints, which are defined as dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a service or services by the Department, can be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by email. There is a Code for Dealing with Complaints in our Customer Service Action Plan, which is available at the following address: <https://assets.gov.ie/12183/7e7932a0bed74887a945398e05404967.pdf>

Areas that are excluded from the complaints procedure are:

- Complaints related to agencies under the remit of the Department;
- Complaints relating to another Department, Minister or agency under the remit of another Department;
- Appeals against decisions taken in the operation of the Sports Capital Programme or Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme;
- Complaints referring to Section 38 of the Disability Act. ;
- Matters which are the subject of litigation;
- Matters referred to the Ombudsman; and
- Freedom of Information (FOI) or Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) re-

quests or appeals which have separate processes.

My Department is fully committed to delivering the highest quality of service and equality of treatment to all its customers and its Customer Service Charter 2017-2019 is informed by the 12 Guiding Principles of Quality Customer Service (QCS) which can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/89dbad-guiding-principles-of-quality-customer-service/>

### **Road Safety Strategy**

1588. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions he is taking on road safety and drink driving following reports on 18 and 19 August 2019 of low conviction rates in some parts of the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35676/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware, my Department introduced stricter penalties for drink driving offences as part of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2018. As of the 26 October 2018 any driver caught over the limit, including those in so-called 'lower' bracket of 51-80 milligrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, faces automatic disqualification.

My Department takes the scourge of drink driving extremely seriously and has consistently withstood pressures from various quarters to relax either the limits or the penalties in any way. The circumstances surrounding variations in conviction rates across the country, however, are matters for enforcement and prosecuting authorities and, ultimately, the Courts Service and the judiciary.

### **Free Travel Scheme**

1589. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the transport options in place to facilitate free travel pass-holding students to travel from Navan to Maynooth to attend university; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35682/19]

**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 issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with the relevant transport operator(s) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Fire Service**

1590. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the chemical make-up of firefighting foams used by airport fire services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35695/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As mandated under EU Regulation 139/2014 and in line with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Airport Services Manual, Part 1 – Rescue and Fire fighting Services, certificated and licensed aerodrome operators in the State utilise fire fighting foams in accordance with the defined European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and ICAO performance levels. In

accordance with the aerodrome licensing requirements under both European and national legislation, the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) is responsible to ensure that aerodrome operators demonstrate that the fire fighting foams utilised are in accordance with the defined International performance levels.

It is a matter for the aerodrome operator to determine what foam type will be utilised to achieve the appropriate rescue and fire fighting response in accordance with the performance level and to manage any issues related to the chemical constituents of a particular foam type. I understand that the chemical constituents will vary dependent on the foam type. There are several types of foam concentrate from which effective fire fighting foams can be produced and these are as follows:

- Protein foam;
- Aqueous film forming foam;
- Fluoroprotein foam;
- Film forming fluoroprotein foam; and
- Synthetic foam.

In order to be helpful, my Department has requested from Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airports the details of the foams types used and this information will be forwarded to the Deputy directly when it is received.

### **Public Bike Schemes**

1591. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to expand the public bike scheme in Cork in 2019; and the meetings he has held with officials from Cork City Council or the National Transport Authority on the matter. [35697/19]

**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 active travel and public transport infrastructure. The administration and expansion of the public bike schemes is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA), which works closely with the relevant local authorities in that regard.

Noting the NTA's responsibilities in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Sports Facilities Provision**

1592. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the development of a velodrome at Abbotstown sports campus; if a design has been completed for the velodrome; if the construction has gone out to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35712/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards, including the development of

the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus at Abbotstown.

Under the National Development Plan 2018-2027, €16m has been committed to develop a National Velodrome and Badminton Centre at the National Sports Campus in 2020 and 2021. The proposed facility will comprise a 250-metre cycling track, 12-16 Badminton Courts in the in-track area, spectator seating and ancillary facilities including office space.

Preparatory work on the National Velodrome and Badminton Centre is underway. In July 2019, Sport Ireland appointed project managers and a design team to carry out a detailed review of the project. Initial work will focus on a review of the existing planning permission, granted in 2015, to assess suitability and fitness for present and future purposes. Thereafter, the design will be updated and a tender package will be compiled with a formal tender expected to take place in early 2020 with commencement of construction expected in Q3/Q4 2020.

### **Greenways Development**

1593. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when work will commence on a section of the north Kerry greenway (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35721/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is probably aware, funding was awarded to Kerry County Council for a Greenway between Listowel and the Limerick County Border, as part of the Great Southern Greenway. No work has been started to date on this section of Greenway as funding has only been recently awarded.

I am informed by Kerry County Council that they have carried out vegetative clearance on the majority of the line in early 2018 to allow for surveys and design work to be completed. A small area around Kilmorna was not cleared at this time for logistical reasons.

Kerry County Council are currently preparing the preconstruction documentation associated with a project of this nature including construction methodology, safety statements, the procurement of the works in accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services and also the project programme. Once these preliminary documents are complete Kerry County Council will be in a position to provide an accurate date as to when construction will commence. It is envisaged however that work will commence in 2019.

### **Railway Stations**

1594. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the duration and location in instances in which lifts at DART and commuter train stations were out of order since 1 January 2018 to 22 August 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35742/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Departmental Contracts**

1595. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a security company will be contracted for an event (details supplied); if the cost of such security will be covered by public funding; and the entity which will be tasked with awarding the security contract for the event. [35759/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In regard to the event in question, in addition to licence fees and other investment, the State will support the event through the provision of local authority and public services such as policing and transport as well as supporting the staging of fan zones and promotional events such as the opening ceremony. There will also be a programme of marketing to maximise the impact of the event for Ireland in terms of profile, attendance and long term legacy.

Officials in my Department will be working closely with the event organisers in the planning and organisation of the event. However, as we are currently seven years out from the event, organisational details such as that sought by the Deputy have yet to be planned or agreed.

### **Air Accident Investigations**

1596. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the final report into an aircraft accident (details supplied) will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35763/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** On information provided by the Chief Inspector of Air Accidents of the Air Accident Investigation Unit, I can inform the Deputy that a draft final report into the tragic accident of Coast Guard Rescue Helicopter R116 is close to conclusion. As per natural justice obligations, a period of up to 60 days is provided to interested state parties following which the Investigation must consider any comments received. The number of comments received will determine timelines associated with the finalisation of the Final Report. As such it is not possible, at this time, to provide the Deputy with a definitive date for the publication of the Final Report.

### **Road Safety Authority Reports**

1597. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter regarding prosecutions and checks (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35778/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

### **Rural Transport Services Provision**

1598. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the withdrawal of a service (details supplied) under Local Link in view of his commitment given on 15 May 2019. [35863/19]

**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.

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The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme, which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **School Transport Data**

1599. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Road Safety Authority roadside safety inspections of school buses carried out from July 2018 to July 2019; the failure rate of the inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35866/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1600. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a grant application by a club (details supplied); if the application will be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35996/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

### **National Sports Policy Framework**

1601. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if interim targets have been set for adult and children's active and social participation in sport and for the reduction in the relevant gradients as set by the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. [36000/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** A number of indicative key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets have already been set for adults in the National Sports Policy 2018-2027. These have not yet been set for children and young people. As indicated in the policy, these will be set following publication later this month of the 2018 Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA) Study.

A comprehensive and final set of KPIs and targets covering all elements of the policy will be considered by the Sports Leadership Group in the context of the development, by the end of this year, of an Action Plan for the period to end 2022.

### **Public Transport Fares**

1602. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a matter regarding the payment of €4 for the use of transport will be addressed (details supplied); the reason service users and persons with disabilities have to pay the amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36058/19]

**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.

As the Deputy will be aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public passenger transport services nationally. It also has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the Rural Transport Programme which now operates under the Local Link brand.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1603. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a grant application by a club (details supplied); if the application will be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36066/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

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186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

### **National Car Test Data**

1604. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of cars (details supplied) that failed the NCT on the basis of a throttle control fault alone to date in 2019; the number of these cars that subsequently underwent a retest and passed when the test was carried out at a higher rev in 2019, in view of the advice of the manufacturer; the date on which his attention and that of the NCT service was first drawn to the issue; the policy of the NCT service in relation to the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36073/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

### **Light Rail Projects Provision**

1605. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a feasibility study will be considered on the extension on the MetroLink project to Templeogue, Knocklyon, Firhouse and Ballycullen in view of traffic congestion in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36108/19]

**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 planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area.

In 2016 the NTA published its statutory *Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 to 2035* which sets out an ambitious programme of infrastructure improvements across active travel, bus, heavy rail, light rail and metro and implementation of the *Strategy* is underway supported by the significantly enhanced funding made available by *Project Ireland 2040*. There

is a statutory requirement to review the *Strategy* every six years and I understand the NTA will commence that review next year.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1606. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a grant application by a school (details supplied); if the application will be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36109/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1607. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when successful applicants that applied for the latest tranche of sports capital funding will be notified regarding their applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36110/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations 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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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 Internships**

1608. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36155/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department facilitates students in granting both paid and unpaid internships where possible. Last year my Department entered into an arrangement with DCU to facilitate 2 paid internships. This arrangement was undertaken as the course of study being followed by the internship participants was directly relevant and related to the work of the Department. The process also helped to foster links between the Department and academic teaching and research community with DCU. Such links help to foster collaboration in policy formation and provide a range of valuable external viewpoints.

Students and recent graduates also approach my Department on an individual basis seeking internships. These internships form part of the student's course requirement and are short term in nature. My Department aims to facilitate such requests where possible with unpaid internships.

Since 2014, 12 unpaid internships have been facilitated in my Department.

### **Climate Change Adaptation Plans**

1609. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the transport infrastructure programme in order to deliver the action of the Climate Action Plan 2019 to commence full implementation of the National Cycle Policy Framework in tabular form. [36161/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I will shortly launch a review of sustainable mobility policy, commencing with a public consultation period. This review will look at all aspects of current policy in relation to active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport and preparations are now at an advanced stage with a view to launching in the coming weeks.

This review will allow all stakeholders to reflect on what has been achieved, what remains to be done and how our policy frameworks can support the realisation of a more sustainable transport system.

As part of the public consultation, I will be publishing a comprehensive suite of documents looking at the most important areas of sustainable mobility policy and seeking the views of all stakeholders.

Included among this suite of documents will be a high-level action-by-action status update of all 109 individual actions within the *National Cycle Policy Framework*. In addition, I will also publish a report of last year's initial Round Table Discussion with stakeholders, an *Ex Post Evaluation of the Smarter Travel Areas* programme 2012-2016 and a high-level assessment of the actions under *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future*.

I look forward to the next phase of this work and engaging with the Deputy, the general public and all stakeholders as we look to shape the future direction of sustainable mobility policy.

### Road Network

1610. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if rectification works to be carried out at a location (details supplied) will be arranged as a matter of urgency. [36173/19]

**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 maintenance and upgrading of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### Road Projects Status

1611. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress made with regard to the draft appraisal for the Julianstown bypass; if the project has been listed as urgent; if the application will be supported in view of more than 20,000 vehicles passing through the village each day, which is similar to the figures prior to the motorway being built which was meant to drastically reduce these numbers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36180/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant County or City 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.

Prior to the financial crisis, applications for funding for road improvement projects would have been considered as part of the Specific Improvement, and Strategic Regional and Local Road Grant Schemes. However, the extent of the cutbacks in grant funding during the recession meant these grant schemes had to be curtailed after 2013 because expenditure on maintenance/renewal was falling well short of what was required to adequately maintain the regional and local road network.

Project Ireland 2040 does provide for the gradual build up in funding for the road network but it will take some time to reach the level required for the adequate maintenance and renewal of the network. For this reason there is limited scope at present for funding projects under the Specific and Strategic Grant Programmes. The primary focus is on implementation of the 12 regional and local road projects identified for development, subject to necessary approvals, in Project Ireland 2040.

Any additional projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under the Specific and Strategic Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. All projects put forward by local authorities for consideration must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and my Department's Capital Appraisal Framework and it is important for local authorities to prioritise projects within their overall area of responsibility with these requirements in mind.

Under the capital project appraisal process a Preliminary Appraisal has to be submitted in relation to each proposed project. Once an appraisal is received it is assessed taking into account other competing projects, the overall regional and local road capital budget and the wider transport planning framework.

In this context the National Transport Authority's Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 to 2035 provides the overall policy framework for transport development in the region. As part of the Corridor options appraisal, the Strategy considers the measures needed to meet travel demand on the economic Drogheda to Dublin City Corridor and focusses largely on public transport options and improved rail services. The proposed electrification of the rail line to Drogheda under Project Ireland 2040 reflects this approach.

The draft Preliminary Appraisal received from Meath County Council regarding a bypass of Julianstown will, therefore, have to be considered with the above factors in mind. Against the backdrop of the need for action to address climate change and limited resources, I am conscious that investment has to be focussed on the projects which best deliver on the Government's overall policy priorities and this means looking critically at proposals for new roads where public transport is being enhanced and where investment has already been made in high quality infrastructure such as the M1.

## **Roads Maintenance**

1612. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the upgrading and resurfacing of the M4 motorway between Celbridge and Kilcock, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36197/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the upgrading and maintenance, including resurfacing, 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.

### **Public Transport**

1613. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be increased for initiatives such as security screens on Bus Éireann vehicles and other security measures for public bus and rail services in view of increased attacks and antisocial incidents across transport networks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36219/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The safety and security of public transport passengers and staff, including arrangements to deal with anti-social behaviour, are important matters that, first and foremost, must be managed by every public transport company, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, where appropriate.

While the vast majority of public transport passenger journeys occur without incident, I am concerned to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff.

My Department has been advised by Iarnród Éireann that it has undertaken a range of measures, including the doubling of security patrols, and proposes further measures to address anti-social behaviour on the rail network.

These include the introduction of Customer Service Officers on all Intercity routes, enhanced CCTV coverage, and the recently launched text alert service which enables customers to discreetly report anti-social behaviour incidents to a monitored security centre, and allowing security personnel and/or An Garda Síochána to be alerted and dispatched to incidents as required.

Iarnród Éireann's allocates significant funding each year on security measures. The annual spend on security has risen from €4.1 million in 2017 to €4.5 million in 2018 and it is projected by the company that this allocation will rise further in 2019 to approximately €4.7 million. The allocation of all Garda resources, including the manner in which Garda personnel are deployed, is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team.

Both Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann have reported that the level of anti-social behaviour is relatively low on their services and noted a declining trend, which is positive.

The entire Dublin Bus fleet is fully fitted with CCTV cameras, with up to 10 internal cameras and two external cameras fitted on the more modern vehicles in the fleet. Each vehicle is equipped with a radio, which facilitates immediate contact to the Central Control Centre.

All of the company's buses are in radio contact with Central Control. Any instances of disruption or concerns around security are immediately reported and services are suspended as necessary. The company also has mobile inspectors in the city centre, who are available to attend incidents as required.

Dublin Bus operates a schools education programme, which involves educating young people about the importance of the bus in their lives and in their local communities. This has proven highly successful in encouraging young people to respect their bus and has assisted in the reduction of incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Bus Éireann has invested in extensive CCTV coverage throughout its fleet for the protection

of passengers and staff and driver security screens are fitted to the entire low-floor, single-deck and double-deck bus fleet.

In relation to security screens on Bus Éireann vehicles, I am advised that manufacturers do not currently provide a solution whereby screens can be fitted on coaches and consequently it is not possible for screens to be fitted to the fleet.

I have been assured that Bus Éireann will continue to review this matter with coach manufacturers. However, they continue to face a number of safety challenges due to the constraints arising from the design and layout of the coach cab area, the high operating speeds of coaches, and the need for a clear and unimpeded view for drivers.

Emergency support for drivers is provided through 24-hour control centres and any incidents of anti-social behaviour are fully investigated and followed up with An Garda Síochána as required.

Following representations from the National Bus and Rail Union, my Department wrote to the three CIE companies seeking their views both on the issue of anti-social behaviour and in relation to ensuring the safety of passengers and staff. All companies stressed their strong and close working relationships with An Garda Síochána.

I also wrote to the Minister for Justice and Equality to seek his views on how we could address the issue of anti-social behaviour on our public transport system. The allocation of all Garda resources, including the manner in which Garda personnel are deployed is solely a decision for the Garda Commissioner and his management team.

I understand that An Garda Síochána has met with the Railway Safety Advisory Council in relation to the issue of anti-social behaviour on our public transport network and that further engagement and initiatives are planned.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

1614. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36235/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department takes the area of cybersecurity very seriously and it is identified as a business risk on my Department's risk register. My Department has a professionally trained ICT security officer, whose responsibilities include management of cybersecurity related issues, and who liaises with the National Cyber Security Centre on a regular basis in order to keep abreast of any cybersecurity developments.

Staff record and maintain a register of security breaches as part of my Department's information security policies.

Our Management Board are regularly updated on issues relating to ICT security, including any breaches.

### **Departmental Operations**

1615. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36251/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department has an ICT disaster recovery plan and appropriate disaster recovery sites to ensure that, in the event of any incident that impacts our ICT systems, ICT services required to operate my Department continue with minimal disruption.

A Department-wide business continuity plan is currently in development. The objective of the plan will be to enable my Department to effectively respond to an emergency or disruptive incident, ensuring that key functions, both ICT and otherwise, can be maintained at an acceptable level, or are restored to such a level as quickly as possible.

### **Roads Maintenance**

1616. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when trees will be felled as part of ongoing works being undertaken on a national route (details supplied). [36252/19]

1617. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeframe in respect of works (details supplied) being undertaken; and the likely completion date of same. [36254/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1616 and 1617 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the 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.

### **Sports Funding**

1618. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be granted to a local authority (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36287/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund opened for applications on 19th November 2018 and the closing date for receipt of applications was 17th April.

72 applications were received in total including one application from Cavan County Council. Details of all applications received have been published on the Department’s website along with the evaluation procedures and guidelines.

Assessment of the applications received has commenced. In view of the detailed information contained in each application, I am advised that it will take a number of months to have all of them assessed. Accordingly, I expect that it will be towards the end of this year before any

allocations are announced.

### **Sports Capital Programme**

1619. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a grant application for a club (details supplied); if the application will be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36320/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

### **Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements**

1620. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the provinces in Canada that have reciprocal arrangements with Ireland in relation to driver licences; the reason the other provinces do not have similar arrangements with Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36345/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Ireland has driver licence exchange agreements in place with the following provinces in Canada: Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland & Labrador, British Columbia & Saskatchewan.

Canadian licences are issued by the government of the province or territory in which the driver is residing. Thus, specific regulations relating to driver's licences vary province to province, though overall they are quite similar. Licence exchange agreements can be made only when the relevant authorities in each jurisdiction have studied and compared the two licensing regimes, so that each side can be satisfied that they are compatible. On the Irish side, this task

is undertaken by the Road Safety Authority (RSA).

We are currently finalising an exchange agreement with Alberta. This will bring to 5 the number of agreements in place with Canada. Work will continue to bring in agreements with the remaining provinces.

### **Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements**

1621. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when agreement and mutual recognition of driver licences from Alberta, Canada and Ireland will be reached so that persons who have come to live or returned to live here can obtain an Irish driver licence based on the one they had in Alberta; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36346/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Work is progressing on the driver licence exchange agreement with Alberta, Canada. The Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and Alberta is currently with the Alberta authorities for approval and signature. A data sharing agreement will also need to be completed to meet our obligations under Data Protection legislation.

Once the agreements have been signed and returned, the relevant legislation will be put in place to complete the process.

### **Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements**

1622. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if persons who passed their driver test in Saskatchewan and did their probationary driving period in Alberta are covered by the reciprocal driving license arrangements between Ireland and Saskatchewan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36347/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Ireland has a driver licence exchange agreement with Saskatchewan, Canada. The place of issue of the licence will determine whether a licence can be exchanged. If a person has a valid Saskatchewan issued driver's licence, this can be exchanged for an Irish licence.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1623. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he has met with the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to a no-deal Brexit and contingency planning for this eventuality, in tabular form. [36364/19]

1624. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he has met with the Minister for Defence and or the Minister of State with special responsibility for Defence in relation to a no-deal Brexit and contingency planning for this eventuality, in tabular form. [36365/19]

1625. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he or his officials have met with representatives from the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to a no-deal Brexit and contingency planning for this eventuality, in tabular form. [36366/19]

1626. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he or his officials have met with representatives from the Department of Defence in relation to a no-deal Brexit and contingency planning for this eventuality, in tabular form. [36367/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1623 to 1626, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, as a Minister of Government, I meet regularly with my Cabinet colleagues including the Ministers for Justice and Equality and Defence. The Cabinet has considered contingency planning for a no-deal Brexit on many occasions, including most recently on 3 September 2019.

At Official level, detailed Brexit preparedness and contingency work is being taken forward on a whole of Government basis, across all Government Departments and Agencies, co-ordinated mainly by officials in the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade in close collaboration with the Department of the Taoiseach. As part of these structures, there are a range of inter-departmental groups in place for contingency planning for all aspects of Brexit, including for a no-deal. These structures and groups provide a forum for a common understanding of issues arising and allow consideration and planning of issues across all sectors, including transport, justice and defence related issues.

### **Brexit Supports**

1627. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if specific financial aid will be provided for the tourism and hospitality sector in the Border region due to the adverse impacts of Brexit and the heavy reliance of the sector on business from Northern Ireland and Britain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36384/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Government's Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update was published on 9 July. It is the Government's assessment that there is a significant risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October and accordingly work on no deal Brexit preparations continue to have the highest priority across Government Departments and Agencies.

There is a high degree of uncertainty in forecasting the macroeconomic impact of a no deal Brexit. However it is clear that the impacts would be very damaging. The Contingency Plan Update confirms that in parallel to the predicted macroeconomic impacts, a no deal Brexit will have severe negative effects in a number of sectors and will be widely felt on a regional basis. The impacts will be felt most notably in many exporting sectors including tourism.

In 2019 the Government allocated almost €8 million in additional funding to the tourism agencies specifically to respond to the impact of Brexit. Key elements of the budgetary response will involve temporary, targeted funding for the sectors most affected. In this regard, the Budget allocation for 2020 is subject to the annual estimates discussions with the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Road Projects Contracts**

1628. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a delay will occur in the tendering process for stage II of the Dunkettle interchange upgrade in

Cork. [36432/19]

1648. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied that the process by which Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII, enables a public contract to go to tender is fit for purpose in view of the tender process for the Dunkettle interchange upgrade stage II, the cost of which was underestimated. [36776/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1628 and 1648 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and construction of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

This also includes responsibility for the procurement and tendering process associated with the national roads programme. In that regard, TII, as a Statutory Body, operates under Public Procurement Guidelines which are set at National Level, the extensive body of national and European public procurement law, established forms of contract, and the public capital investment procedures.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply regarding the timelines and tender process for Stage II of the Dunkettle Interchange Project. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Regional Airports**

1629. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the rationale for reviewing the funding model for regional airports; if the importance of the public service obligation, PSO, for regional airports such as Donegal Airport will be committed to; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that PSO funding is critical to the ongoing running and success of the airport and that the PSO model is in compliance with EU guidelines for regional airports; if the review will not undermine the viability of the funding model for Donegal Airport; if it will allow for sustainable growth and future expansion of the strategically important airport for the north-west; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36464/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The importance of regional airports in facilitating connectivity and regional development is reflected in Ireland’s National Aviation Policy (NAP) as well as Project Ireland 2040 and related Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies.

These policies will be central to developing any funding supports for regional airports, including Donegal Airport, under the new Regional Airports Programme (RAP) 2020 -2024 which is currently being developed by my Department. The current Programme expires at the end of this year.

As part of the preparations for the new Programme, I am seeking the views of key stakeholders and interested parties on the development of the new Programme and related policy. An Issues Paper for Consultation was published on my Department’s website on 30 August and the closing date for submissions is 30 September 2019.

The aim of the consultation is to contribute to the design of optimum, cost effective measures in support of regional airports over the period of the next Programme, taking account of

regional development, connectivity, sustainability and climate impacts. They must also take into account changes to State aid rules since the publication of the last Programme.

In terms of national connectivity, the current Programme also supports two domestic Public Service Obligation (PSO) air services. This scheme, which must comply with Regulation (EC) No. 1008/2008, facilitates the operation of two domestic air services in Ireland; Donegal - Dublin and Kerry - Dublin. As you may be aware, a four year contract to operate services on these routes was awarded to Stobart Air in January 2018 and operates until 31 January 2022. The Department intends carrying out a mid-contract review on the performance of the PSOs, in keeping with practice on previous contracts, by the end of 2020.

### **Brexit Supports**

1630. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the supports being provided to the haulage sector to prepare for Brexit; his plans to implement additional measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36489/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department has maintained close contact with road haulage stakeholders in the context of Brexit and continues to work with the industry representative bodies to keep hauliers and business informed of developments, in keeping with our long-established practice. My officials held meetings in May, July and August with representatives of Freight Transport Association Ireland and the Irish Road Haulage Association to discuss Brexit and the whole-of-Government preparations and, importantly, industry preparations. I addressed an FTAI event on 29 August and emphasised the ongoing need for the transport and logistics sector to prepare for Brexit.

My Department hosted a Brexit Freight Forum with key road transport and maritime stakeholders including haulage industry representative bodies in January of this year. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine were also in attendance and addressed the Forum. In February and March of this year, my Department was represented at the Irish Retail Grocery and Distribution Sector Roundtable events hosted by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and engagement with this sector, including haulage industry representatives, is continuing.

In March, my Department issued a comprehensive Brexit communications notice to all licensed international road haulage operators outlining the position on a range of transport issues which would arise in the event of a no-deal Brexit. This notice is published in my Department's area of [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) and the information available online will continue to be updated to keep industry stakeholders informed of Brexit developments.

A very important development is Regulation (EU) 2019/501 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2019, which will ensure the maintenance of basic road connectivity for road freight transport in the event of a no-deal Brexit, allowing UK operators to continue to access the EU on the basis that the UK gives reciprocal access to EU operators. In a Brexit preparedness communication dated 04/09/2019 the Commission has proposed to extend the period of application of this Regulation until 31/07/2020.

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) study into the implications of Brexit on the use of the landbridge, published in November 2018, estimated that approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) travel between Ireland and the continent via the landbridge each year. A cross-departmental Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was established in October 2017 and has been working on measures aimed at

ensuring the ongoing effective and efficient use of the landbridge post-Brexit, including the key Dover-Calais route. My Department is represented on this Group and engagement continues with our EU partners to find solutions to minimise the potential disruption to Irish hauliers' access to and through the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The IMDO hosted a workshop on 4 September 2019 to discuss maritime connectivity in the context of Brexit, and the Irish Road Haulage Association and Freight Transport Association Ireland were invited to this event, along with shipping companies, ports authorities, and importers/exporters.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) has a range of supports available to business including the freight and logistic sector and details can be found on their website [www.dbei.gov.ie](http://www.dbei.gov.ie).

My Department, along with other Government Departments, has emphasised the importance of stakeholders taking all necessary steps within their control to prepare for Brexit, including undertaking contingency planning to minimise the impact of Brexit on their operations. I would encourage road haulage operators to refer to the European Commission's published Notices to Stakeholders in the field of road transport, the EU's basic road connectivity contingency Regulation and the section titled "Brexit and Transport – What You Need to Know" in my Department's area of [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie).

### **Electric Vehicles**

1631. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he will take to legislate for the regulation of e-scooters in view of recommendations and a recently published report by the Road Safety Authority, RSA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36560/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Taking into account the recommendations of the TRL report commissioned by the RSA, I have launched a public consultation on the use of e-scooters and other forms of personal powered transporters. This consultation will run from 1st September 2019 to 1st November 2019 inclusive. The consultation document is available on my Department's website.

I will not be making any decisions on legislating or regulating the use of personal powered transporters during the consultation period and their use on public roads and in public places will remain illegal.

### **Cycling Policy**

1632. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the tender process to select a suitable service provider for the cycling design office planned to be operational during the fourth quarter of 2019 is complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36561/19]

**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 planning and development of public transport infrastructure, including the establishment of the office referred to by the Deputy.

The Deputy is aware that the NTA issued a tender in relation to this matter earlier in the

summer with a deadline for receipt of tenders by 17 July.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

### Legislative Measures

1633. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the necessary legislation required to implement and enforce a new variable speed limit regime and the ability to deploy lane closures on the M50 will be brought forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36562/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The legislative proposals to which the Deputy refers are will be contained in the Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

A General Scheme of the Bill, including the proposal for variable speed limits, was approved by Government for formal drafting last December, subject to two proposals within the Scheme being examined further in Cabinet Committee. These two proposals - for graduated speeding penalties and the carrying of driving licences - have now been examined in detail at official level and will be considered by Cabinet Committee shortly.

Once this process is completed, I hope to see work on drafting the Bill for publication completed, and to publish the Bill before the end of the year.

### Public Transport Review

1634. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a public consultation will be launched in relation to public transport and active travel policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36563/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As I have previously informed the Deputy, I will shortly launch a review of sustainable mobility policy, commencing with a public consultation period. This review will look at all aspects of current policy in relation to public transport and active travel and preparations are now at an advanced stage with a view to launching in the coming weeks.

This review will allow all stakeholders to reflect on what has been achieved, what remains to be done and how our policy frameworks can support the realisation of a more sustainable transport system.

As part of the public consultation, I will be publishing a comprehensive suite of documents looking at the most important areas of public transport and active travel policy and seeking the views of all stakeholders. I will also publish a report of last year's initial Round Table Discussion with stakeholders, an *Ex Post Evaluation of the Smarter Travel Areas* programme 2012-2016 and a high-level assessment of the actions under the existing policies, *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future* and the *National Cycle Policy Framework*.

I look forward to the next phase of this work and engaging with the public and all stakeholders as we look to shape the future direction of public transport and active travel policy.

## Public Transport Data

1635. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of electric buses operating in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36573/19]

1636. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of low emission buses operating in Dublin; the number that will be operational by the end of 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36574/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1635 and 1636 together.

My strong commitment to transition our public transport fleet away from fossil fuels towards cleaner technologies was recently reaffirmed in the all-of-Government *Climate Action Plan*, which sets out an unambiguous target for the first one hundred low-emission buses to enter the urban bus fleet by the end of Q4 2020. This movement to low-emission alternatives for public transport will help to promote and normalise the use of alternative fuels and technologies, while contributing some limited mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

Progress towards meeting this target is already underway and a clear trajectory towards low-emission vehicles has been firmly established. In the immediate future, Ireland has committed to no longer purchasing diesel-only buses for the urban public bus fleets. The National Transport Authority (NTA), with statutory responsibility for PSO public transport vehicle procurement, initiated a tender competition to award a “Framework Agreement for the Supply of Double-Deck Diesel-Electric Hybrid Buses” before the end of Q4 2019. In addition, funded under the *Green Public Transport Fund*, Dublin Bus have taken delivery of six electric-hybrid buses, with a further three expected to be delivered before by year end.

Longer-term, findings from the Low Emission Bus Trials alongside EU public fleet procurement requirements (*Clean Vehicles Directive*) and on-going market analysis and research, will collectively inform the NTA’s bus procurement strategy for the coming years. I understand that by 2023, under the *BusConnects Programme*, approximately half of the public urban bus fleet in the Greater Dublin Area will be low-emitting with full conversion by 2030.

Noting its responsibility with regards to this matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for consideration and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

## Departmental Funding

1637. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the involvement of his Department in an organisation (details supplied); the amount invested in same to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36643/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** A representative from the Climate Change Unit in my department has regularly attended meetings of Hydrogen Mobility Ireland (HMI). My department engages with HMI as a policy stakeholder, providing policy context and input; however, the Department is not an author of any outputs from the Group nor does it have any governance function.

Earlier this year, industry representatives from HMI were invited to attend and present at a meeting of Working Group (WG) 4 of the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce. This working group, co-chaired by my department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action

and Environment, was tasked with examining the role of incentives and infrastructure in the transition of the transport fleet to alternative (non-electric) fuels. Deliberations from this Working Group are helping to inform policy development recommendations of the overall LEV Taskforce, a Report from which is due for consideration by Government in the coming weeks.

No financial investment has been provided to HMI by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1638. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a sports capital grant will be approved for a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36645/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations in May.

Work is now underway in assessing the remaining applications for capital works, including an application from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that. 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.

### **Bus Services**

1639. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter regarding a bus shelter for an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36666/19]

**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 provision of bus stops, bus shelters and bus stations throughout the State.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

### **Public Service Vehicles**

1640. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans to introduce a licensing system for rickshaw drivers in view of media and Garda reports on the involvement of some in the industry in drug dealing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36694/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As you may be aware, last year, the Cabinet gave approval for publication of a General Scheme of a Bill to amend the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 so as to provide for the regulation of rickshaws. Work is underway to advance the drafting of this Bill.

Rickshaws can be powered in a number of different ways - pedal powered, pedal-assisted and motorised. This Bill will introduce comprehensive new detention powers which will ensure effective enforcement of a ban on motorised rickshaws carrying passengers for reward. The Bill will also introduce a licensing regime for non-motorised rickshaws only.

I do share concerns that have been raised in relation to rickshaws, particularly from a public safety perspective, and this Bill will introduce measures to ensure that rickshaws drivers are vetted and licenced. I am confident that this will significantly improve safety for passengers and for all road users.

### **Light Rail Projects**

1641. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to plans by TII to tender for an independent expert panel for Metro-Link and the fact that local stakeholders (details supplied) are concerned regarding the independence of the process and have requested that his Department would be a more appropriate body to recruit the panel and ensure objectivity; and if consideration will be given to the request. [36697/19]

**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.

I think there is a potential misunderstanding as regards the role and function of this expert panel as referred to by the Deputy.

The *Public Spending Code* sets out the responsibilities of Government, Sanctioning Authorities and Sponsoring Agencies in relation to the oversight and delivery of individual projects such as MetroLink.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland is the Sponsoring Agency in relation to the MetroLink project and is therefore the primary responsible body for the preparation, management and delivery of this project. The *Public Spending Code* states that the Sponsoring Agency "*has overall responsibility for the proper management of the project, including its detailed planning.* .".

It is a matter for TII to put in place such arrangements as it thinks necessary to assist it with

the performance of its role as Sponsoring Agency under the *Public Spending Code*. Establishment of such a panel of experts, as referred to by the Deputy, by a Sponsoring Agency is not unusual for a project of the scale of MetroLink. It will act in an advisory capacity to TII at project delivery level.

The Deputy is aware that the *Public Spending Code* requires significant projects, such as MetroLink, to seek Government's approval at certain decision points and I will, at the appropriate times, bring Memoranda to Government in relation to those decision points.

### **Public Service Obligation Services**

1642. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of subsidisation of public transport here by provider in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [36709/19]

**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 in Ireland.

In Budget 2019, I secured €287m in Exchequer funding for Public Service Obligation (PSO) service delivery. Since 2010, the PSO subvention is no longer paid directly by my Department to transport operators. The award and subvention of PSO contracts now falls under the statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA). The allocations to the transport companies are decided by the NTA in exercise of its statutory mandate and in accordance with the various contract arrangements that it has in place with PSO 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 a response within ten working days.

### **Cycling Facilities Funding**

1643. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding provided for cycling; and the percentage this represents of overall transport funding. [36710/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Deputy will acknowledge the significantly enhanced funding Project Ireland 2040 provides to improve active travel infrastructure and other supporting measures that will benefit both walkers and cyclists across the country.

Under the Climate Action Plan 2019 Government has committed to a number of important actions in relation to cycling, specifically Actions 91, 95 and 97. As part of Action 97 Government has committed to revise current transport infrastructure programmes to achieve at least 10% expenditure on facilitating cycling. That commitment is required to be fulfilled by Q4 2020 and my Department is currently examining the Action and its implementation in line with that timeline.

In relation to the current position, funding for active travel, including cycling, is provided under a number of different programmes across both my Department and indeed wider Government.

My Department supports cycling through a number of different programmes –

- The cycling/walking programme, with funding administered by the National Transport Authority (NTA);
- The sustainable urban transport programme, with funding administered by the NTA;
- BusConnects with funding administered by the NTA;
- The greenways strategy, with funding administered by my Department; and The roads programme, with funding administered by my Department and by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Funding allocated in 2019 under the cycling/walking and the sustainable urban transport programmes alone equates to approximately €48million (almost 18% of the NTA's proposed capital investment programme for the year). In 2018 funding for these two programmes equated to approximately 15% of the NTA's capital investment programme.

Beyond my Department's funding programmes there are three additional and important funding programmes available to support active travel, and/or leisure orientated walking and cycling, -

- Project Ireland 2040's Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, with funding administered by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government;

- Project Ireland 2040's Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, with funding administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development; and

- The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, with funding administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development with supplementary supports available through Fáilte Ireland, an agency under the aegis of my Department.

In addition to the above, further funding is also available at a European level through the European Structural and Investment Funds Programme and the INTERREG programme which complement funding made available under these national programmes referred to above.

While finally, cycling is also supported through the fiscal incentives available through the Bike to Work Scheme which has proven very successful.

The totality of this taxpayer support for active travel, including cycling, is an important consideration and it is one my Department will be examining as part of the implementation of Action 97 of the Climate Action Plan 2019.

### **Vehicle Registration**

1644. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that vehicles can have ownership registered to persons under 17 years of age and minors and also to fake names with bogus addresses and that in many instances these vehicles are being used in criminal and illegal activity; his plans to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36724/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Registration of new and imported vehicles is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners and my Department have no role in that matter. My Department are however responsible for change of vehicle ownership notifications, and these are recorded on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF) at the Departments office in Shannon, Co. Clare. Article 10 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (SI No. 385 of 1992) and amendments made thereto

set out the procedures regarding notification and recording of changes of vehicle ownership.

Where my Department suspect or detect incorrect change-of-vehicle ownership notifications using fake names and or bogus addresses, they endeavour to contact the previous registered owner seeking assistance in clarifying the matter, including the furnishing of information pertaining to the sale or disposal of the vehicle. In such circumstances, a special ‘marker’ will be placed on the NVDF for the vehicle alerting that the details of the owner or address are under investigation, and no future correspondence will issue to the individual concerned. Where necessary the case is also forwarded to the Gardai for follow-up investigation.

Where undetected by my Department, the normal procedure in the case of such complaints is for the Department to advise vehicle owners to contact their local Garda station and inform them of the correspondence they have received. Officials at my Department will assist with any subsequent investigation by An Garda Síochána. The Department will enable the NVDF vehicle record to be amended and restored to the previous owner if warranted from any investigation.

Notwithstanding this, such instances including sale of a vehicle to a minor are primarily enforcement matters for An Garda Síochána. The recording of a vehicle in the name of a minor is legislated for in Section 30 of the Road Traffic Act 2004 and makes it an offence for a mechanically propelled vehicle to be supplied to a person under the age of 16 years; and sets out the offences where such legislation is contravened. “Supply” in this legislation includes supply by way of sale, hire, loan, gift, or other means of making the vehicle available to a person.

My Department is however looking to strengthen provisions in this regard. A proposed amendment to section 12 of the Roads Act 1920 will provide that the Minister may make regulations to collect certain identifying particulars on application or renewal of a vehicle licence or on becoming the new owner of a vehicle.

### **Greenways Development**

1645. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of projects (details supplied). [36756/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The current status of the projects in question as sought by the Deputy are outlined below:

**South Kerry Greenway:** Funding was awarded to this project in 2014. To date, no construction has been carried out. A planning application was submitted to An Bord Pleanála in August 2018 and an Oral Hearing is scheduled for 8th October 2019. I await their decision.

**Galway to Moycullen Greenway:** This project was also awarded funding in 2014 and construction has yet to begin on the route. I understand that work on route options is ongoing.

**Great Western Greenway:** 42km of the Great Western Greenway is currently cycleable between Achill and Westport. I recently awarded €3.2m to Mayo County Council to extend the Great Western Greenway in the Clew Bay area at Achill Sound, Bunnacurry and towards Murrisk.

**Suir Blueway:** 21km of the 53km Blueway along the River Suir is now open as a Greenway. Last year my Department awarded €765,000 to improve the quality of this route.

**Waterford Greenway:** This 46km Greenway has been a great success since opening in 2016 and remains in use by a large number of tourists, both local and overseas, all throughout

the year. Last year my Department awarded Waterford City and County Council €1,455,000 for improvement works on the Greenway to address a number of outstanding issues. Additional funding has now been made available to bring the Greenway into the heart of Waterford City Centre. I expect that this will see a greater numbers accessing the Waterford City from the Greenway.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

1646. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when pending sports capital grant applications will be decided upon. [36760/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations 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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

### **Sports Capital Programme**

1647. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when details of the next sports capital programme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36767/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2018 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on Friday 19th October last. By that deadline, a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding.

186 of these applications were for projects that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the programme that subsequently submitted corrected documents. These applications were assessed first and approximately €7m in allocations to 170 projects were announced on the 17th January.

619 equipment only applications were assessed next and 466 allocations with a value of €9.8m were announced to these organisations 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 further number of weeks to have all applications assessed with allocations announced shortly after that.

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.

*Question No. 1648 answered with Question No. 1628.*

### **Rail Services Provision**

1649. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to ensure a pilot train service operating at a later time is put in place to service the Connolly Station to Sligo route (details supplied). [36836/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have overall responsibility for policy and funding in relation to public transport.

The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1650. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has carried out an audit to date of the shipping capacity of Ireland in the event that the south England landbridge becomes unusable in a no-deal Brexit scenario; and if additional ferries have been secured to allow for direct transport to European ports of Irish-produced goods by firms based here. [36863/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The 2018 Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) report on the Implications of Brexit on the use of the Landbridge <https://www.imdo.ie/Home/site-area/news-events/implications-brexit-use-landbridge> acknowledges that “for Ireland, maritime links represent a key means of ensuring its direct connectivity with mainland Europe, particularly in view of the uncertain evolution of trade flows passing over the United Kingdom ‘land bridge’. The viability of the ongoing use of the landbridge route to access the single market in a no deal Brexit scenario is a serious concern for Irish importers and exporters and the impact of any disruption to the landbridge cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty, particularly in a no-deal scenario.

My Department in conjunction with the IMDO, has consulted extensively with stakeholders regarding maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative route for trade currently using the Landbridge. Just this week (on

4 September 2019) a Workshop, organised by my Department and the IMDO, with some 90 participants drawn from importers, exporters, shipping companies, ports, shipping agents, and other key stakeholders, and focussed on this specific issue, was held in Dublin.

In the context of Brexit, there have already been significant market responses from the shipping companies adding additional freight capacity on direct ferry sailings to continental Europe including:-

- In 2018, CLdN launched MV Celine, the World's largest RoRo vessel, and in 2019 launched the MV Laureline RoRo vessel, significantly increasing capacity on the Dublin–Rotterdam and Dublin -Zeebrugge routes.

- Irish Ferries' investment of €150 million in its newest passenger and freight vessel, MV W.B. Yeats, provides year-round freight capacity between Ireland and France of 165 HGVs per sailing or 60,600 HGVs per annum, and a vessel of similar size to the W.B. Yeats is due to be delivered on the Irish Sea routes in 2020.

- In May 2018, Brittany Ferries launched a direct route from Cork to Santander in northern Spain.

- In July 2019, BG Freight Line announced the commencement of a direct Waterford-Rotterdam weekly LoLo freight service, which will act as a deep-sea feeder through Rotterdam port and onwards to worldwide destinations.

These increases in capacity show the readiness of market participants to respond to shifts in trade patterns resulting from Brexit.

In a 'No-Deal' Brexit scenario, it will take some time for stakeholders, including importers and exporters, to fully adapt their supply chains, which are currently optimally arranged including through use of the UK landbridge in many cases, to the new situation. However, the assessment of my Department and the IMDO, based on extensive and ongoing consultations, including with the shipping sector, is that sufficient capacity should be available on direct routes to continental ports following a 'No Deal' Brexit and should demand for further capacity arise, the shipping sector can and will respond quickly to meet such demands.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1651. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the contingencies in place for trading enterprises in the transport and haulage sector in the event of a no-deal Brexit; and the discussions he has had with the EU Commission regarding flexibility in respect of state aid thresholds for trading enterprises using port facilities to transport goods to continental Europe or transporting goods via the current UK landbridge in such an event. [36865/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department's website, [www.dttas.gov.ie](http://www.dttas.gov.ie), provides full information on the implications of Brexit for the transport sector and also contains links to supports that are available generally to businesses impacted by Brexit, including the haulage sector, through the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. These extensive supports, schemes and advice are intended to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit, and are assisting businesses to meet their challenges by identifying key risk areas and the practical preparatory actions to be taken over the coming weeks. Details can be found on their website [www.dbei.gov.ie](http://www.dbei.gov.ie).

In addition, the Communication published by the European Commission on 4 September contains a new checklist for businesses and additional legislative proposals relating to contingency measures. Importantly for the haulage sector, the Commission has proposed to extend the regulation ensuring basic road freight and road passenger connectivity (Regulation (EU) 2019/501) which was due to expire on the 31 December 2019. The Commission proposal provides for an extension until 31 July 2020, reflecting the logic and the duration of the original Regulation which had been adopted prior to the extension of the Article 50 period to 31 October 2019. The extension of this Regulation will provide certainty to transport operators about continuity of services cross-border bus and international road haulage.

The new Commission detailed checklist will help those businesses that trade with the UK to identify what final preparations may be required. In order to minimise disruption to trade, all parties involved in supply chains with the UK – regardless of where they are based – should be aware of their responsibilities and the necessary formalities in cross-border trade. This builds on previous Commission communications and 100 stakeholder notices, which cover a broad range of sectors.

The continued use of the landbridge as a key route connecting Ireland with the continent is a crucial concern given the level of imports and exports that are transported via this route, it is estimated that 16% of the Roll-on/Roll-off traffic between Ireland and GB is traffic using the landbridge to transport goods to and from European ports. The total value of our trade using the landbridge has been estimated to be approximately €21 billion. Goods using the landbridge include many time-sensitive or perishable goods, with almost all of this traffic being handled by Dublin and Rosslare ports.

Some trade currently using the landbridge route may, depending on the nature of the product, switch to the direct routes to the continent. For others, some delays at UK and other EU ports may not be such as to constitute a significant deterrent to the continued use of the landbridge. However, the use of the landbridge for some other products that are perishable or very time sensitive may become unviable and may also not be viable on the longer direct maritime links.

Officials from my Department have assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative for trade that currently takes place using the Landbridge. Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider stakeholders, the preliminary assessment is that sufficient capacity will be available on direct routes to continental ports from end October 2019, and should demand for further capacity arise, the shipping sector can respond to meet such demands.

Furthermore, on 4 September 2019, my Department in conjunction with the IMDO, hosted a workshop in relation to Maritime connectivity. A range of stakeholders attended, such as importers, exporters, ferry companies, haulage companies and business sectors. The aim of this workshop was to provide a forum to consider the risk posed by the UK Landbridge and the options for future direct connectivity to continental ports.

## Road Projects

1652. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which the upgrading of the M4 from Kilcock to Lexlip is contemplated in view of the frequency and increasing number of accidents at peak times on a daily basis arising from the volume of traffic that the road cannot support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36910/19]

**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. The Roads Acts 1993-2015 prescribes the roles and responsibilities of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, for the delivery of the national roads programme. Among these roles and functions, TII and local authorities are responsible for the upgrading and maintenance of individual national roads.

Noting the above position, I have referred your question to TII for a more detailed reply in relation to the M4 from Kilcock to Leixlip. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Brexit Preparations**

1653. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he remains satisfied that all possible actions have been taken by his Department in anticipation of a UK crash out from the EU; if the necessary air and sea options are being pursued to ensure importers and exporters have alternative direct access to the rest of the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36927/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** It is the Government's assessment that there is a significant risk of a no deal Brexit on 31 October. Work on no deal Brexit preparations therefore has the highest priority across Government. To be clear, a no deal Brexit will have profound implications for Ireland on all levels. These include macroeconomic, trade and sectoral challenges, both immediately and in the longer term.

In terms of Ireland's preparedness measures, the Brexit Contingency Action Plan Update, published on 9 July, reflects the extensive work which has taken place at EU level and on a whole-of-Government basis, including the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019 (Brexit Omnibus Act), to prepare for a no deal Brexit.

The Action Plan sets out the next steps to be taken, by Government Departments and State Agencies, businesses and individuals, between now and 31 October. It puts particular emphasis on the need for increased preparedness measures, by exposed businesses in particular.

In parallel with our preparedness work at national level, the Government is working closely with the European Commission on how, in the absence of the Withdrawal Agreement, to meet the shared twin objectives of protecting the integrity of the Single Market and Ireland's place in it, and protecting the Good Friday Agreement. On 4 September the Commission announced its intention to extend Regulations which will guard Ireland's connectivity in the fields of aviation, cross-border bus and international road haulage in the immediate term following a no-deal Brexit.

While the full implications of Brexit for our air and maritime transport are not yet clear, I do not anticipate that direct maritime or direct air services by community air carriers between Ireland and continental Europe will be affected, even in a no-deal Brexit scenario.

That said, a significant proportion of our goods destined for EU markets are transported via the UK landbridge to access these markets. Brexit could impact on the efficiency of the landbridge route particularly where there are increased border and custom procedures and associated delays, or were the UK to subsequently apply differing standards, road charging or regulatory regimes. The landbridge is the fastest route to continental Europe and as such is relied upon for the transport of time-sensitive products, such as those in the agri-food/perishable

goods sector, just-in-time and high value goods. Any delays or barriers to this key route to European markets will be detrimental for certain sectors. Significant work has been and continues to be undertaken through the Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in seeking to ensure continued access through the landbridge to markets in continental Europe.

In relation to shipping, in the past shipping operators have responded to economic developments and increased or reduced capacity in response to market demands. Following a series of meetings between my officials and the major ferry companies operating at Irish ports, I am confident that shipping services can be expected to adapt to changing market demands that may arise and we have seen the evidence of this with the increase in shipping capacity on direct routes to continental ports. These services include the MV Celine which was last year launched from Dublin Port and will serve routes to Rotterdam and Zeebrugge and the MV WB Yeats, which is operating between Dublin and Cherbourg since March 2019. Additionally, a new ferry route to Santander in Spain commenced from the Port of Cork in 2018.

If disruption to the landbridge does arise, it is likely to be most acute in the immediate period following the UK exit. My Department, along with IMDO, is implementing a number of mitigating actions to encourage a market response in a timely manner. This includes a focussed awareness campaign aimed at shipping companies, importers and exporters aimed at creating a dialogue to identify new market demands as early as possible. On the 4th September, my Department in conjunction with the IMDO, hosted a workshop in relation to Maritime connectivity. A range of stakeholders attended, such as importers, exporters, ferry companies, haulage companies and business sectors. The aim of this workshop was to provide a forum to consider the risk posed by the UK Landbridge and the options for future direct connectivity to continental ports.

In response to the Deputy's query regarding adequate travel provisions in the air travel sector, Regulation (EU) 2019/502 on common rules ensuring basic air connectivity aims to ensure the continuation of a basic level of air connectivity for citizens and business between the UK and Europe in the event of the UK exiting the EU without an agreement. While certain provisions within this Regulation have entered into force, the majority will only apply if and when the UK exits the EU without a deal. The Regulation was adopted on 25 March 2019 with an original expiration date of 30 March 2020. The European Commission has recently published a proposal to extend the date of application of this Regulation until the 24th October 2020 to coincide with the end of the IATA summer season. Furthermore, my officials have been advised that there are currently no capacity constraints in relation to the air freight market.

### **School Completion Programme**

1654. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost to restore the school completion programme to 2010 levels. [35238/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The full-year cost of restoring the SCP to 2010 funding levels would be in the region of €7.3 million per annum.

### **Family Resource Centres**

1655. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to introduce a family resource centre at a location (details supplied); the way in which an applica-

tion can be made in relation to same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35988/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.

In Budget 2019, I secured an increase of €1.5 million in funding for the FRC Programme. This brings the overall financial allocation for the Programme to €18 million.

There are no plans to establish new family Resource Centres this year.

The additional funding provided in 2019 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.

The application process to join the FRC programme is an operational matter for Tusla. I have requested Tusla to provide the Deputy with the requested information directly.

### **School Completion Programme**

1656. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children that received targeted interventions under the school completion programme in the 2018/2019 school year. [35999/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Educational Welfare Service of Tusla have informed my Department that 24,749 children received targeted interventions under the School Completion Programme in 2018/19.

### **Care Orders**

1657. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of special care orders which were granted in respect of children and young persons in each of the past five years. [36503/19]

1718. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children and young persons admitted to special care facilities in each of the past five years in tabular form. [36757/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1657 and 1718 together.

As these are operational matters, I have asked Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Childcare Education and Training Support Programme**

1658. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount

spent in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 on the childcare employment training scheme in tabular form; the number of persons that benefitted from it for each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36641/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** TEC is an overarching childcare programme, specifically designed to support parents on eligible training and education courses as well as certain categories of parents returning to work, by providing subsidised childcare places. The TEC Programme also provides childcare support for families on Family Income Support (ASCC). It comprises three strands:

1. Childcare Education and Training Support Programme (CETS) provides childcare to training course participants on courses provided by the Local Education and Training Boards (ETBs, formerly FÁS and Vocational Education Committees) and secondary schools.

2. After-School Child Care Programme (ASCC) is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and provides after-school care for primary school children for certain categories of working parents and parents on DEASP employment programmes (excluding Community Employment).

3. Community Employment Childcare Programme (CEC) is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) and provides childcare for children of parents who are participating in the Community Employment scheme. There are two strands within CEC, namely CEC(PS) (pre-school) and CEC(AS) (after-school).

Table 1 and 2 set out the amount spent in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 on the Childcare Employment Training Scheme (CETS), and the number of persons that benefitted from the scheme each year.

**Table 1. Expenditure on the childcare employment training scheme in tabular form 2016 -2018 and to date in 2019.**

Programme Call	2016	2017	2018	2019
TEC - Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) 2016-2017	4,451,141.12	6,487,657.74	1,250.00	1,163.00
TEC - Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) 2017-2018	n/a	3,683,161.20	4,238,638.80	-7,203.00
TEC - Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) 2018-2019	n/a	n/a	2,476,042.93	3,324,431.19
TEC - Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) 2019-2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	22,157.00

**Table 2. Number of children registered under employment training scheme from 2016 -2018 and to date in 2019.**

Programme Call	2016	2017	2018	2019
CETS	3,500	2,540	1,931	70

### Community Childcare Subvention Programme

1659. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, on the community childcare subvention scheme; the number of persons that benefited from it for each year in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36642/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Programmes provide support for parents/guardians on a low income to avail of reduced childcare costs at participating privately owned childcare services and at community not-for-profit childcare services, a list of these services is available through the relevant local County Childcare Committee. Under CCS Plus my Department pays a portion of the childcare costs for eligible children with the parent paying the remainder. The rate of subvention payable is determined by the status of the parent with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Tables 1 and 2 set out the amount spent in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 on the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Programmes and the number of persons that benefitted from the scheme each year. It should be noted that the CCS programme is no longer available however the CCSP programme with identical levels of financial support is available but will close to new registrations when the National Childcare Scheme commences in October 2019.

Table 1. Expenditure on the CCSP Scheme from 2016 -2018 and to date in 2019

Payments by Programme Call 2016 to date

Programme Call	2016	2017	2018	2019
Community Child-care Subvention 2016-2017	15,232,453.58	20,843,990.46	59,944.40	1,859.35
Community Child-care Subvention 2017-2018	0.00	23,101,733.10	27,001,876.02	-86,950.35
Community Child-care Subvention 2018-2019	0.00	0.00	16,182,223.85	16,603,834.12
Community Child-care Subvention 2019-2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community Child-care Subvention Private 2016-2017	1,705,040.24	6,131,483.25	-231.20	-6,297.94
Community Child-care Subvention Plus 2017-2018	0.00	20,985,913.81	47,730,808.14	26,626.22
Community Child-care Subvention Plus 2018-2019	0.00	0.00	31,924,686.36	72,968,254.06
Community Child-care Subvention Plus 2019-2020	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,303,452.37

Table 2. Number of children registered under CCSP scheme form 2016 -2018 and to date in 2019

Programme	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019**@ 05/09/2019	2019/2020 @ 05/09/2019
CCS	20,568	17,820	12,572	No CCS programme this year
CCSP	7,232	22,913	35,424	7,675
CCSRT*	314	560	608	46
CCSU	-	39,357	33,682	10,989

Note: All figures are calculated using the child's PPS number. If a child had more than one approved registration in the same programme, they have been counted once in that programme. However if a child had approved registrations in different programmes during the same academic year they have been included in both programme totals.

\*For programme call year 2016/17 this programme call consisted of CCSR only, CCSRT was introduced in 2017/18

\*\*2018/19 CCS, CCSP, CCSU & CCSRT registrations are still being processed so this figure may change over the coming weeks.

### Childcare Services

1660. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if correspondence has been received from a service provider (details supplied); if so, when a response will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34740/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** It is not possible to appeal the calculation of Programme Support Payment (PSP) or select an alternative snapshot period from which the payment is calculated. For the last programme year 2018/19, the month of December 2018 was selected as the snapshot period to calculate PSP.

As with all other terms of PSP, this snapshot applies to all services supplying DCYA childcare programmes without exception, and is not negotiable. Selecting alternative snapshot periods for individual services would, amongst other things, risk double-payment of PSP for a single child, if they had moved from one service to another during the programme year.

I understand that the service provider in question is dissatisfied with their payment but the PSP was calculated along the same parameters for all services and cannot be appealed. Please note that the PSP is administered by Pobal on behalf of my Department and therefore all future queries are best directed to Pobal.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

1661. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to her and the Minister of State in her Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34840/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I have appointed two Special Advisers in my Department. The appointments have been made in accordance with Instructions for Ministerial Appointments as

published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. These instructions set specific conditions to be met in respect of such appointments including salaries to be applied. Please see the following table for details.

Name	Role	Salary Scale	Point on Scale
Patricia Ryan	Special Adviser	Principal Officer Standard Scale - PPC	5
Sinéad Fennell	Special Adviser	Principal Officer Standard Scale - PPC	1

### Youth Services Funding

1662. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the situation by which a project (details supplied) is facing a serious threat without funding will be addressed; and if she will extend the funding and continue the commissioning process at the same time. [34858/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services' funding ever undertaken. This reform is informed by the 2014 Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Funding Programmes. This review made a number of recommendations for the future operation of youth schemes and their development in the years ahead to ensure an evidence-based and outcomes-focused programme designed to secure optimal outcomes for young people. The review recommended the development of a single targeted youth funding programme to replace previous schemes.

The new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme has 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 are the primary target group for services available through the new scheme.

The reform of youth services' funding provides an opportunity 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. This mapping is assisting the Department and ETBs in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels.

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board, via its Youth Services Board, is currently involved in a detailed Area Profiling, Needs Assessment and Service Requirement process for the entire city with a view to making recommendations to my Department for youth service requirements from 2020 onwards. Part of that process will include the identification of areas where no DCYA funded services currently exist with a view to commissioning new services in those areas.

Any identified service requirement where no service currently funded by the Department exists must be met following a fair and transparent commissioning process to ensure that all service providers, existing or potential, have a fair and equitable opportunity to apply for funding. This Department cannot predict what needs will be identified within Dublin City in advance of the CDETB completing the aforementioned area profiling, needs assessment and service requirement process.

All of this is dependent on availability of budget in 2020.

## Childcare Services Regulation

1663. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason parents of children attending crèches (details supplied) were not informed of breaches and issues uncovered by Tusla; the steps she plans to take to ensure that in future Tusla informs parents in circumstances in which a company or individual faces criminal charges in respect of the care of their children; her plans to introduce mandatory reporting of crèches, breaches and issues to parents of children attending such crèches; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34968/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla as the independent statutory regulator of early years services has the power to inspect early years services and to carry out prosecutions in relation to breaches of regulations by early years services. In relation to child protection concerns, the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate also takes immediate action through referral to the social work function within Tusla. In relation to Tusla's ability to inform parents of breaches of regulations, Tusla is required to follow due process, including giving service providers the opportunity to take corrective action and to appeal against decision (including a legal right to appeal against deregistration decisions to the District Court), and must take considerable care to ensure that it does not - through the information it shares in public or with other parties- prejudice the outcome of ongoing regulatory or enforcement processes that are the subject of legal action. Tusla publishes its inspection reports on the Tusla website and these reports outline the outcome of regulatory or prosecutorial activity.

Tusla's powers were strengthened considerably in 2016, including being given the power to deregister a service without going through the courts and the power to attach conditions to a registration. At the end of July 2019 I wrote to the Chairperson of Tusla requesting his views on what additional powers Tusla might need, and he replied in recent weeks. Officials in my Department are currently examining his proposals, which will require amendment of primary legislation as well as of the Early Years Services Regulations. The powers my Department is examining include potential ways to share more information at an earlier stage with parents in relation to inspection findings, the registration status of services, and any enforcement actions being undertaken. In framing any legislative changes or regulatory reforms in this area, it will be necessary to balance parents' legitimate interest in being kept informed with the need for due process, particularly given the need to avoid undermining any legal actions that Tusla might be taking.

## Early Childhood Care and Education Staff

1664. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on having a sectoral employment order established for the early childhood education and care sector; if she has discussed this issue with the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform regarding the necessary funding that would be required in due course as a result of the necessary increased costs that will arise once a sectoral employment order is approved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35059/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The early learning and care sector has been identified as a sector in which low pay and poor working conditions for staff are common, which impacts on the quality of provision to children through its effect on the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. The lack of consistency of care resulting from high staff turnover levels impacts directly on quality, and low wages are a constraint on plans to upskill the workforce. My support for improved pay and conditions for early learning and care

practitioners has been explicit, as their role is critical to supporting children's development and delivering better child outcomes.

Over the past 4 budgets the level of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare services has increased by 117%. The level of investment needs to continue to rise if we are to offer services that are of high quality, affordable and accessible. However, increased investment by itself will not ensure that staff wages and conditions will improve.

As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have repeatedly called for the sector to pursue a Sectoral Employment Order, which offers a viable mechanism to establish appropriate wage levels.

Under the terms of industrial relations legislation, for the process of establishing a Sectoral Employment Order to commence, the body or bodies commencing the process must be "substantially representative" of either the workers or the employers in the sector. It is not yet clear at what point any organisation representing workers or employers in this sector will reach a membership level that the Labour Court accepts as substantially representative. Nor is it yet clear what the decision of the Labour Court might be, or what the implications of any such decision might be for the cost of public funding schemes in a context where the State is not the employer. However, I can assure the Deputy that my Department will readily co-operate with a Sectoral Employment Order process when it is under way.

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 for service providers to offer staff 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*, which contains a commitment to develop a Workforce Development Plan which will ensure appropriate levels of early learning and care and school-age childcare staff at all levels in the sector, will achieve a graduate-led workforce by 2028, and raise the profile of careers in the sector. I have put the Steering Group in place to lead this work.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is aware of my commitment to addressing not only access and affordability, but also quality and the importance of a valued workforce in that regard and he has been very supportive to date with my endeavours.

### Childcare Services Administration

1665. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 59 of 10 July 2019 and her letter of 29 July 2019, the criteria upon which Tusla and the HSE can grant the extra hours; the limits there are when granting such hours in relation to the proposed national childcare scheme; and the limits when granting such hours. [35062/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Childcare Support Act 2018 makes provision for specific statutory bodies including Tusla and the HSE to

access childcare to support vulnerable children and families and for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to enter into formal agreements with the various bodies for these purposes. Engagement is ongoing between my officials and each of the bodies in relation to the terms of agreements under which vulnerable children will be referred to the scheme having regard to the provisions of the Act. The terms of each agreement will include such matters as the qualifying criteria and the hours, including the limits on hours for which children may be referred. Where a referral is made by a sponsor body, the families will automatically qualify for a subsidy without having to satisfy any income test. The statutory body will determine the hours for which a child is referred under a sponsor agreement, based on the needs of the family, subject to the limit set out in the agreement between the Minister and each sponsor body. Engagement with each of the sponsor bodies is very advanced and is progressing well. Agreements will be in place with each of the bodies before the launch of the National Childcare Scheme.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1666. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of extending the AIM scheme to support preschool aged children attending full day care. [35101/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), which was launched in June 2016, is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Its goal is to empower early learning and care practitioners to deliver an inclusive preschool experience, ensuring that every eligible child can meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality early years care and education.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child in the context of the preschool setting they are attending. AIM is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

AIM is already available to children attending full-day care settings, but only for the hours during which they are taking part in the ECCE programme. AIM is intrinsically linked to the parameters provided by the ECCE programme in that AIM is available only to those who are eligible for and participating on the ECCE programme for the duration of the ECCE programme i.e. 3 hours per day, 5 days per week, 38 weeks of the year, over a 2-year period.

Extending AIM to all pre-school children in full day care could involve extending AIM to children younger than the minimum age for ECCE of 2 years 8 months, and it is not known what proportion of younger children would require AIM supports.

Even if an extension of AIM to full day care were limited to those children who are already eligible for ECCE and already availing of AIM supports, it is not known what proportion of these children would make use of provision beyond the 15 free hours per week provided by ECCE and the 38 weeks of the year in which ECCE is currently available.

The primary cost of extending AIM would be the cost of Level 7 AIM support, which is provided to enable the early learning and care setting to either (a) reduce the adult-to-child ratio, or (b) acquire additional staff resources for the preschool room. The Level 7 payment is currently set at €195 per week based on highly complex needs for a 15-hour week. The cost of AIM Level 7 in the programme year 2018-19 was approximately €19m. In its simplest possible extrapolation, assuming that all children benefitting from 3 hours of support per day were instead

to benefit from 8 hours of support per day, the cost of Level 7 would rise by €32m to €51m per year. If provision were also extended to year-round support, the cost might rise a further €19m to €70m, on a 52-week basis. However, it is unlikely that all children currently availing of AIM supports would attend 8 hours per day or 52 weeks per year, and furthermore many services that provide ECCE and AIM do not offer full day care.

It must also be noted that Level 7 would not be the only additional cost required to provide an extension of AIM to preschool children attending full day care. In particular, the increased capitation paid in respect of qualified Inclusion Coordinators (€2 per child per ECCE week) might rise. In addition, the cost of other elements of AIM, such as equipment, might also rise. It is therefore difficult to establish reliable estimates of costs associated with extending AIM to full day care provision.

Nevertheless, the Government has committed in *First 5* to consider enhancements to and/or extension of AIM. In the coming months my Department will initiate the end-of-year-three evaluation of AIM, which will provide important data to inform consideration of future extensions.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

1667. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of extending the AIM scheme to support school aged children attending full day care. [35102/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), which was launched in June 2016, is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) preschool programme. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that every eligible child can meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality early years care and education.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child in the context of the pre-school setting they are attending. AIM is administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

AIM supports are currently provided based on the needs of the child and the preschool setting, and a clinical assessment is not required. AIM supports that are provided are deemed essential to enable the child's meaningful participation in their ECCE Programme.

As AIM is currently designed to support children to access the ECCE programme, children availing of AIM must comply with the age requirement of this programme, which is 2 years and 8 months to 5 years, and must not yet be attending school.

Estimating the cost of extending the AIM scheme to support school-aged children is not possible at this point in time, given the complexity of the task and the lack of data on important variables such as the number of children attending school-age childcare services who would require AIM supports and the proportion of school-age childcare settings in which additional support would be required. Furthermore, it has not yet been determined how the type of supports required for school-age children might differ from the type of supports required for pre-school children.

Nevertheless, the Government has committed in *First 5* to consider enhancements to and/or

extension of AIM, which might include extending AIM to school-age children, or to children with additional needs other than a disability. In the coming months my Department will initiate the end-of-year-three evaluation of AIM, which will provide important data to inform consideration of future extensions of AIM.

### **Childcare Services Administration**

1668. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the rules for childcare providers in relation to deposits; and if it is permissible for childcare providers to hold two separate deposits, that is, one for the child's ECCE place and one for the child's place in a part-time private childcare place. [35103/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As per the DCYA Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding programme rules, a service provider may charge a refundable booking deposit to hold an ECCE place for a child. The maximum deposit a provider may charge is equivalent to four weeks' ECCE payment (€258). The totality of the ECCE deposit must be returned to the parent/guardian once the child's registration is approved on the Programme Implantation Platform (PIP).

The ECCE programme rules stipulate that if a service is holding a legacy deposit that exceeds €258 for a child (the equivalent of four weeks ECCE subvention) that has been attending that service prior to their commencement on ECCE, then depending on the level of ECCE service, the service must return up to €258 of that deposit to the parent/guardian once the child's ECCE registration has been approved on PIP, regardless of when that deposit was collected. The rationale for this deposit rule is based on the premise that the DCYA will fund a service provider for up to four weeks if a child leaves without notice. Without the ECCE deposit rule, a service provider could financially benefit from a four week payment from the DCYA despite the fact they already have a private deposit safeguard in place.

The only other deposit stipulation is that a service provider's deposit policy must be clearly outlined in their fees list. If a service has any queries surrounding their fees list they should contact their local City/County Childcare Committee.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes**

1669. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when ECCE providers are notified of changes to the ECCE contracts; the mechanism through which this is done; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35104/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding agreement is published on the Pobal Programme Implementation Platform (PIP) a number of weeks before the launch of each programme year. There is ample time for service providers to review, seek clarification and sign the funding agreement before the start of the ECCE programme.

In the unlikely event that a change of circumstances necessitated an amendment to the ECCE Funding Agreement for e.g. due to a legislation or policy change, service providers would be informed through PIP and the amended funding agreement would be available to review.

My Department has no plans to amend the 2019/20 programme year ECCE funding agreement.

## **City and County Child Care Committees**

1670. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that many county childcare committees have different interpretations of ECCE contractual requirements; and the steps she will take to address same. [35105/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding agreement requirements are clearly outlined in both the programme rules and the funding agreement itself.

My Department is not aware of any discrepancies among City/County Childcare Committees in relation to this matter. If the Deputy has specific examples, I would urge her to please contact officials from my Department through [eyqueries@dcya.gov.ie](mailto:eyqueries@dcya.gov.ie) so that this matter can be investigated as a matter of urgency.

## **Child and Family Agency Staff**

1671. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35283/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Deputy will be aware that it is not appropriate for me to comment on individual cases, nor to make a direction that may interfere in the decision-making and professional judgement of Tusla social work staff.

I can advise the Deputy that I have referred the matter to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for their appropriate attention.

## **Departmental Expenditure**

1672. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by her Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by her Department over the next five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35335/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Department of Health provides ICT services to my Department under the terms of a Service Level Agreement. As part of this agreement DCYA's Lotus Notes infrastructure is furnished by the Department of Health, along with a block allocation of Notes' software licenses for staff. There is no expenditure associated with the receipt of this service.

As the Department transitions to the new Build to Share desktop service, provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, we shall cease to use IBM's Lotus Notes software, therefore there will no projected spend on said software over the next five years.

## **Early Childhood Care and Education Data**

1673. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the esti-

mated cost of increasing the ECCE capitation rates by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25, respectively; and the estimated first and full-year cost of extending the duration of the ECCE year by 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks, respectively from September 2019 onwards in tabular form. [35424/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** €298.1m has been allocated to the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme in 2019.

The following table outlines the projected cost in 2019 of increasing the standard and higher capitation rates for the programme by increments of €5 over and above current levels, up to a €25 increase. This costing is based on the increases occurring from September 2019.

Increase	Standard Capitation Rate	Higher Capitation Rate	Increase
€0.00	69	80.25	n/a
€5.00	74	85.25	€8.4m
€10.00	79	90.25	€16.8m
€15.00	84	95.25	€25.2m
€20.00	89	100.25	€33.6m
€25.00	94	105.25	€42.0m

The following table outlines the projected full year cost in 2019 of increasing the standard and higher capitation rates for the scheme by increments of €5 over and above current levels, up to a €25 increase. This costing is based on the increases occurring from January 2019.

Increase	Standard Capitation Rate	Higher Capitation Rate	Full Year Cost	Increase
€0.00	€69.00	€80.25	€298.1m	n/a
€5.00	€74.00	€85.25	€318.1m	€20.0m
€10.00	€79.00	€90.25	€338.0m	€39.9m
€15.00	€84.00	€95.25	€358.0m	€59.9m
€20.00	€89.00	€100.25	€378.0m	€79.9m
€25.00	€94.00	€105.25	€398.0m	€99.9m

The below table outlines the projected full year cost in 2019 of increasing the standard and higher capitation rates for the scheme by increments of 2 weeks over and above current levels, up to a 12 week increase.

The ECCE programme occurs on the basis of a Programme Year. ECCE provision is therefore currently split, with 16 weeks of provision over September to December, and 22 weeks of provision over January to June in the following calendar year. Due to fixed holidays between September and December in 2019 the additional weeks would have to be added in the first half of 2020. Increasing the ECCE programme weeks would therefore have no year one (2019) costs.

Increase	Standard Capitation Rate	Higher Capitation Rate	Full Year Cost	Increase in 2020
0 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€298.1m	n/a
2 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€313.8m	€15.7m
4 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€329.5m	€31.4m
6 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€360.9m	€62.8m
8 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€376.5m	€78.4m

Increase	Standard Capitation Rate	Higher Capitation Rate	Full Year Cost	Increase in 2020
10 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€392.2m	€94.1m
12 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€407.9m	€109.8m

### School Completion Programme

1674. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated first and full-year cost of restoring the school completion programme to peak levels of funding. [35425/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The full-year cost of restoring the SCP to peak funding levels would be in the region of €7.3 million per annum.

### School Completion Programme

1675. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of school completion programmes in operation nationally; the number of children availing of such programmes; and the breakdown of such programmes by county in tabular form. [35426/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** There are 124 School Completion Programmes nationally providing interventions to 69,775 children and young people to support attendance, participation and retention across School Completion Programme cluster schools.

The number of School Completion Programmes broken down by county is set out in the following table.

County	No of SCP's
Carlow	2
Cavan	1
Clare	2
Cork	11
Donegal	5
Dublin	47
Galway	5
Kerry	2
Kildare	4
Kilkenny	1
Laois	1
Limerick	7
Longford	1
Louth	5
Mayo	2
Meath	2
Monaghan	3

County	No of SCP's
Offaly	2
Roscommon	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	5
Waterford	3
Westmeath	2
Wexford	5
Wicklow	4

### School Completion Programme

1676. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of school completion programmes that were in operation nationally in 2009; the number of children availing of such programmes in 2009; and the breakdown of such programmes by county in tabular form. [35427/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** There are 124 School Completion Programmes nationally providing interventions to 69,775 children and young people to support attendance, participation and retention across School Completion Programme cluster schools.

The number of School Completion Programmes broken down by county is set out in the following table.

County	No of SCPs
Carlow	2
Cavan	1
Clare	2
Cork	11
Donegal	5
Dublin	47
Galway	5
Kerry	2
Kildare	4
Kilkenny	1
Laois	1
Limerick	7
Longford	1
Louth	5
Mayo	2
Meath	2
Monaghan	3
Offaly	2
Roscommon	1
Sligo	1
Tipperary	5

County	No of SCPs
Waterford	3
Westmeath	2
Wexford	5
Wicklow	4

### School Completion Programme

1677. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff employed in the school completion programme on a full-time, part-time and sessional basis to date in 2019; the number employed in 2009, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35428/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The School Completion Programme is a core programme under the DEIS programme and is one of three service strands under Tusla's Educational Welfare Services (EWS) providing direct interventions to children and young people. Each year since the programme transferred to Tusla in 2014, €24.7m in funding has been allocated to the School Completion Programme projects nationally. There are 124 SCPs currently operating nationally.

The following table sets out the number of staff employed in SCPs. Figures are based on the most recent plans submitted by the 124 SCP's.

Number of SCP Staff

Full-time	Part-time	Sessional
219	195	1191

### Family Resource Centres

1678. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of ensuring each family resource centre has three full-time equivalent staff members. [35429/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is responsible for the administration of the Family Resource Centre Programme.

I have allocated an additional €4.5m in funding for the Family Resource Centre Programme between 2018 and 2019. This allowed for increases in core funding for each centre, as well as the establishment of 11 new FRCs last year, bringing the total number of FRCs funded under the Programme to 121.

Each individual FRC has a Voluntary Board of Management, which is responsible for the recruitment of its employees and the terms and conditions under which they are employed.

As the Deputy's question refers to an operational matter for Tusla, I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy.

### Family Resource Centres

1679. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of family resource centres in operation in 2008; and the amount of funding provided to each family resource centre in 2008, in tabular form. [35430/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In 2008, funding to the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme was provided by the Family Support Agency (FSA), which was under the aegis of the former Department of Social and Family Affairs. Responsibility for the FSA transferred to the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2010 and then to my Department when it was established in 2011. The FSA was dissolved in 2014, and its constituent programmes, including the FRC Programme, were transferred to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in 2014, under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The Deputy's question refers to the operation of the FRC Programme in 2008, and the distribution of funding to individual centres. I have asked Tusla to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Family Resource Centres**

1680. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of family resource centres in operation to date in 2019; and the amount of funding provided to each family resource centre in 2019, in tabular form. [35431/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre (FRC) Programme.

In Budget 2019, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs secured an increase of €1.5 million in funding for the FRC Programme. This brings the overall financial allocation for the Programme to €18 million.

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.

I can confirm that there are 121 Family Resource Centres in operation to date in 2019.

The allocation of funding to individual Family Resource Centres is an operational matter for Tusla. I have requested Tusla to provide the Deputy with the requested information directly.

### **Family Support Services**

1681. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of hiring an additional family support worker. [35432/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter

## Child and Family Agency Funding

1682. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the full amount of funding provided to Tusla in 2019. [35433/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency receives annual funding from the Exchequer under my Department's Vote (Vote 40). The net core budgetary allocation to Tusla in 2019 is €767.348m. This includes a budget allocation of €17.194m for capital spending.

An additional €3.0m was separately allocated to Tusla this year to Family Resource Centres (1.5m) and to Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services (€1.5m).

Tusla also receives budgetary allocations from other areas of my Department's Vote, including Early Years Pre-School Inspectorate, Children and Young People's Services Committees, What Works (formerly Quality and Capacity Building Initiative), The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, and Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme. The funding allocated to these areas in 2019 is as follows:

Early Years Pre-School Inspectorate:	€4.356m
Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC)	€1.686m
What Works (Formerly QCBI)	€0.615m
Area-Based Childhood (ABC) Programme	€8.2m
Prevention, Partnership & Family Support (PPFS) Programme	€1.3m

Currently, the total funding being provided to Tusla from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2019 for all areas of expenditure is €786.505m.

## Departmental Staff Remuneration

1683. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full-year cost of providing the 2019 living wage to each member of staff within her Department and within agencies under the aegis of her Department. [35434/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy may be aware, any adjustments to the salaries of public and civil servants are set out in the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020.

A suggested living wage of €12.30 per hour would equate to an annual salary of €23,747, based on a standard civil service net working week of 37 hours. Details of the application of adjustments to civil service pay in accordance with the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 are available on [www.circulars.gov.ie](http://www.circulars.gov.ie).

As the information requested is not readily available in respect of the agencies under my Department's remit, I have asked the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Children Detention School Campus and Tusla to furnish this information directly to the Deputy.

## Childcare Services Staff

1684. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to phase in the Mercer scale in the early childhood education and care sector to bring all employees up to the living wage level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35513/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The early learning and care sector has been identified as a sector in which low pay and poor working conditions for staff are common, which impacts on the quality of provision through its effect on the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. The lack of consistency of care together with high staff turnover impact directly on quality, while low wages are a constraint on plans to upskill the workforce. My support for improved pay and conditions for early learning and care professionals has been explicit, as their role is critical to supporting children's development.

Over the past 4 budgets the level of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare services has increased 117%, and the level of investment needs to continue rising if we are to secure services that are of high quality, affordable and accessible. However, increased investment by itself will not ensure that staff wages and conditions will improve.

As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have 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 under way.

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 for service providers to offer staff 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, which contains a commitment to develop a Workforce Development Plan which will ensure appropriate levels of early learning and care and school-age childcare staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will establish role profiles, career pathways, qualifications requirements, and associated policy mechanisms. It will set out plans to raise the profile of careers in the sector, establishing a career framework and leadership development opportunities, and it will work towards a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Funding**

1685. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to reform the funding model for early childhood education and care in order to reflect a more a service-led model; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35514/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028), was published in November 2018. First 5 identifies over 150 actions across the domains that impact on young children's lives including ambitious and far reaching actions related to the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector.

First 5 commits to at least doubling investment in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare by 2028 and a key vehicle to ensure that such significant additional investment delivers for children, families and the State will be a new Funding Model.

The intention with the new Funding Model is to design mechanisms to deliver additional funding to Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare providers to ensure greater levels of affordability, quality and inclusion in their services. It is planned that the new Funding Model will operate in addition to the major funding streams for the universal pre-school Early Childhood Care and Education programme and the National Childcare Scheme when it comes into operation later this year.

In order to lead the development of the Funding Model, I am appointing an Expert Group with expertise in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare systems, funding, and quality, as well as those with skills in economics and policy development. This Group will be asked to agree principles to underpin the new Model in consultation with stakeholders, identify and consider options on how additional funding for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare can be structured to deliver on policy objectives, and design a new Model to recommend to Government.

A Research Partnership will support the Expert Group with evidence and analysis as well as engagement and consultation work. The Request for Tender for this project has recently been published. The Expert Group will hold its first meeting next month, beginning a complex project that is likely to take some time to bring to fruition. Further updates will be available as the work progresses in the coming months.

The new Funding Model will be a key vehicle to achieve the vision of Early Learning and Care services that are equipped to provide high-quality, graduate-led services for children, affordability to parents and sustainability for providers and that Early Learning and Care services that operate in the context of disadvantage will receive extra support to provide additional services to families.

I am committed to improving the quality of Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services which is at the core of the development of a new Funding Model.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Staff**

1686. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to address the high staff turnover in the early childhood education and care sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35515/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am acutely aware of the difficulties that many early learning and care services report in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, and the high rate of staff turnover in the sector. In Pobal's latest Early Years Sector Profile Report 2017/2018, the staff turnover rate stood at 24.7% which, despite a 3% improvement on the previous year, remains unsustainably high.

I believe that the key challenge to retaining staff is undoubtedly improving wages and working conditions. Over the last 4 budgets, the level of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare has increased 117%, and we need to keep increasing the level of public investment if we are to secure services that are of high quality, affordable and accessible. However, increased investment by itself will not ensure that staff wages and conditions will improve.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have 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 co-operate with such a process when it is under way.

In *First 5*, the Whole of Government Strategy I launched with the Taoiseach in November, I made a commitment to develop a new funding model that will leverage additional investment for certain criteria, for example, better pay, or full implementation of the curriculum. I have set out my vision for the sector, and a roadmap to achieve it, in *First 5*.

*First 5* also committed to a Workforce Development Plan, to raise the profile of careers in the sector and to ensure sufficient numbers of staff at all levels. Work on developing the plan began in recent months, following the publication of terms of reference for a Steering Group. The Workforce Development Plan will set out plans to achieve a graduate-led workforce by 2028, to establish a career framework and leadership development opportunities, as well as to work towards a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Expenditure**

1687. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to address the gap between spending on the early childhood education and care sector here compared to European counterparts in view of the fact that Ireland spends just 0.3% of GDP and the EU average is 0.7%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35516/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028)*, was published in November 2018. *First 5* identifies over 150 actions across the domains that impact on young children's lives including ambitious and far reaching actions related to the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector.

*First 5* sets out Government's intention to increase public investment in high-quality Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare for all babies and young children to raise quality and address the affordability of provision for families, particularly families on low income. A specific target is identified of at least doubling the level of public investment in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare by 2028.

My Department has secured substantial increases in funding of the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare in recent years. Over the past four budgets, investment has increased by 117%, from €260 million in 2015 to €574 million in 2019. This has enabled, for example, doubling of the ECCE programme to two years, doubling of the number of places available, doubling of the number of children availing of subsidies, greater access to early learning and care services for children with disabilities, and more investment in the workforce itself.

The *First 5* commitment to doubling investment again from current levels will require successful estimates campaigns based on high-quality data and evidence on the need for additional investment. Every 0.1% increase in the proportion of GDP expenditure would cost approximately €300 million.

A key vehicle to ensure that such significant additional investment delivers for children, families and the State will be a new Funding Model to design mechanisms to deliver additional funding to Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare providers to ensure greater levels of affordability, quality and inclusion in their services. I am establishing an Expert Group to make proposals on this model and the Group will begin work next month.

The National Childcare Scheme being introduced shortly will, for the first time, provide Government with a robust infrastructure to route investment to parents, both on a universal and targeted basis. This radical and innovative new scheme will support the provision of quality services to children and enable greater subsidisation of parental costs as more investment becomes available year on year.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1688. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35570/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The following table sets out the various providers that have been utilised by my Department to deliver advice and training in the context of GDPR preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff, along with associated costs.

In 2018 my Department undertook a competitive procurement process to engage a supplier to provide a range of GDPR training for Department staff across all grades. Following the procurement process Public Affairs Ireland were engaged.

All staff were invited to participate in GDPR awareness sessions in 2018. This training was then followed with a more in-depth GDPR training course for the Department's Data Protection Liaison Officers, and for those staff who required a more in-depth knowledge of GDPR. A briefing session for the Management Board was also provided.

Year	Training	Name of External Provider	Costs Incurred
2017	Certificate in Data Protection Level 1 GDPR Essentials Level 1	Public Affairs Ireland	€2,928.15
2017	Data Protection: An Introduction	Law Society Professional Training	€95.00
2017	Privacy Engine Online Programme (1 Year Licence)	Sytorus	€4,413.00
2018	In-house Training from Procurement Process:GDPR General Awareness Session-GDPR Essentials TrainingManagement Board Briefing SessionData Privacy Impact Assessment TrainingGDPR Training for Law Enforcers	Public Affairs Ireland	€24,835.00

Year	Training	Name of External Provider	Costs Incurred
2018	GDPR Advanced Level 2 Data Privacy Impact Assessments GDPR Essentials	Public Affairs Ireland	€2,550.00
2018	Certificate in Data Protection	Institute of Public Administration	€1,350.00
2018	GDPR Subject Access Requests, FOI and the Right of Access The Role of the DPO	CMG Training Limited	€1,580.00
2018	Advanced Diploma in Data Protection	The Honorable Society of King's Inns	€7,050.00
2018	Data Protection Impact Assessment on an aspect of Affordable Childhood Scheme	Castlebridge	€9,900.75
2018	Online GDPR for Managers Training Resource for 4,500 Early Learning and Care Service Providers in Ireland	Interactive Health and Safety Company	€7,303.99
2019	Data Breach Response Workshop GDPR Subject Access Requests, FOI and the Right of Access Data Retention Policy Compliance	CMG Training Limited	€1,185.00
2019	GDPR Training for Data Protection Officers	Irish Academy of Computer Training	€888.00
2019	Ongoing Data Protection Advice and Iterative Data Impact Assessment of Affordable Childcare Scheme	Trilateral Research	€16,974.00 to date
			Total Spend to Date €81,052.89

### Deaths in Care

1689. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children who died while in the care of the HSE in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019, as per the reports of the national review panel; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35618/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Deputy's 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 reply be provided to the Deputy.

## Early Childhood Care and Education Staff

1690. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to ensure that workers in early years facilities earn at least the living wage of €12.30 per hour; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35629/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The early learning and care sector has been identified as a sector in which low pay and poor working conditions for staff are common, which impacts on the quality of provision through its effect on the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. The lack of consistency of care together with high staff turnover impact directly on quality, while low wages are a constraint on plans to upskill the workforce. My support for improved pay and conditions for early learning and care professionals has been explicit, as their role is critical to supporting children's development.

Over the past 4 budgets the level of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare services has increased 117%, and the level of investment needs to continue rising if we are to secure services that are of high quality, affordable and accessible. However, increased investment by itself will not ensure that staff wages and conditions will improve.

As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I cannot set wage levels or determine working conditions for these staff.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have 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 co-operate with such a process when it is under way.

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 for service providers to offer staff 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*, which contains a commitment to develop a Workforce Development Plan which will ensure appropriate levels of early learning and care and school-age childcare staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will establish role profiles, career pathways, qualifications requirements, and associated policy mechanisms. It will set out plans to raise the profile of careers in the sector, establishing a career framework and leadership development opportunities, and it will work towards a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce.

## Departmental Customer Charters

1691. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of complaints her Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if her attention has been drawn to issues and-or problems in having complaints registered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35638/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department's procedures for dealing with customer complaints are detailed in its Customer Service

Action Plan and Charter, which is available on the Department's website. If a complaint is made by a customer it is dealt with by the Unit of my Department responsible for the issue to which the complaint relates.

If the complaint is not resolved by the Unit to the satisfaction of the customer, they may contact the Department's Customer Services Officer who will liaise with the customer and the Unit involved to resolve the matter if possible.

Under the Action Plan and Charter referred to above, a complaint is formally logged by the Department when a customer contacts the Customer Services Officer in relation to an unresolved complaint, and requests that Officer to intervene to resolve the matter if possible.

In the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, no such requests were received by the Customer Services Officer of my Department.

### **Child and Family Agency Data**

1692. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of complaints by category and county received by Tusla in each of the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35674/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 requires Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to establish procedures for dealing with complaints against the Agency or a service provider. It also requires Tusla to publish certain information in relation to complaints.

Any individual who wishes to make a complaint about Tusla services can do so through the "Tell Us: You Say, We Listen" complaints process. Contact details and further information are available on the Tusla website ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)).

Actions relating to complaints are an operational matter for Tusla. I do not have the specific information being sought by the Deputy. I have asked Tusla to respond to the Deputy directly with regard to his request.

### **School Completion Programme**

1693. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost in 2020 if the budget for school completion programme increased by 12%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36112/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The full-year cost of increasing the School completion programme by 12% would be in the region of €2.9m.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education Expenditure**

1694. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the number of programme weeks in the early childhood care and education programmes by two weeks; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36130/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The following table outlines the projected full year cost in 2019 of increasing the Early Childhood Care and

Education programme by 2 weeks over and above current levels.

Increase	Standard Capitation Rate	Higher Capitation Rate	Full Year Cost	Increase
0 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€298.1m	n/a
2 weeks	€69.00	€80.25	€313.8m	€15.7m

### Departmental Internships

1695. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in her Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons who took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if her Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36142/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department facilitated a small number of short term unpaid internships to individuals who wrote to the Department requesting workplace experience in their chosen fields of study, where such study was relevant to this Department and where they could be accommodated.

In 2017, my Department participated in the Centre for Excellence and API Study Abroad graduate programmes providing one part time short term unpaid placement in each case.

In the five years from 28th August 2014 to 28th August 2019 the following internships/placements have been provided in my Department

2014 0 placements

2015 1 placement

2016 1 placement

2017 4 placements

2018 0 placements

2019 0 placements

Currently, my Department is not in a position to facilitate unpaid internships or placements due to lack of availability of accommodation.

### Cyber Security Protocols

1696. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if her Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36222/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department currently has one (1) professionally trained in cybersecurity, member of staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under my Department's remit. In addition we have a further three (3) members undertaking training in security fundamentals with a goal to further specialisation in

cybersecurity training on behalf of the Department. There are currently no specialists being recruited for this purpose. My Department maintains a risk-register of security breaches and there are staff who analyse, log and maintain such a register. I am advised that there have been no cyber security breaches within the Department in the past 12 months. In addition my Department continues to engage with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) based in the Department of Communications, Climate Action Environment and receives regular updates from the State's national/governmental Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE).

### Departmental Operations

1697. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36238/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Department of Health currently provides ICT services to my Department under the terms of a Service Level Agreement and facilitates the provision of key IT services including a disaster recovery plan that covers DCYA services. As my Department transitions to the new Build to Share desktop service, provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, a new disaster recovery plan will be developed in line with new infrastructure and service arrangements.

As a result of my Department's relocation to Miesian Plaza a formally documented and approved business continuity plan is not currently in place within the Department, however one is in the process of being developed.

The relocation to Miesian Plaza has meant that currently no disaster recovery site is provisioned. A new site will be secured arising from the completed work on the IT services transition and the forthcoming Business Continuity Plan.

### Childcare Services

1698. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to support a not-for-profit childcare model which would allow for affordability, reliability and flexibility for parents, particularly in the area of after-school childcare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36262/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028)*, was published in November. *First 5* identifies over 150 actions across the domains that impact on young children's lives including ambitious and far reaching actions related to the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector.

*First 5* commits to at least doubling investment in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare by 2028 and a key vehicle to ensure that such significant additional investment delivers for children, families and the State will be a new Funding Model.

The intention with the new Funding Model is to design mechanisms to deliver additional funding to Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare providers to ensure greater levels of affordability, quality and inclusion in their services. It is planned that the new Funding Model will operate in addition to the major funding streams for the universal pre-school Early Childhood Care and Education programme and the National Childcare Scheme when it comes

into operation later this year.

In order to lead the development of the Funding Model, I am appointing an Expert Group with expertise in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare systems, funding, and quality, as well as those with skills in economics and policy development. This Group will be asked to agree principles to underpin the new Model in consultation with stakeholders, identify and consider options on how additional funding for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare can be structured to deliver on policy objectives, and design a new Model to recommend to Government.

One of the issues that the Expert Group will be requested to explore in their work will be the potential for linking of additional funding to Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services to operation of services on a not-for-profit/surplus basis, or reasonable profit/surplus basis. This will require detailed economic and legal analysis.

An important strand of work in the development of the new Funding Model will be the inclusion element, whereby consideration will be given to how best to fund Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services operating in the context of concentrated disadvantage which can face challenges in providing supports and services to children and their families commensurate with their needs. There is potential to build on the long-established precedent of the Delivering Equality of opportunity in Schools (DEIS) model that exists in the primary and secondary school sector.

A Research Partnership will support the Expert Group with evidence and analysis as well as engagement and consultation work. The Request for Tender for this project has recently been published. The Expert Group will hold its first meeting next month beginning a complex project that is likely to take some time to bring to fruition. Further updates will be available as the work progresses in the coming months.

The new Funding Model will be a key vehicle to achieve the vision of Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare services that are equipped to provide high-quality services for children, affordability to parents and sustainability for providers.

### **Early Years Sector**

1699. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the process by which early years inspectors make registration inspections with reference to the average waiting times between initial inspection and report finalisation. [36370/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The reference to a “registration inspection” is understood to mean the inspection that is carried out by the statutory regulator of early years services, Tusla, prior to registering a new service in relation to which an application for registration has been made. This initial inspection of a potential early years service is termed a “Fit for Purpose” inspection. This inspection is undertaken when all application documents have been submitted by the applicant and the registration form has been completed. An inspection is then scheduled within a month of completion of the registration form. At certain times of the year, summer applications are prioritised in order to facilitate registration of new services in September. Tusla advises potential service providers applying to register a new early years service to allow three months for registration to be completed.

### **Early Years Sector**

1700. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if, in the event of a service being removed or deregistered from the early years register, this deregistration applies to the person appointed as the service provider or the service itself. [36371/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In the event of a service being removed from the register, under its powers as set out in Section 58D of the Child Care Act 1991 (as amended) the statutory regulator (Tusla) de-registers the registered provider and their registered company, if applicable, in relation to that service. In effect, therefore, Tusla may remove a single service from the register. However, depending on the nature of the reason for deregistration, Tusla may take this factor into account when considering whether further enforcement actions - up to and including the possibility of prosecution - might be necessary in relation to any other services who have the same registered provider. In cases where a registered provider is convicted of an offence under that Part of the Child Care Act 1991, or of an offence that in Tusla's opinions renders such person unfit to carry on an early years service, Tusla shall remove the registered provider from the register, thus impacting on all services for which that person is a registered provider. In such a case, Tusla shall also refuse to register any new services for that person.

### Early Years Sector

1701. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if, in the event of a service being removed from the early years register, there are consequences for other services operated by the same service provider. [36372/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In the event of a service being removed from the register, under its powers as set out in Section 58D of the Child Care Act 1991 (as amended) the statutory regulator (Tusla) de-registers the registered provider and their registered company, if applicable, in relation to that service. In effect, therefore, Tusla may remove a single service from the register. However, depending on the nature of the reason for deregistration, Tusla may take this factor into account when considering whether further enforcement actions - up to and including the possibility of prosecution - might be necessary in relation to any other services who have the same registered provider. In cases where a registered provider is convicted of an offence under that Part of the Child Care Act 1991, or of an offence that in Tusla's opinions renders such person unfit to carry on an early years service, Tusla shall remove the registered provider from the register, thus impacting on all services for which that person is a registered provider. In such a case, Tusla shall also refuse to register any new services for that person.

### Early Years Sector

1702. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of services that are deemed non-compliant by service type, that is, sessional full day and county, in tabular form. [36373/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The independent statutory regulator of early years services, Tusla, does not reference an overall status of "non-compliant" in relation to an early years service. Rather, compliance is assessed in relation to each of the individual regulations within the Early Years Services Regulations, as a service may be found non-compliant in relation to one or more regulations but compliant in relation to others. Following a finding of non-compliance in relation to one or more regulations, an early

years service is then given the opportunity to rectify the position and become compliant in relation to those regulations. As a result of the regulatory work undertaken by Tusla, levels of non-compliance across the sector are reducing.

On a periodic basis, Tusla collates data from inspections and publishes summary analyses of inspection findings. The latest such analysis is available in the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Annual Report for 2017, which is published on the Tusla website. The annual report provides information relating to the levels of compliance in the sector in that year. In 2017, the year covered by that report, 12,857 regulations were assessed across 1,563 inspections, and of these regulations 3,217 (25%) were non-compliant. Not all regulations are assessed at each inspection. About one-third (32%) of inspection reports analysed in that year did not record any non-compliant regulations, and a further one-third (32%) recorded either one or two non-compliant regulations.

The 2018 annual report of the Early Years Inspectorate is due for publication in October 2019.

### **Early Years Sector**

1703. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department or an agency operating under its aegis assigns a risk rating to early years services that have been inspected. [36374/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials in my Department have requested the required information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

### **Early Years Sector**

1704. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if it is mandatory or policy for early years inspectors who find non-Garda-vetted members of staff on site during an early years service inspection to report this breach of the law to An Garda Síochána. [36375/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Where an Early Years Inspector from Tusla, the statutory regulator, finds that a member of staff working in an early years premises has not met the Garda Vetting disclosure requirements, that member of staff is required to leave the premises and is not permitted to return to work until such time as vetting has been secured and assessed by the service provider. The inspectorate uses the extent of their powers as set out under the Child Care Act 1991, Early Years Services Regulations 2016, to address the matter. Where there is persistent and significant non-adherence in relation to this Regulation, the matter will in such instances be referred to the National Garda Vetting Bureau compliance team.

### **Early Years Sector**

1705. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there is a memorandum of understanding between Tusla and An Garda Síochána to allow early years inspectors who find non-Garda vetted members of staff on-site during an early years service

inspection to report this breach of the law to An Garda Síochána. [36376/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Where an Early Years Inspector from Tusla, the statutory regulator, finds that a member of staff working in an early years premises has not met the Garda Vetting disclosure requirements, that member of staff is required to leave the premises and is not permitted to return to work until such time as vetting has been secured and assessed by the service provider. The inspectorate uses the extent of their powers as set out under the Child Care Act 1991, Early Years Services Regulations 2016, to address the matter. Where there is persistent and significant non-adherence in relation to this Regulation, the matter will in such instances be referred to the National Garda Vetting Bureau compliance team.

A regular liaison function exists between the National Garda Vetting Bureau and the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate. To provide clarity in relation to the processes already in place and to ensure good governance, a Memorandum of Understanding is currently in development between Tusla and An Garda Síochána. Referrals between the Tusla and the Garda Vetting Bureau form part of this Memorandum of Understanding.

### Early Years Sector

1706. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the process by which an early years inspector can report a fire safety concern to the relevant authorities; and the follow-up that is then expected from the fire service. [36377/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Where an Early Years Inspector that is part of the statutory regulator, Tusla, has a fire safety concern in relation to an early years service, a referral may be made to the relevant local area fire authority by letter. This is usually followed by a written response or communication from the fire authority to the provider. Where minor matters of fire safety are identified, an Early Years Inspector may address the matter under the Early Years Regulations. Where the matter is more serious, a referral to the fire authorities will be made.

### Early Years Sector

1707. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of fitness to practise letters issued to early years employees with qualifications from other countries by county and year of issuance since 2016, in tabular form. [36378/19]

**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. The Workforce Development Plan aims to lay out a clear pathway for achieving the commitments set out in *First 5* for the development of the early learning and care and school-age childcare workforce. It will identify actions to raise the profile of careers in the sector, as well as to recruit and retain skilled professionals.

The Early Years Sector Profile report 2017/2018 is a comprehensive source of information on the sector in Ireland. The data and findings from the report play an important part in tracking progress and changes within the sector as well as identifying emerging needs. Particularly notable from this report is the increase in the number of children using centre-based services and the numbers of staff employed in these services. I am delighted to see that these early years

professionals are becoming increasingly more qualified, as the survey reflects. The data for the 2018/2019 Early Years Sector Profile Report is being compiled at present and will be available before the end of 2019.

My Department has published a list of early years qualifications, from both Ireland and abroad, that are recognised for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the contractual requirements for the ECCE programme funded by my Department.

If someone who wishes to work in an early learning and care service in Ireland has a qualification that is not on the published list, that person can apply to my Department seeking a letter of eligibility to practice. An assessment is then made as to whether that person's qualification meets the standard of recognised qualifications. Early learning and care professionals cannot be employed by a service provider until their qualifications are approved, if their qualification award is not on the published list.

My Department receives a diverse range of qualification applications for awards obtained abroad for recognition. My Department also receives applications from professionals whose qualification award is already on the published list, and a letter of eligibility is not necessary for these applicants.

In the following table I have outlined the total number of letters of eligibility to practice issued to applicants with qualifications from other countries in tabular form from 2016 to date. As many applicants are living abroad when they apply for qualifications recognition, I am unable to give information on the applications from foreign applicants by county in Ireland.

Year Eligibility Letter Issued	Number of Eligibility Letters Issued to Applicants with Qualifications from Other Countries
2016	555
2017	539
2018	540
2019 to date	179

Please note: the above table does not include early learning and care professionals whose award is already on the published list of recognised qualifications.

### Early Years Sector

1708. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average frequency of inspections of early years services by county, in tabular form. [36379/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** It is not possible to give a simple measure of the frequency of inspections of early years services carried out by the statutory regulator, Tusla, as there are a number of different categories of inspection, including “fit-for-purpose” inspections carried out when a new service is being registered, unannounced inspections, and unannounced follow-on inspections.

Furthermore, the frequency of inspections is dependent on several factors including the level of compliance found on the last inspection, unsolicited information received, whether or not conditions have been attached to services' registration, the length of time since the last

inspection and/or where there is a change in circumstances or a notification of instances which requires review.

“Fit-for-purpose” inspections are carried out in relation to all new early learning and care services, with the timing dependent on the timing of the application to register.

Every single registered early learning and care provider, of which there are 4,435, has been inspected by Tusla’s Early Years’ Inspectorate. A total of 2,513 inspections were conducted in 2018, an increase of 90% since 2014 (1,326).

### **Child Abuse**

1709. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of high priority cases of retrospective child abuse referred by Tusla to An Garda Síochána between 2016 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36632/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The 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 reply be provided to the Deputy.

### **Child and Family Agency Investigations**

1710. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an audit will be carried out by Tusla of the historic case files relating to child abuse held in the headquarters of an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36633/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My colleagues in Tusla, Child and Family Agency, inform me that there is no audit being undertaken by them of the historic case files relating to child abuse held in the headquarters of Scouting Ireland.

Tusla is following up on any cases of alleged historic child abuse which have been referred to them by Scouting Ireland and which require assessment. Tusla also has its own helpline where individuals can contact them with regard to alleged historic child abuse.

Tusla and An Garda Síochána have been working closely with Scouting Ireland to identify all historical abuse cases which require child protection assessment because of potential current risk to children and/or criminal investigation where crimes had not previously been reported.

There has been coordination between Tusla and the Garda Síochána throughout. Tusla is confident that this piece of joint work with the Garda Síochána has identified all of the victims of childhood abuse who have reported their abuse to Scouting Ireland and all of the named alleged abusers.

Tusla has also been assisting Scouting Ireland in reviewing its current child safeguarding practice and is confident that Scouting Ireland is making every effort towards ensuring the safety of children when they are in Scouting Ireland’s care.

Tusla and Scouting Ireland have agreed to continue to liaise closely and to work together to maintain the highest child safeguarding standards within Scouting Ireland.

Tusla has no authority to audit Scouting Ireland files.

### **Early Years Sector**

1711. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of early years providers being investigated by the national panel of Tusla by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36634/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials in my Department have requested the required information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

### **Early Years Sector**

1712. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of inspections initiated by the early years national panel of Tusla across all service types that is sessional, full-day and half-day by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36635/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials in my Department have requested the required information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

### **Early Years Sector**

1713. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of inspections initiated by the early years registration panel of Tusla across all service types, that is, sessional, full-day and half-day by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36636/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials in my Department have requested the required information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

### **Early Years Sector**

1714. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the criteria Tusla follows when it defines an early years provider as critical on its risk register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36637/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Officials in my Department have requested the required information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. This information will be supplied to the Deputy in no later than 10 working days. I have asked my officials to follow up on this to ensure delivery as a matter of urgency.

## Adoption Data

1715. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of adoption records identified by her Department that may be false and/or misleading, including illegal registration of births; her plans to hold a full-scale audit of adoption records with a view to determining the number of adoption records that may be false and or misleading and including illegal registration of births; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36639/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** In February 2018 Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, informed my Department that they had discovered evidence of illegal birth registrations in files from St. Patrick's Guild Adoption Society. 148 illegal birth registrations have been confirmed, to date, although this figure may increase. The work of notifying those affected by the discovery of illegal registration in the St Patrick's Guild file is ongoing. To date, these cases are the only cases identified where a high level of certainty has been reached, that an illegal birth registration has taken place.

The Deputy will be aware that following the discovery of these illegal birth registrations, I commissioned Marion Reynolds to act as the independent chair of a sampling review into illegal birth registrations. I have received this report from the independent reviewer, and am currently awaiting legal advice on this report from the Attorney General. Decisions about examination of further records will follow the publication of this report.

## Affordable Childcare Scheme

1716. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided under the affordable childcare scheme. [36663/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The National Childcare Scheme is a new, national scheme of financial support to help parents with 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.

The Scheme provides a universal subsidy to all families with children under 3 years, as well as families with children over 3 years who have not yet qualified for the free pre-school programme. The universal subsidy is not means-tested and provides 50c per hour towards the cost of a registered childcare place for up to 40 hours per week.

Income-related subsidies differentiated by age of up to €5.10 per hour for babies will be available for up to 40 hours per week, for families using registered childcare. This means that maximum subsidy for a child under 1 will be €204 per week (€10,600 per annum)- a significant increase on the current maximum targeted rate of €145 per week.

The full cost of the scheme is very much dependant on parental actions as they transition from legacy schemes, and choices with regard to forms of childcare informed by the new scheme. Estimates with regard to the scheme uptake are informed by a number of factors including:

- establishing the number of families with children eligible for the scheme by income bracket (2016 data supplied by CSO),
- profiling these families by reference to the age of their children,
- estimating the proportion of children in each income bracket and age range using regis-

tered early learning and care,

- 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.

It has previously been estimated that the first year of operation of the scheme would require €200m, much of which is available through the targeted schemes. The cost for 2020 is currently being examined in the context of the Estimates process.

The National Childcare Scheme has been designed to be flexible, with income thresholds, maximum hours and subsidy rates which can be adjusted in line with Government decisions and as more investment becomes available. As such, it establishes a sustainable platform for investment in early learning and care and school age childcare for years to come.

### **Social Workers Recruitment**

1717. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full-year cost of each ten additional social workers and ten additional social care workers recruited. [36664/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

*Question No. 1718 answered with Question No. 1657.*

### **Adoption Authority of Ireland Data**

1719. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the discussions her Department has had with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the access of Tusla to the client identity services of the Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36768/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I became aware earlier this year that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection had notified both Tusla and the AAI that the Client Identity Service (CIS) could no longer assist in processing data for those agencies, in the context of information and tracing, on the basis that there was no statutory basis to do so. I engaged with my colleague, Minister Doherty, in an effort to address these difficulties, 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 in question 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. I recognise that compliance with GDPR obligations is the reason that the current service has had to be discontinued, hopefully on a temporary basis, and I look forward to the service resuming when the necessary statutory safeguards are in place.

### **Childcare Services Staff**

1720. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of childcare workers that earn less than the living wage of €12.30 per hour; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36872/19]

1721. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of childcare workers that receive unemployment benefit or allowance during the summer months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36873/19]

1722. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of childcare workers in receipt of the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36874/19]

1723. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average rate of pay for a graduate childcare worker; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36875/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1720 to 1723, inclusive, together.

The most recent data available on rates of pay for staff working in early learning and care services dates from mid-2018 and is drawn from Pobal's Early Years Sector Profile for 2017/18. According to this report, at that time the average rate of pay for staff working directly with children was €12.17 per hour. Those with relevant third-level degrees had wages higher than the average. The average rates of pay for graduates at that time were €13.56 for those with qualifications at Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications, €13.09 for those with Level 8 qualifications, and €14.59 for those with qualifications at Levels 9 or 10.

At the time that survey was carried out, the so-called "living wage" (as determined by the Living Wage Technical Group, led by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice) was €11.90 per hour. At that time, data from Pobal indicated that 55% of staff earned less than the "living wage". It would not be appropriate to compare wages in mid-2018 with the "living wage" determined for 2019 by the Living Wage Technical Group, as wages may have risen since mid-2018. Data from the 2019 survey of early learning and care providers is currently being analysed by Pobal and will be available in the coming months. At that point it will be possible to estimate the proportion of staff who today earn less than the 2019 "living wage" of €12.30 per hour.

I have no data available to me on the number of workers in early learning and care services that receive unemployment benefit or allowance during the summer months or the number of such workers in receipt of the working family payment.

As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I cannot therefore determine wages or working conditions in the sector. I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions. I have 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 co-operate with such a process when it is under way.

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 for service providers to offer staff full-time employment contracts; and a pilot measure to fund participation in CPD. In addition, work has commenced on the development of a Workforce Development Plan, which will identify practical steps to achieve First 5 commitments relating

to the workforce, including moving to a graduate-led workforce by 2028.

### **Childcare Services Staff**

1724. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of taking on the cost of all private childcare classroom staff at all levels nationwide; the number of childcare staff employed by private, not community run crèches at level 5, 6 and 7 based on current numbers. [36938/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The most recent data available on numbers of staff working in early learning and care services dates from mid-2018 and is set out in Pobal's Early Years Sector Profile Report of 2017/18. At that time Pobal estimated there to be 25,893 staff working directly with children, of whom 65% or approximately 16,800 were working in private services. Of this number, Pobal reported that 27% or approximately 4,600 had relevant qualifications at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications, 44% or approximately 7,500 had qualifications at Level 6, and 7.5% or approximately 1,300 had qualifications at Level 7. In addition, 17% or approximately 2,900 had qualifications at Level 8 or higher, while 3.6% or approximately 600 had either no qualifications or qualifications at less than Level 5. This latter group included staff who had signed the 'grandfather declaration' allowing them to remain working in the sector without qualifications until September 2021, as well as staff who work solely with school-age children, in relation to whom there is currently no minimum qualification requirement.

As the State is not the employer, my Department does not pay the wages of staff working in early learning and care settings, and I am therefore not in a position to estimate what the cost to the State would be if it were to take on the direct employment of all staff currently working in private early learning and care services.

I am, however, doing all that is in my power to improve wages and working conditions in the sector. I have 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 under way.

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 for service providers to offer staff full-time employment contracts; and a pilot measure to fund participation in CPD. In addition, work has commenced on the development of a Workforce Development Plan, which will identify practical steps to achieve First 5 commitments relating to the workforce, including moving to a graduate-led workforce by 2028.

### **Social Workers Recruitment**

1725. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of an additional ten social workers for one full year of employment on a full-time basis. [36939/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Child and Family Agency Staff**

1726. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average salary of a full-time Tusla social worker; and the number of full-time social workers employed nationwide. [36940/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Child and Family Agency Expenditure**

1727. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost to increase all full-time social workers pay by 25%. [36941/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Child and Family Agency Staff**

1728. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of administrative staff employed to assist Tusla social worker workloads. [36942/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Child and Family Agency Expenditure**

1729. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost of hiring an additional ten administrative staff to assist Tusla social worker workloads. [36943/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Social Workers Recruitment**

1730. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on the most recent Tusla social worker recruitment drive; the length of time the recruitment drive ran for; and the number of social workers employed as a result. [36944/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my Officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Child and Family Agency Data**

1731. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on car travel mileage by Tusla crèche inspectors in each of the years 2016 to 2018. [36945/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I wish to advise that my officials have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Local Improvement Scheme**

1732. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his attention has been drawn to the need for additional funding to be made available for the local improvement scheme (details supplied); the steps he is taking to address funding deficits in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36558/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Local Improvement Scheme, or LIS, is a programme for improvement works on small private or non-public roads in rural areas. The scheme is funded by my Department and is administered through the Local Authorities.

As the Deputy is aware, there was no dedicated funding for this scheme for a number of years due to constraints on public expenditure. However, I was very conscious of the underlying demand for the scheme in rural areas throughout the country and I reintroduced the LIS in September 2017.

Since then, I have allocated €48 million for improvement works on more than 1,200 roads across the country, including €10 million earlier this year. Funding allocations, on a county by county basis, can be found on the Gov.ie website at the following link: [www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d309ea-local-improvement-scheme/](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d309ea-local-improvement-scheme/).

I will be closely monitoring expenditure on my Department's programmes over the coming months and any decisions regarding the possibility of further funding for the LIS will be made in that context. The question of funding for the LIS in 2020 will be considered as part of the annual Budgetary process.

### **Rural Regeneration and Development Fund**

1733. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if consideration will be given to an application for RRDF funding from a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36688/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Under Project Ireland 2040, the Government has committed €1 billion to the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund over a 10 year period to support rural economic development and help build strong communities. The Fund has been allocated €315m over the period 2019 to 2022.

The second call for Category 1 applications for the Fund closed at on the 6th August and there was an excellent response from all across the country and my Department received 69 applications for funding.

I can confirm that my Department received an application for the redevelopment of Schull Harbour from Cork County Council.

My Department are currently engaged in collating the applications before the assessment process begins. The outcome of the assessments will be examined by the Project Advisory Board, made up of representatives from key Government Departments and external experts, which was established to oversee the assessment process

My role is to consider and approve the recommendations that emerge from the assessment process outlined above. I expect that an announcement detailing the successful Category 1 projects from the second call to the Fund before the end of 2019.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

1734. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Minister of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34852/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established on 19 July 2017, since then I have appointed three advisers and Minister of State Séan Canney has appointed one adviser, details of which are summarised in the following table.

Name	Title	Salary	Minister	Department
Mr Padraig Hughes	Special Adviser	€94,535	Minister Michael Ring	Department of Rural & Community Development
Mr Daniel Rowan	Press Adviser	€89,356	Minister Michael Ring	Department of Rural & Community Development
Mr Paul McGrath	Adviser in a voluntary capacity	Nil	Minister Michael Ring	Department of Rural & Community Development
Mr Robert Hughes	Special Adviser	€85,823	Minister of State Séan Canney	Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment and the Department of Rural & Community Development

### Town and Village Renewal Scheme

1735. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when a decision will be made on applications under the town and village renewal scheme in 2019; when works approved will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34912/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last and Local Authorities were invited to submit up to 12 applications to my Department for consideration under the scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications was 28th June.

Over 300 applications for funding were received from the Local Authorities. My officials are currently assessing all of the applications received and decisions on the successful applications will be made when the assessment process is fully completed.

In general, projects that are allocated funding under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme take 12-18 months to complete from the date of commencement.

### **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Scheme**

1736. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if additional funding will be provided for the pilot programme to provide free carbon monoxide alarms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34998/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** On 13th of May last I announced an initiative to support the installation of carbon monoxide alarms in the homes of elderly, isolated and vulnerable people throughout rural Ireland. Alarms will be supplied through Muintir na Tíre groups who will install them in people's homes on a voluntary basis. I have allocated €115,000 to support this initiative through the Dormant Accounts Fund which is administered by my Department.

The pilot programme anticipated the installation of 2,000 Carbon Monoxide alarms. I understand that savings secured through the procurement process has enabled additional alarms to be provided within the existing budget and the scheme remains open for further applications. This funding will complement the already established Community Smoke Alarm Scheme funding so that a suite of safety measures will be available to those who otherwise might not be able to afford them.

Further details are available at <https://www.muintir.ie/community-development/carbon-monoxide-alarms/>

### **Rural Development Programme Funding**

1737. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of grant funding his Department and associated agencies have allocated to counties Longford and Westmeath since its establishment; the amount funded through the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when it handled certain areas now allocated to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35140/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established in July 2017 and details of the funding allocated to Longford and Westmeath since that date are provided in the following tables.

A number of the schemes referenced commenced while under the remit of the then Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Regional Affairs, and allocations made under these schemes prior to the transfer of functions are also outlined where appropriate.

In respect of agencies under the remit of my Department, none of these bodies has a role in the sanctioning of grant funding.

Overall, I can confirm that, since the start of 2017, Longford has been allocated funding in excess of €15.3 million, while Westmeath has been allocated €12.9 million.

These figures are correct to the end of June 2019 and include the following funding (including some provided prior to 2017 under functions which transferred from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Regional Affairs). The years in which each programme has operated are noted:

-	Longford	Westmeath
Town and Village Renewal Scheme (2016-)	€1,611,256	€1,428,000
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme/Rural Recreation Scheme (2016-)	€1,984,650	€2,077,224
CLÁR Programme (2016-)	€983,299	€690,493
Local Improvement Scheme (2017-)	€1,024,660	€1,379,981
REDZ (2016 only)	€350,000	€192,000
LEADER (2014-2020)**	€1,831,927**	€2,254,969**
Agricultural Shows (2017-2018)	€36,000	€48,000

*\*\*In respect of LEADER funding, the figures above refer to funding to approved projects under the current programme to date. Under LEADER 2014-2020 each Local Development Strategy (LDS) area has a set allocation for the duration of the programme. For the current programme, Longford has a core project allocation of €5,698,500 and Westmeath has €5,563,495.*

In addition, significant grant funding has also been allocated through the following programmes since 2017 under functions which did not transfer from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural and Regional Affairs:

	Longford	Westmeath
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (2018-)	€4,141,452.58	€600,000
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)	€1,523,469	€2,328,293
Community Enhancement Programme (including funding under predecessor RAPID and Communities Facilities Schemes)	€495,541	€569,087
Community Services Programme (figures from 1 Jan 2018, when CSP transferred to this Department)	€885,041	€2,111,418

### Departmental Expenditure

1738. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35347/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established in July 2017. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services for my Department are provided by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform through the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO).

My Department utilises the “Build To Share” functionality provided by the OGCIO, which includes Microsoft Office as the office suite and Microsoft Outlook for email. This package does not include Lotus Notes.

### LEADER Programmes Funding

1739. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount available to each local action group, LAG, for projects under the present LEADER programme; the amount of expenditure approved for projects to date by LAG; the amount expended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35556/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** LEADER is a multi-annual programme with a total budget of €250 million over the period 2014-2020. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. This allocation includes both core project funding and administration and animation costs for the LAGs.

The remaining €30 million in the programme is available for thematic schemes to be delivered at a national level and is allocated as projects are approved.

Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the amount allocated to projects by each LAG under the LEADER programme 2014-2020, the value of projects approved to date, and the amount paid to date in respect of projects. The figures do not include expenditure or approvals under national-level thematic schemes which operate on a competitive bid basis.

Total project expenditure on the current LEADER programme since it commenced, effectively in 2016, amounts to over €29.6 million. The level of project activity under the programme has increased significantly since the start of 2018 and 2,299 projects have now been approved for funding of over €83.8 million. A further 325 project applications, requesting in excess of €25.4 million, are at various stages in the approval process. Project expenditure will increase significantly as these projects are implemented and payments are drawn down.

**Table 1: Total LEADER Project Allocations, Approvals and Payments by LAG as of end August 2019**

Local Action Group	Core Project Allocation	Value of Approved Projects	Project Payments to date
Carlow	€4,797,602	€2,518,546	€1,253,617
Cavan	€6,391,715	€3,418,400	€1,332,188
Clare	€6,645,000	€3,978,414	€992,776
Cork North	€3,810,543	€2,479,756	€855,939
Cork South	42,803,477	€964,934	€419,996
Cork West	€3,691,755	€1,438,185	€256,272
Donegal	€9,631,407	€5,508,961	€3,152,332
Dublin Rural	€4,777,829	€1,626,701	€560,505
Galway East	€5,741,888	€2,009,225	€436,879

Local Action Group	Core Project Allocation	Value of Approved Projects	Project Payments to date
Galway West	€3,425,425	€1,451,097	€233,187
Kerry	€7,650,904	€5,623,537	€2,082,982
Kildare	€3,946,200	€1,359,091	€302,317
Kilkenny	€5,798,949	€1,872,109	€838,022
Laois	€5,325,000	€1,521,436	€852,697
Leitrim	€4,490,000	€2,425,969	€684,109
Limerick	€6,946,151	€4,611,974	€1,607,382
Longford	€5,698,500	€1,831,927	€619,692
Louth	€4,576,397	€2,214,470	€647,905
Mayo	€8,260,822	€5,316,127	€1,639,357
Meath	€5,137,345	€2,693,628	€368,767
Monaghan	€5,694,500	€2,648,410	€887,914
Offaly	€6,000,000	€3,233,259	€1,816,469
Roscommon	€6,581,283	€3,463,328	€878,401
Sligo	€5,720,737	€3,056,521	€1,245,061
Tipperary	€7,562,584	€4,890,713	€1,421,177
Waterford	€5,525,346	€3,409,009	€1,962,668
Westmeath	€5,563,495	€2,254,969	€409,191
Wexford	€7,580,104	€3,901,122	€1,341,517
Wicklow	€4,728,231	€2,151,610	€510,414
Total	€164,503,189	€83,873,428	€29,609,733

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1740. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35582/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Data protection awareness training specifically in relation to the provisions of the GDPR was made available to all staff in my Department in April and May 2018.

A total of 87 staff attended courses in preparation for the introduction of GDPR.

Additional training was provided to the Data Protection Officer in January 2019.

My Department reviews its training requirements on a regular basis and will provide further Data Protection training to staff as required.

Details of training providers and costs are set out in the following table.

Training Provider	Cost
Institute of Public Administration (IPA)	€4381.33
Irish Academy of Computer Training (IACT)	€ 888.00

## Departmental Customer Charters

1741. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35650/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established on 19 July 2017 with the mission of promoting rural and community development and supporting vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.

The Department is aware of the importance of providing quality customer service to stakeholders and members of the public and published its first Customer Action Plan and Charter, in line with the public service's Customer Charter Initiative, earlier this year.

The Customer Action Plan includes details of our complaints procedure; setting out how customer complaints can be made and how they are dealt with. The Department has received one formal complaint to date, in 2018, which was successfully resolved following an investigation into the matter.

## Rural Development Programme Funding

1742. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will address a matter regarding a group (details supplied) that has applied for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35831/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I can confirm that an application for funding has been received by my Department in respect of the group referred to by the Deputy. This was just one of more than 300 applications received under the scheme in question.

My officials are currently in the process of assessing all of the applications received and I will announce the successful applicants when the assessment process is fully complete.

## Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

1743. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when a new office will open (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35968/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Pobal is a *not for profit* company that works on behalf of the Irish Government in managing and supporting programmes in the areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Inclusive Employment and Enterprise, and Early Years and Young People.

Pobal are currently negotiating on the rental and fit out of a new office space in Mullingar. The new space is expected to accommodate up to 50 seats, consisting mainly of National Child-care Scheme staff and a hot-desk area. Whilst negotiations are ongoing, a temporary office will open in Mullingar during September.

Any new jobs arising will be advertised on [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie) in the Autumn, their twitter account @Pobal and other sources.

## Departmental Internships

1744. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36154/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established in July 2017. In this timeframe there have been no unpaid internships issued to persons, to work in the Department.

The Department currently has no plans to offer unpaid internships. Public bodies are outside the scope of the current national internship programme administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

## LEADER Programmes Funding

1745. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when an application for further tranche of LEADER funds will be allocated to a community (details supplied); the timeframe from application for further funding to receipt of funds; if there is a standard process across all local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36174/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** LEADER is a multi-annual programme for the period 2014-2020 which has a total budget of €250 million over the programming period. LEADER is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area. Each LAG has been given a funding allocation for the duration of the programme. Project applications are made to, and approved by, the relevant LAG in each LEADER area.

Payment claims are submitted to my Department by the LAGs when projects are up and running and have incurred expenditure. The approved works must be completed by the project promoter prior to any phased or final payments being made.

Processing times for claims can take an average of 4 to 6 weeks from the point where a claim is submitted by the project promoter through the LAG. Certain checks are required to be carried out by all LAGs prior to the payment claims being submitted to my Department. Claims can only be progressed for payment to my Department once all the regulatory checks have been complied with.

There is no delay in payments being issued by my Department to the LAG for the project once all of the necessary checks have been completed and verified as required.

With regard to the project referred to by the Deputy, I understand that the project is still under construction and that the promoters have submitted a fourth claim for payment to the relevant Local Action Group. This claim is currently undergoing validation.

## Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

1746. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the 2019 outdoor recreational infrastructure scheme awards will be announced in view of the difficulties in works in 2018 due to the constrained timelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36195/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme forms part of the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme. The scheme provides funding to develop new outdoor recreational infrastructure and to maintain, enhance and promote existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland. Funding of over €41 million has been allocated to almost 600 projects under the scheme since 2016.

I launched the 2019 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme last March and applications were invited under three separate measures based on the scale of the projects to be delivered. The closing date for applications was 31st May, and over 280 applications were received. These applications are currently being assessed by my Department.

I will announce the successful projects under the various scheme measures when the assessment process is complete. The timelines for the completion of these projects and the drawdown of the funding will take account of the experience of projects in completing works under previous funding rounds, as highlighted by the Deputy.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

1747. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36234/19]

1748. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36250/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1747 and 1748 together.

My Department's ICT managed service is provided by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform through the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO).

The OGCIO implements a multi-layered approach to cyber security and to protecting ICT systems, infrastructures and services. The OGCIO builds resilience into its ICT solutions as a matter of course, and has disaster recovery plans and sites in a Government Data Centre. Disaster recovery forms part of the overarching Business Continuity framework for their clients including my Department.

The OGCIO also has specialist staff, with the appropriate skills and expertise, tasked with managing cyber security. The OGCIO implements a defence-in-depth security strategy which is achieved through the effective combination of People, Processes, and Technology to support the implementation of appropriate security measures and provisions, including monitoring and analysing logs.

Our external line-of-business systems are secured behind firewalls and utilise industry-stan-

standard security protocols with disaster recovery functionality backed up by a dedicated external ICT infrastructure team. Business continuity and disaster recovery are supported through backups of data performed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, with live replication of systems to ensure backup systems can be utilised should a problem occur. Backups are also stored off-site on a regular basis.

Finally, my Department has a comprehensive risk management structure in place and works closely with our partners in the OGCIO and external providers to manage risks relating to the availability of IT systems and data.

### **LEADER Programmes Data**

1749. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local action group, LAG, under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme; the amount expended to date under the programme in each LAG to 31 August 2019; the spend to date out of the amount allocated to each LAG for the programme period to the 31 August 2019 as a percentage; the amount expended to date on project costs, administration and other costs by each LAG to 31 August 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36263/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** LEADER is a multi-annual programme with a total budget of €250 million over the period 2014-2020. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. This funding is allocated to the LAGs for the full period of the programme.

The remaining €30 million is available for schemes to be delivered at a national level.

Table 1 below provides details as at 31st August 2019 of:

- The budget allocations to the LAGs under the LEADER 2014-2020 programme.
- The total spend by the LAGs broken down by:
  - the cost of developing their strategies (preparatory support);
  - the expenditure incurred on LEADER administration and supporting the development of projects (administration & animation);
  - the funding provided to LEADER projects; and
- The total spend expressed as a percentage of the LAG's budget allocation.

While the overall spend to date is 28% of the total allocation available to the LAGs, there has been a significant increase in project approvals since the start of 2018, with 2,299 projects approved to a value of €83.8 million. A further 325 projects, requesting funding in excess of €25.4 million, are at earlier stages in the approvals process. Project payments under the programme will increase significantly as these projects are completed and submit payment claims.

#### **Table 1: LEADER Expenditure data as of 31st August, 2019**

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Local Action Group	Total Allocation	Prep Support Spend	Admin & Animation Spend	Project Spend	Total Spend	% Spent
Carlow	€6,416,803	€20,000	€594,460	€1,253,617	€1,868,077	29%
Cavan	€8,522,286	€50,000	€782,738	€1,332,188	€2,164,926	25%
Clare	€8,920,225	€83,336	€1,481,000	€992,776	€2,557,111	29%
Cork North	€5,091,846	€15,000	€981,860	€855,939	€1,852,799	36%
Cork South	€3,831,303	€65,000	€623,243	€419,996	€1,108,239	29%
Cork West	€5,015,674	€135,240	€860,578	€256,272	€1,252,090	25%
Donegal	€12,913,878	€57,594	€1,907,387	€3,152,332	€5,117,313	40%
Dublin Rural	€6,370,438	€55,000	€895,141	€560,505	€1,510,646	24%
Galway East	€7,655,851	€155,356	€986,700	€436,879	€1,578,935	21%
Galway West	€4,540,033	€75,000	€475,000	€233,187	€783,187	17%
Kerry	€10,219,868	€16,344	€1,837,111	€2,082,982	€3,936,437	39%
Kildare	€5,261,600	€50,000	€587,921	€302,317	€940,238	18%
Kilkenny	€7,791,573	€57,295	€1,362,750	€838,022	€2,258,067	29%
Laois	€7,124,587	€35,191	€810,289	€852,697	€1,698,177	24%
Leitrim	€5,998,475	€25,000	€778,341	€684,109	€1,487,451	25%
Limerick	€9,276,594	€22,187	€1,620,026	€1,607,382	€3,249,595	35%
Longford	€7,597,623	€30,000	€840,842	€619,692	€1,490,533	20%
Louth	€6,101,862	€28,000	€847,368	€647,905	€1,523,273	25%
Mayo	€11,121,432	€119,238	€1,679,598	€1,639,357	€3,438,193	31%
Meath	€6,903,124	€40,000	€1,030,570	€368,767	€1,439,337	21%
Monaghan	€7,592,720	€58,296	€807,797	€887,914	€1,754,007	23%
Offaly	€8,036,764	€30,000	€1,097,363	€1,816,469	€2,943,832	37%
Roscommon	€8,852,659	€58,213	€1,008,910	€878,401	€1,945,523	22%
Sligo	€7,655,648	€15,000	€732,837	€1,245,061	€1,992,898	26%
Tipperary	€10,103,443	€20,000	€1,318,329	€1,421,177	€2,759,506	27%
Waterford	€7,522,796	€75,427	€984,819	€1,962,668	€3,022,914	40%
Westmeath	€7,384,206	€25,602	€902,968	€409,191	€1,337,761	18%
Wexford	€9,840,141	€15,000	€1,055,344	€1,341,517	€2,411,861	25%
Wicklow	€6,336,549	€35,794	€866,022	€510,414	€1,412,229	22%
Total	€220,000,000	€1,468,112	€29,757,311	€29,609,733	€60,835,156	28%

### CLÁR Programme

1750. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the CLÁR programme in each of the years 2017 to 2019; the amount paid to each local authority up to 31 August 2019 for each allocation in tabular form; the amount paid out to date out of the amount allocated to each local authority in each such year based on latest data to 31 August 2019 as a percentage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36264/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** In 2017, I approved over €5.7 million in CLÁR funding to Local Authorities. To date, over €5.5 million of this funding has been drawn down; this equates to 97% of the total allocated to the Local Authorities.

In 2018, I approved over €9.2 million in CLÁR funding to Local Authorities. To date, almost €7.7 million of this funding has been drawn down; this equates to 83% of the total allocated to Local Authorities.

My Department is currently engaging with the Local Authorities to close off their 2017 and 2018 projects.

On 26th August, I announced funding of over €3.8 million for projects to be delivered through the Local Authorities under the 2019 CLÁR programme. No payments have yet been made in respect of these projects.

The details requested by the Deputy for each Local Authority are provided in the following tables.

It should be noted that funding under some CLÁR Measures is provided directly to applicant organisations and is not routed through the Local Authorities. This funding is not included in the figures provided below. However, details of all projects approved under the CLÁR programme are available at [www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/91ba52-clar/](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/91ba52-clar/).

**Table 1: CLÁR 2017 Allocations and Payments**

County	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2017	Total paid to 31.08.2019	% of allocation paid to 31.08.2019
Carlow	€178,760	€172,177	96.32%
Cavan	€288,731	€288,469	99.91%
Clare	€323,132	€323,132	100.00%
Cork	€195,600	€190,402	97.34%
Donegal	€70,590	€70,590	100.00%
Galway	€519,792	€519,492	99.94%
Kerry	€134,188	€134,188	100.00%
Kilkenny	€161,932	€161,932	100.00%
Laois	€51,395	€51,395	100.00%
Leitrim	€457,552	€457,552	100.00%
Limerick	€161,730	€160,925	99.50%
Longford	€238,417	€237,067	99.43%
Louth	€245,869	€155,370	63.19%
Mayo	€628,230	€621,637	98.95%
Meath	€104,000	€104,000	100.00%
Monaghan	€594,338*	€586,524	98.69%
Offaly	€186,954	€185,665	99.31%
Roscommon	€320,555	€311,516	97.18%
Sligo	€274,650	€271,746	98.94%
Tipperary	€191,258	€187,978	98.29%
Waterford	€313,365	€313,365	100.00%
Westmeath	€77,096	€77,096	100.00%

County	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2017	Total paid to 31.08.2019	% of allocation paid to 31.08.2019
Wicklow	€33,300	€6,300	18.92%
Totals	€5,751,434	€5,588,519	97%

\*includes payment for a project under Measure 4 of the 2017 Scheme (First Response Support) paid directly to Monaghan Local Authority.

**Table 2: CLÁR 2018 Allocations and Payments**

County	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2018	Total paid to 31.08.2019	% of allocation paid to 31.08.2019
Carlow	€337,707	€332,494	98.46%
Cavan	€551,489	€530,071	96.12%
Clare	€371,598	€370,865	99.80%
Cork	€611,191	€493,815	80.80%
Donegal	€461,841	€441,064	95.50%
Galway	€603,615	€465,987	77.20%
Kerry	€431,677	€115,800	26.83%
Kilkenny	€303,464	€281,900	92.89%
Laois	€508,313	€453,359	89.19%
Leitrim	€380,236	€294,236	77.38%
Limerick	€343,840	€343,540	99.91%
Longford	€414,181	€95,120	22.97%
Louth	€266,207	€219,324	82.39%
Mayo	€624,166	€393,763	63.09%
Meath	€226,440	€209,804	92.65%
Monaghan	€503,164	€500,666	99.50%
Offaly	€259,639	€259,638	100.00%
Roscommon	€312,465	€292,447	93.59%
Sligo	€376,895	€353,820	93.88%
Tipperary	€361,355	€332,999	92.15%
Waterford	€528,840	€528,839	100.00%
Westmeath	€324,867	€299,108	92.07%
Wicklow	€130,590	€62,190	47.62%
Totals	€9,233,780	€7,670,850	83%

**Table 3: CLÁR 2019 Allocations and Payments**

County	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2019	Total paid to 31.08.2019	% of allocation paid to 31.08.2019
Carlow	€68,550.00	0	0%
Cavan	€226,747.60	0	0%
Clare	€217,811.12	0	0%
Cork	€114,800.00	0	0%
Donegal	€196,129.00	0	0%
Galway	€264,300.00	0	0%
Kerry	€143,666.00	0	0%

County	Amount Allocated CLÁR 2019	Total paid to 31.08.2019	% of allocation paid to 31.08.2019
Kilkenny	€114,770.00	0	0%
Laois	€115,200.00	0	0%
Leitrim	€279,665.82	0	0%
Limerick	€95,000.00	0	0%
Longford	€255,638.00	0	0%
Louth	€59,567.00	0	0%
Mayo	€340,010.00	0	0%
Meath	€56,880.00	0	0%
Monaghan	€270,245.41	0	0%
Offaly	€55,350.00	0	0%
Roscommon	€240,270.20	0	0%
Sligo	€230,003.00	0	0%
Tipperary	€145,000.00	0	0%
Waterford	€149,850.00	0	0%
Westmeath	€78,000.00	0	0%
Wicklow	€100,000.00	0	0%
Totals	€3,817,453	€0	0%

### Local Improvement Scheme Funding

1751. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the local improvement scheme in 2018 and 2019; the amount paid to each local authority up to 31 August 2019, in tabular form; the amount paid out to date out of the amount allocated to each local authority in each such year up to 31 August 2019 as a percentage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36265/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** In 2018, I allocated €20.8 million to Local Authorities under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). To date, over €19.2 million has been paid out in respect of the 2018 scheme and my Department is working with the Local Authorities to finalise draw-downs for that year.

In February of this year, I allocated €10 million to Local Authorities under the 2019 LIS. To date, €125,000 has been paid out in respect of the 2019 scheme. However, I expect the level of expenditure under the 2019 scheme to increase substantially in the coming months as improvement works on the roads in question are completed and payment claims are submitted to my Department by the Local Authorities.

The details requested by the Deputy in respect of each relevant Local Authority are provided on the following tables.

**Table 1 : LIS 2018 Allocations and Payments**

Local Authority	Total Allocation 2018	Amount of 2018 Allocation Paid to Date	Percentage of Al- location Paid to date
Carlow	€528,279	€521,812	98.78%
Cavan	€636,680	€631,468	99.18%

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Local Authority	Total Allocation 2018	Amount of 2018 Allocation Paid to Date	Percentage of Allocation Paid to date
Clare	€1,038,844	€1,023,900	98.56%
Cork	€1,700,000	€1,344,107	79.07%
Donegal	€1,792,516	€1,360,232	75.88%
Galway	€1,942,000	€1,942,000	100.00%
Kerry	€1,209,990	€1,011,739	83.62%
Kildare	€329,591	€329,590	100.00%
Kilkenny	€679,683	€533,810	78.54%
Laois	€568,255	€440,352	77.49%
Leitrim	€550,120	€550,120	100.00%
Limerick	€684,349	€684,349	100.00%
Longford	€472,217	€382,350	80.97%
Louth	€250,000	€249,984	99.99%
Mayo	€1,843,235	€1,802,851	97.81%
Meath	€773,404	€765,001	98.91%
Monaghan	€540,841	€540,841	100.00%
Offaly	€644,654	€644,486	99.97%
Roscommon	€820,968	€817,242	99.55%
Sligo	€606,870	€606,870	100.00%
Tipperary	€794,400	€713,368	89.80%
Waterford	€607,047	€607,047	100.00%
Westmeath	€607,224	€607,224	100.00%
Wexford	€511,410	€477,768	93.42%
Wicklow	€668,135	€668,135	100.00%
TOTAL	€20,800,712	€19,256,646	92.58%

**Table 2: LIS 2019 Allocations and Payments**

Local Authority	Total Allocation 2019	Amount of 2019 Allocation Paid to Date	Percentage of Allocation Paid to date
Carlow	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Cavan	€269,254	€0	0.00%
Clare	€480,811	€0	0.00%
Cork	€900,000	€0	0.00%
Donegal	€677,456	€0	0.00%
Galway	€856,959	€0	0.00%
Kerry	€669,930	€0	0.00%
Kildare	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Kilkenny	€288,905	€0	0.00%
Laois	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Leitrim	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Limerick	€384,092	€0	0.00%
Longford	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Louth	€250,000	€125,000	50.00%

Local Authority	Total Allocation 2019	Amount of 2019 Allocation Paid to Date	Percentage of Allocation Paid to date
Mayo	€778,496	€0	0.00%
Meath	€326,394	€0	0.00%
Monaghan	€250,000	€0	0.00%
Offaly	€278,871	€0	0.00%
Roscommon	€355,104	€0	0.00%
Sligo	€256,154	€0	0.00%
Tipperary	€599,969	€0	0.00%
Waterford	€258,802	€0	0.00%
Westmeath	€256,433	€0	0.00%
Wexford	€329,878	€0	0.00%
Wicklow	€282,494	€0	0.00%
TOTAL	€10,000,002	€125,000	1.25%

### Town and Village Renewal Scheme

1752. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority under the town and village renewal scheme in each of the years 2017 to 2019; the amount paid to each local authority up to 31 August 2019 for each allocation in tabular form; the amount paid out to date out of the amount allocated to each local authority in each such year up to 31 August 2019 as a percentage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36266/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I allocated €21.6 million to 281 projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme in October 2017. To date, €18.3 million of this funding has been drawn down, which equates to 85% of the total allocated.

I allocated €21.3 million to 224 projects under the scheme in October 2018. To date, €3.5 million of this funding has been drawn down, which equates to 16% of the total allocated.

It should be noted that projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme can typically take 12 to 18 months to complete. Payments are made to Local Authorities when a certain threshold of project expenditure is reached, and final payments are made on the full completion of the project. My Department is currently working on the close-off of the 2017 projects with the Local Authorities.

The following tables detail the funding allocated to each Local Authority in 2017 and 2018, and the amount of payment made to date in respect of each year's allocation. The percentage of the allocation drawn down to date is also provided.

I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. Local Authorities were invited to submit applications to my Department for consideration under the scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications was 28th June. Over 300 applications for funding were received from the Local Authorities.

My officials are currently assessing all of the applications received and I will announce the successful projects when this assessment is complete.

### Table 1: Approvals and Payments by Local Authority under Town and Village Re-

**newal Scheme 2017**

County	2017 Grant Funding approved	2017 funding paid to 31 August 2019	Amount paid as % of allocation
Carlow	€884,488	€884,488	100%
Cavan	€929,728	€929,681	100%
Clare	€944,000	€780,000	83%
Cork	€1,347,827	€1,110,466	82%
Donegal	€1,159,000	€562,796	49%
Dunlaoghaire/Rathdown	€80,000	€80,000	100%
Fingal	€252,000	€224,212	89%
Galway	€1,004,231	€948,231	94%
Kerry	€868,472	€526,386	61%
Kildare	€416,403	€328,202	79%
Kilkenny	€873,364	€546,363	63%
Laois	€983,407	€895,785	91%
Leitrim	€1,098,538	€928,538	85%
Limerick	€1,087,943	€928,072	85%
Longford	€637,400	€487,400	76%
Louth	€775,726	€707,729	91%
Mayo	€1,348,178	€1,266,178	94%
Meath	€905,546	€803,081	89%
Monaghan	€580,000	€530,000	91%
Offaly	€300,000	€300,000	100%
Roscommon	€575,508	€420,300	73%
Sligo	€1,063,968	€1,017,216	96%
South Dublin	€20,000	€20,000	100%
Tipperary	€857,384	€745,318	87%
Waterford	€625,800	€625,800	100%
Westmeath	€596,000	€510,994	86%
Wexford	€1,157,525	€955,082	83%
Wicklow	€265,000	€162,828	61%
Total	€21,637,435	€18,316,592	85%

**Table 2: Approvals and Payments per Local Authority under the Town and Village Scheme 2018**

County	2018 Grant Funding approved	2018 funding paid to 31 August 2019	Amount paid as % of allocation
Carlow	€786,118	€343,059	44%
Cavan	€530,000	€163,976	31%
Clare	€581,000	€100,000	17%
Cork	€1,001,800	€43,023	4%
Donegal	€1,100,000	€0.00	0%
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	€100,000	€0.00	0%

County	2018 Grant Funding approved	2018 funding paid to 31 August 2019	Amount paid as % of allocation
Fingal	€597,960	€0.00	0%
Galway	€900,000	€250,000	28%
Kerry	€476,000	€0.00	0%
Kildare	€520,000	€260,000	50%
Kilkenny	€652,280	€0.00	0%
Laois	€872,094	€168,447	19%
Leitrim	€737,520	€50,000	7%
Limerick	€963,918	€294,666	31%
Longford	€593,856	€196,928	33%
Louth	€892,157	€0.00	0%
Mayo	€1,183,615	€257,486	22%
Meath	€670,834	€67,134	10%
Monaghan	€868,500	€34,063	4%
Offaly	€1,300,000	€305,704	24%
Roscommon	€880,000	€195,981	22%
Sligo	€1,138,400	€569,200	50%
Tipperary	€913,266	€0.00	0%
Waterford	€756,000	€0.00	0%
Westmeath	€452,000	€50,000	11%
Wexford	€1,334,798	€148,283	11%
Wicklow	€518,005	€11,880	2%
Total	€21,320,121	€3,509,829	16%

### Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

1753. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount allocated to each local authority or local development company, LDC, under the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme in each of the years 2017 to 2019; the amount paid to each local authority or LDC up to 31 August 2019 for each allocation; the amount paid out to date out of the amount allocated to each local authority or LDC in each such year up to 31 August 2019 as a percentage in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36267/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure, and for the maintenance and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural Ireland. The projects supported under the scheme range from small scale local infrastructure, to projects of significant scale undertaken at a regional level. Some of these projects can take up to 18 months to complete.

In 2017, I approved over €13.6 million in funding for the ORIS, €11.5 million of which was allocated to Local Authorities. The balance of funding was allocated to State agencies in respect of their outdoor recreational activities. To date, over €6.6 million has been paid to Local Authorities under the 2017 scheme. There was no funding directly allocated to Local Development Companies in 2017.

In 2018, I approved over €20.8 million in ORIS funding to Local Authorities and Local

Development Companies. To date, just under €1 million has been drawn down by them under the 2018 scheme.

My Department is working closely with the Local Authorities to close-off or accelerate projects and I would expect a significant increase in the drawdown of funding for the 2017 and 2018 schemes by the end of this year.

My officials are currently assessing applications received under the 2019 scheme and details of approvals will be announced in due course.

The figures requested by the Deputy in respect of each Local Authority and Local Development Company are provided on the following tables.

**Table :1 ORIS 2017 Allocations and Payments to Local Authorities**

County	Amounts Allocated	Drawdown to 31.08.19	Percentage Draw-down to 31.08.19
Carlow	€111,500.00	€7,000.00	6.28%
Cavan	€791,620.00	€492,965.00	62.27%
Clare	€55,917.00	€45,917.40	82.12%
Cork	€1,109,520.00	€90,760.00	8.18%
Donegal	€104,200.00	€103,600.00	99.42%
Dublin	€814,096.00	€54,096.00	6.64%
Galway	€116,650.00	€79,908.51	68.50%
Kerry	€314,277.00	€106,383.91	33.85%
Kilkenny	€123,476.08	€49,047.06	25.74%
Laois	€247,290.20	€48,057.00	11.78%
Leitrim	€1,050,153.00	€557,576.50	52.14%
Limerick	€189,884.00	€189,884.20	100.00%
Longford*	€555,159.00	€553,554.92	99.71%
Louth	€101,128.76	€8,500.00	8.41%
Mayo	€1,321,430.00	€992,088.51	75.08%
Meath	€87,520.00	€87,069.20	82.35%
Monaghan	€145,600.00	€143,152.23	98.32%
Offaly	€1,240,115.00	€979,868.29	79.01%
Roscommon	€186,388.45	€178,778.20	95.92%
Sligo	€1,072,675.00	€763,390.00	71.17%
Tipperary	€80,296.00	€78,930.00	98.30%
Waterford	€70,600.00	€62,102.98	87.96%
Westmeath	€933,634.00	€149,310.00	15.99%
Wexford	€510,416.00	€510,416.00	100.00%
Wicklow	€176,200.00	€163,633.00	92.87%
TOTAL	€11,509,745.49	€6,655,988.91	61.59%

\*In addition, Longford received an additional allocation of €160,000 in 2017 in respect of an extension to the Royal Canal Way Greenway project, bringing the total amount of funding drawn down to €713,554.92.

**Table 2: ORIS 2018 Allocations and payments to Local Authorities and LDCs**

County	Organisation	Amount allocated	Amount of Drawdown to 31.08.19	% Drawdown to 31.08.19
Carlow				
Carlow	Carlow County Development Partnership CLG	€47,268.01	€23,632.50	50.00%
Carlow	Carlow Co Co	€132,649.20	€0.00	0.00%
Cavan				
Cavan	Breffni Integrated, Local Development Co	€102,956.00	€0.00	0.00%
Cavan	Cavan County Council	€1,215,539.00	€196,487.00	16.16%
Clare				
Clare	Clare Local Development Company	€58,370.79	€52,770.79	90.41%
Clare	Clare County Council	€692,866.00	€0.00	0.00%
Cork				
Cork	Avondu Blackwater P/ship	€11,656.00	€11,655.21	99.99%
Cork	SECAD Partnership CLG	€33,600.00	€0.00	0.00%
Cork	West Cork Development Partnership CLG	€53,230.29	€52,453.20	98.54%
Cork	Cork County Council	€1,174,911.00	€78,439.00	6.68%
Donegal				
Donegal	Donegal Co Co	€343,660.00	€0.00	0.00%
Dublin				
Dublin	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	€400,000.00	€200,000.00	50.00%
Galway				
Galway	Galway Rural Development	€11,077.20	€0.00	0.00%
Galway	Forum Connemara CLG	€6,734.55	€5,734.55	85.15%
Galway	Galway County Council	€1,036,966.00	€0.00	0.00%
Kerry				

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County	Organisation	Amount allocated	Amount of Drawdown to 31.08.19	% Drawdown to 31.08.19
Kerry	South Kerry Development Partnership CLG	€89,620.00	€52,713.81	58.82%
Kerry	North East & West Kerry Development	€99,578.00	€0.00	0.00%
Kerry	Kerry County Council	€570,909.40	€0.00	0.00%
Kerry	National Parks and Wildlife Service of DCHG	€500,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Kildare				
Kildare	Kildare Co Co	€85,684.00	€0.00	0.00%
Kilkenny				
Kilkenny	Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	€31,276.00	€17,467.96	55.85%
Kilkenny	Kilkenny County Council	€740,622.00	€168,776.50	22.79%
Laois				
Laois	Laois Partnership Company	€40,184.80	€6,830.97	17.00%
Leitrim				
Leitrim	Leitrim Integrated Development Company CLG	€40,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Leitrim	Leitrim Co Co	€496,018.54	€0.00	0.00%
Limerick				
Limerick	West Limerick Resources	€11,336.80	€11,195.14	98.75%
Limerick	Ballyhoura Development CLG	€64,000.00	€64,000.00	100.00%
Limerick	Limerick City and County Council	€722,717.28	€65,784.00	9.10%
Longford				
Longford	Longford County Council	€1,239,491.28	€20,000.00	1.61%
Louth				
Louth	Louth Co Co	€388,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Mayo				

County	Organisation	Amount allocated	Amount of Drawdown to 31.08.19	% Drawdown to 31.08.19
Mayo	South West Mayo Development Company CLG	€96,000.00	€56,000.00	58.33%
Mayo	Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co Teo	€120,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Mayo	Mayo County Council	€1,300,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Meath				
Meath	Meath Partnership	€59,857.70	€15,488.46	25.88%
Meath	Meath County Council	€992,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Monaghan				
Monaghan	Monaghan Integrated Development CLG	€110,024.00	€49,124.28	44.65%
Monaghan	Monaghan County Council	€495,441.62	€0.00	0.00%
Monaghan	Monaghan County Council (with Coillte)	€421,130.40	€0.00	0.00%
Offaly				
Offaly	Offaly Local Dev Company	€107,730.00	€99,758.88	92.60%
Offaly	Offaly Co Co	€400,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Roscommon				
Roscommon	Roscommon Leader Partnership	€15,378.00	€15,378.00	100.00%
Roscommon	Roscommon County Council	€1,141,553.84	€46,065.67	4.04%
Sligo				
Sligo	Sligo Leader Partnership CLG	€179,840.00	€88,740.77	49.34%
Sligo	Sligo County Council	€726,092.00	€113,046.00	15.57%
Tipperary				
Tipperary	South Tipperary Development CLG	€4,800.00	€4,799.47	99.99%

County	Organisation	Amount allocated	Amount of Drawdown to 31.08.19	% Drawdown to 31.08.19
Tipperary	North Tipperary Leader Partnership	€38,714.00	€28,169.95	72.76%
Tipperary	Tipperary Co Co	€756,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Waterford				
Waterford	Waterford City & Co	€182,163.04	€32,450.00	17.81%
Westmeath				
Westmeath	Westmeath Community Development	€172,000.00	€111,865.68	65.04%
Westmeath	Westmeath County Council	€752,000.00	€0.00	0.00%
Wexford				
Wexford	Wexford Local Development	€9,560.14	€9,560.14	100.00%
Wexford	Wexford County Council	€1,410,782.44	€522,703.96	37.05%
Wicklow				
Wicklow	County Wicklow Partnership	€46,280.00	€44,685.39	96.55%
Wicklow	Wicklow County Council	€859,305.00	€0.00	0.00%
	TOTALS	€20,837,574.32	€986,519.46	4.73%

### Departmental Expenditure

1754. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the 2019 capital spend to 31 August 2019 including the capital carryover from 2018, by sub-head; the provision under each subhead including the capital carryover from 2018 provided for in the revised estimates volume for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36268/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Further Revised Estimates for 2019 in respect of the Department of Rural and Community Development provides for gross capital expenditure of €138 million. There was no capital funding carried forward from 2018.

To date, €47 million of this capital allocation has been spent. I have set out expenditure to date in the table below against the total capital provision for 2019.

At the start of each year my Department profiles expected spend for that year, and the overall capital expenditure to date is on profile.

As is usual for capital programmes, the majority of claims for payment will be made in the final quarter of the year as projects progress to completion and capital grant approvals are

drawn down. This is particularly true for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, for which delivery is now beginning to accelerate.

Continued close monitoring of expenditure is a matter of significant priority so as to ensure the best use of available resources and that value for money is delivered in respect of our funding.

### Capital Expenditure to 31 August 2019

-	REV 2019	YTD - Actual
V42 – GROSS (€m)	138.0	47.0
A - REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL AFFAIRS	122.9	45.7
A.2 - ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	0.2	0.1
A.4 - NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES	15.0	6.9
A.5 - LEADER - RURAL ECONOMY SUB PROGRAMME	30.0	25.1
A.7 - TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION	15.0	8.2
A.8 – REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	0.7	-
A.9. - LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES	10.0	3.0
A10 - RURAL REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT FUND	52.0	2.4
B - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	15.1	1.3
B.2 - ADMINISTRATION - NON PAY	0.2	0.1
B.6- SUPPORTS FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES	1.8	-
B.7- DORMANT ACCOUNT MEASURES	2.5	0.1
B.8- PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION	0.7	-
B.10 - LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHIVE SERVICE	6.0	1.1
B.11 - COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME	4.0	-

## Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

1755. **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 by county up to 31 August 2019; the number of applications granted funding by county up to 31 August 2019; the funding approved for the scheme in 2019; the number and value of payments made up to 31 August 2019 for approved projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36269/19]

**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.

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). The number of applications per county is set out in Table 1.

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. The county breakdown of the projects which were announced is set out in Table 2.

Following the announcement of the 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, €4,150,523 has been drawn down from the Fund by 11 separate projects. I expect that payments from the Fund will significantly accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across the other projects.

The second call for Category 1 applications under the Fund closed on the 6th August 2019. My Department received 69 applications for funding and are currently engaged in collating the applications before the assessment process begins. The number of applications per County is set out in Table 3.

Table 1. Number of Applications under the First Call per County

-	Category 1 Applications	Category 2 Applications	Overall Applications per County
Carlow	1	5	6
Cavan	2	3	5
Clare	13	10	23
Cork	17	49	66
Donegal	8	4	12
Dublin	0	1	1
Galway	9	5	14

-	Category 1 Applications	Category 2 Applications	Overall Applications per County
Kerry	7	7	14
Kildare	4	9	13
Kilkenny	4	5	9
Laois	4	1	5
Leitrim	2	3	5
Limerick	13	5	18
Longford	2	1	3
Louth	2	2	4
Mayo	7	6	13
Meath	2	6	8
Monaghan	5	4	9
Offaly	1	4	5
Roscommon	4	1	5
Sligo	3	2	5
Tipperary	3	3	6
Waterford	1	4	5
Westmeath	1	2	3
Wexford	5	6	11
Wicklow	1	2	3
Multiple Locations	5	4	9
Totals	126	154	280

Table 2. Number of Projects Announced as Approved for Funding by County

-	Applications Announced as Approved for Funding Category 1	Applications Announced as Approved for Funding Category 2	Total Applications Announced as Approved for Funding
Carlow	1	1	2
Cavan	1	2	3
Clare	4	2	6
Cork	2	5	7
Donegal	2	1	3
Dublin	0	0	0
Galway	3	3	6
Kerry	1	4	5
Kildare	1	2	3
Kilkenny	2	1	3
Laois	1	0	1
Leitrim	0	1	1
Limerick	3	1	4
Longford	2	0	2
Louth	1	1	2
Mayo	3	2	5
Meath	0	4	4

-	Applications An- nounced as Ap- proved for Funding Category 1	Applications An- nounced as Ap- proved for Funding Category 2	Total Applications Announced as Ap- proved for Funding
Monaghan	1	4	5
Offaly	0	1	1
Roscommon	3	1	4
Sligo	2	1	3
Tipperary	1	0	1
Waterford	0	1	1
Westmeath	0	1	1
Wexford	1	4	5
Wicklow	0	0	0
Multiple Locations	3	3	6
Totals	38	46	84

Table 3. Number of Applications under the Second Call per County

County	Number of Applications
Carlow	2
Cavan	4
Clare	5
Cork	4
Donegal	3
Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim	1
Galway	4
Kerry	6
Kildare, Laois	1
Kilkenny	3
Laois	1
Leitrim	2
Limerick	5
Longford	1
Mayo	4
Meath	3
Monaghan	2
Offaly	3
Roscommon	2
Sligo	1
Tipperary	4
Waterford	2
Wexford	3
Wicklow	3
Grand Total	69

1756. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding allocated under each measure for the CLÁR programme in 2019; the expenditure to date under each measure and by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36508/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28th February last, with applications invited under three separate Measures:

Measure 1: Support for “School and Community Safety Measures”,

Measure 2: Support for “Play Areas and Multi-Use Games Areas”, and

Measure 3: Funding for “Community Wellbeing Support”.

Community Wellbeing Support under Measure 3 includes the provision of equipment and vehicles for voluntary first-response organisations, as well as the provision of specialist vehicles to bring people to cancer-care centres and other community-care services. The Measure may also provide funding for sensory gardens.

The closing date for the 2019 CLÁR programme was the 30th April, and almost 500 applications were received by my Department.

To date, I have announced the following funding under the 2019 CLÁR programme:

Measure 1: School and Community Safety Measures - €2,522,993.43 for 74 schools/communities

Measure 2: Play Areas and Multi-Use Games Areas - €1,294,459.72 for 30 schools/communities

Measure 3a: First Response Support - €567,515.93 for 30 groups.

Measure 3b: Mobility and Cancer Care Transport - €890,632.00 for 20 groups.

Details of successful projects on a county basis can be found at: [www.gov.ie/en/collection/f9051a-clar-funding-2019/](http://www.gov.ie/en/collection/f9051a-clar-funding-2019/).

To date, no drawdown of funding has been made, as the successful projects have only recently been announced. However, I would expect the drawdown of funding to commence in the coming weeks.

### **RAPID Programme**

1757. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the details of the RAPID funding provided to each of the Dublin local authorities in 2019; the projects being funded in each case; and the criteria which applied to qualifying for this funding. [36814/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The original RAPID programme ran from 2001 and closed to new applications in 2011. In 2017, a nationwide re-cast RAPID programme was launched. All areas of the country were eligible for funding, and the funding was administered by Local Community Development Committees.

In early 2018, my Department completed a review of the re-cast RAPID programme and the

Community Facilities Scheme (CFS). On foot of this review, I launched the new Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) in May 2018. It replaces and builds on RAPID and the CFS. Combining these schemes makes for a more flexible, streamlined and targeted approach to providing funding to those communities most in need, while reducing the level of administration involved.

CEP funding is administered locally by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) across the country, with support from their Local Authority. Information about the Programme criteria and projects previously funded can be found at the following link [www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/e669d7-community-enhancement-programme/](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/e669d7-community-enhancement-programme/). CEP funding being provided in 2019 to the Dublin local authority areas is set out below.

Local Authority	CEP 2019 Amount
Dublin City	€212,306
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	€142,108
Fingal	€150,521
South Dublin	€169,399
	€674,334

### LEADER Programmes Administration

1758. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to revise the existing administrative process for the allocation of LEADER 2014-2020 funding including the role of local community development committees, LCDCs, in the process and revert back to the administrative model that pertained under the 2007-2013 rural development programme, RDP; and if such changes would require approval at EU level to achieve same. [36890/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The selection of LEADER Local Development Strategies, and by inference the selection of LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs), is subject to strict EU Regulatory requirements which mandate a transparent process, open to all interested parties. The Local Development Strategies and LAGs for the 2014-2020 LEADER programme in Ireland were selected by an Independent Selection Committee through a robust process.

Following on from that selection process, two separate models emerged for the delivery of the LEADER programme in Ireland. The first of these models, where some Local Development Companies were successful in being selected as the LEADER Local Action Group, mirrors the approach used in the 2007-2013 programme .

The second model is where the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) were selected as the LAG. Under this model, the Local Development Companies administer much of the programme as Implementing Partners for the LAGs. In both models, therefore, the Local Development Companies continue to be a key point of engagement for potential applicants under the LEADER programme.

While there are some differences in the delivery model between the current LEADER programme and the 2007-2013 programme, the structures which are in place have now bedded-in well and I currently have no plans to revise the process for the allocation of core funding for the 2014-2020 programme. In any event, any proposed changes would have to be agreed with the European Commission.

## LEADER Programmes Expenditure

1759. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the expenditure by project and administration incurred under the 2007-2013 LEADER programme in each year of the period and as of 31 August 2012; the value of projects that had been approved under the programme to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36891/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the expenditure by project and administration costs under the 2007-2013 LEADER programme for each of the years 2007-2012. It is not practicable to provide details as of 31st August 2012, but the figures on the table reflect the position as of 31st December each year.

Table 2 below provides the number and value of project approvals under the 2007-2013 LEADER programme for each of the years 2007-2013, as of 31st December each year. All projects had to be approved before 31st December 2013. However, payments to projects could continue for a further two years, as the projects were completed.

It should be noted that no projects were approved, or expenditure incurred, in the first two years of the LEADER 2007-2013 programming period. LEADER is an EU-wide programme and, as can often be the case with such programmes, activity increases progressively over the course of the programme period.

**Table 1: LEADER Project & Administration Expenditure for the period 2007-2012**

Year	Projects	Administration	Total Expenditure
2007	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
2008	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
2009	€8,201,445.25	€11,464,519.05	€19,665,964.30
2010	€30,596,158.16	€13,659,684.89	€44,255,843.05
2011	€35,452,081.68	€12,009,677.00	€47,461,758.68
2012	€39,681,861.45	€13,335,298.42	€53,017,159.87
Total	€113,931,546.54	€50,469,179.36	€164,400,725.90

**Table 2: LEADER Project Approvals for the period 2007-2013**

Year	No. Approved Projects	Total LEADER Grant approvals
2007	0	€0.00
2008	0	€0.00
2009	1,271	€20,004,753
2010	1,724	€33,670,670
2011	2,061	€38,371,891
2012	3,047	€76,788,710
2013	1,683	€48,532,958
Total Approvals	9,786	€217,368,983

### Local and Community Development Programme

1760. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

the status of the recently published strategy Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland, 2019-2024; the timeline for the delivery of each action under the strategy in tabular form; and the supports available to support the community and voluntary sector. [36892/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I recently launched “*Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024*”. The Strategy sets a general direction of travel for Government policy in relation to community development, local development and the community and voluntary sectors for the next five years and beyond. It also copper-fastens the renewed relationship and partnership between Government and the community and voluntary sectors which has developed during the course of its preparation.

The Strategy will be implemented in partnership with sectoral stakeholders over the strategy period and beyond. The implementation will be supported by the Cross Sectoral Group on Local Development and Community Development with periodic progress reports provided to the relevant Government Cabinet Committee. Responsibility for implementing actions will rest, in many cases, with Government and my Department will work collaboratively with both relevant Government Departments and sectoral stakeholders to scope, develop and implement cross cutting actions.

The Strategy will entail far reaching changes across Government and the community and voluntary sector and will require an incremental building of supports over the strategy period and beyond. This will be the case particularly for those actions requiring larger scale sustained funding support. In this context actions are grouped into three categories;

Short Term To be initiated as soon as possible and completed by 2021

Medium Term To be initiated on a phased basis and completed by 2023

Long Term To be progressed early in the strategy period and will continue to be developed and built upon beyond 2023.

The timeline for the delivery of each individual action under the Strategy is set out in tabular form in the strategy document on pages 24 – 31. The strategy can be found on my department’s website at the following link:

[www.gov.ie/en/publication/d8fa3a-sustainable-inclusive-and-empowered-communities-a-five-year-strategy/](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d8fa3a-sustainable-inclusive-and-empowered-communities-a-five-year-strategy/).

## State Pensions

1761. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the general rules for the treatment of farmers with regard to State pensions contributory and non-contributory; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35046/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** There are a number of payments and pensions paid by my department to people over State pension age. The State pension (contributory) is a PRSI based payment. It is not means tested and is paid from the Social Insurance Fund which in turn is financed by Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions. Entitlement levels are largely based on such contributions. The maximum rate of payment is €248.30 weekly. Qualification for the scheme is based on a number of criteria including a minimum of 520 paid qualifying contributions. For those who

have paid the required number and type of contributions at a reckonable rate – including Class S (self-employed) - they will be used in the calculation of their entitlements

A person aged over 66 with limited PRSI contributions over the course of their life may claim a State pension (non-contributory). This is a means-tested payment and the weekly rate payable is dependent on the means of each claimant. The maximum personal rate payable is €237 (over 95% of the maximum rate of the contributory pension). Account is taken in the means test of the value of property (other than the family home) and capital the person may have as well as cash income such as earnings from employment or self-employment, occupational pensions, foreign social security pensions and so on. This rate of payment does not include additional supports available, including rent allowance, household benefits or fuel allowance. Alternatively, if a person's spouse is a State pensioner, their most beneficial payment may be an Increase for a Qualified Adult, based on their personal means, and amounting up to 90% of a full contributory pension.

These arrangements apply to all claimants for the State pension (non-contributory) as well as other means-tested welfare schemes. The rules applying to the State pension (non-contributory) do not prohibit individuals engaging in any form of self-employment; it is the means available from the net profit from such self-employment (after allowing for expenses) which determines the rate of pension payable, if any.

The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension. With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. The consultation was open for over three months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on the issues of most interest to them including how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to bring a proposal to Government setting out that design in the near future. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Data**

1762. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of restoring the back to school allowance for clothing and footwear to pre-2011 levels. [35223/19]

1763. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and

Social Protection the estimated cost to increase back to school and footwear allowance by €50. [35224/19]

1889. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the funding set aside in 2019 for the back to school clothing and footwear allowance. [36672/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1762, 1763 and 1889 together.

The back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the costs of clothing and footwear when children start or return to school each autumn. The Government has provided €56.3m for the scheme in 2019 which operates from June to September. Provision was made to increase the payment rates by €25 in 2019.

The payment rates for the 2019 scheme are €150 for eligible children aged 4 to 11 years and €275 for children aged over 12 years and attending secondary school.

115,000 customers were awarded the allowance automatically in respect of 209,400 children from a matching exercise on the Department's computer systems and did not have to make an application. They received their payment during week beginning 8 July. Payments totalling €42.3m were made in respect of these customers.

In addition, the Department has received approximately 32,700 manual and online applications for the 2019 BSCFA scheme since the 24 June 2019. In total, BSCFA payments amounting to €49.6m have been made to 132,860 households in respect of 244,600 children.

Using the total number of children covered by the scheme in 2018 as a basis, the additional cost to increase the BSCFA rates by €50 would be €13.3 million.

Using the same basis, the additional cost of restoring the rates to the 2011 levels, i.e. to €200 for children aged 4 to 11 and to €305 for children aged 12 years and older, would be €11.1 million

Any increases to the rates of payment for the BSCFA scheme would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

### **School Meals Programme**

1764. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of ensuring that all DEIS schools have access to the school meals programme. [35236/19]

1765. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing funding to the school meals programme by 40%. [35240/19]

1768. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount of funding provided for school meals. [36747/19]

1771. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the estimated cost in one year to roll out the hot meals programme to all children of State run primary schools which have cooking and kitchen facilities. [36946/19]

1841. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will report on the hot school meals pilot project; her plans to roll out the service to all primary schools in the coming years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35628/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1764, 1765, 1768, 1771 and 1841 together.

The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €57.6 million in 2019 representing an increase of €3.6 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

The School Meals Scheme is currently available to all DEIS schools, subject to submission of an application each year. The scheme provides funding for a breakfast or snack for all children and lunch for up to 90% of children in DEIS schools for the entire school year from September to June. Currently 857, out of 896, DEIS schools participate in the scheme. The remainder have chosen not to participate. A total of €43.8 million was allocated to DEIS schools in the 2018/2019 academic year.

Not all DEIS schools apply for the scheme and, out of the schools that do apply, not all schools apply for two clubs for the full enrolment figures. If funding were to be provided to all DEIS schools for a breakfast or snack for all children and lunch for up to 90% of children in DEIS schools the full year cost would be €59.9 million. The full year cost of providing a breakfast and lunch to all children in DEIS schools would be €64.4 million.

As part of Budget 2019, it was announced that DEASP would commence a pilot scheme from September 2019, providing Hot School Meals in 36 primary schools for an estimated 7,200 children at a cost of €1m for 2019 and €2.5m in 2020.

All 3,239 primary schools were issued with an invitation to submit an expression of interest to participate in the pilot. Over 500 expressions of interest were received from Primary Schools across the country.

The 36 schools chosen to participate in the pilot were selected randomly, having regard to geographical spread, numbers enrolled, range of suppliers and the overall budget available for the pilot in 2019 and 2020 (€1m and €2.5 respectively).

The pilot will also be run in Our Lady of Lourdes NS in Goldenbridge for the 2019/20 school year following the Proof of Concept which has been operating there successfully since early this year.

A report will issue after the pilot is complete and the outcomes evaluated. As outcomes will be largely driven by a differential analysis of educational outcomes in pilot versus non-pilot schools, the intention is that the Department of Education and Skills and the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service will be involved in establishing an evaluation framework and timeframe. Outcomes will be tracked and measured throughout the duration of the pilot.

The full year cost of extending the Hot Meals Pilot to all children at primary school level would be an estimated €296m.

Any increase in the funding of the scheme, or extension of the pilot programme can only be considered in a budgetary context.

I trust that this clarifies the position.

### **Disability Allowance Eligibility**

1766. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; if they can receive a social welfare payment to compensate the loss of income; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35784/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Disability allowance (DA) is a means tested scheme and means are assessed in line with the provisions specified in the relevant social welfare legislation. In summary, any income, with some exceptions, belonging to the person is assessable as means for DA purposes.

Another condition for receipt of DA is that a person has an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued (or may be expected to continue for at least one year) and that as a result of this disability, is substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of his/her age, experience and qualifications.

The DA scheme is structured to encourage recipients to avail of opportunities to engage in rehabilitative work where this is appropriate, either in self-employment or in insurable employment. When an individual engages in or is already engaged in rehabilitative work, they can avail of an income disregard of €120 per week, and 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 are also disregarded, for the purpose of the means test.

As the Department has no current claim for DA for the person concerned in order to determine his possible eligibility, he should fully complete and submit an application form (DA1).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Free Travel Scheme Eligibility**

1767. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if changes will be made to the qualifying payments for the free travel pass to include the thalidomide payment as a qualifying payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35844/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 953,000 customers with direct eligibility. Following announcements in Budget 2019 the funding for the free travel scheme was increased by €5 million to a total of €95 million.

The scheme is available to all people aged over 66 living permanently in the State. In general access to a free travel pass for those aged under 66 is linked to a person being in receipt of certain primary Social Protection payments such as disability allowance, invalidity pen-

sion, carer's allowance, blind pension and partial capacity benefit. The thalidomide payment scheme is administered by the Department of Health and is not a Social Protection payment.

The payment a person receives under the thalidomide payment scheme is not reckonable as means for the purpose of Social Protection payments. Subject to satisfying the qualifying conditions a person in receipt of the payment may apply for a Social Protection scheme which allows a person aged under 66 to receive a free travel pass.

Any decision to extend the qualifying criteria for the free travel scheme to include those who are in receipt of a thalidomide payment could only be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection may award a travel supplement in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant. The supplement is intended to assist with ongoing or recurring travel costs that cannot be met from the client's own resources and are deemed to be necessary. Every decision is based on consideration of the circumstances of the case, taking account of the nature and extent of the need and of the resources of the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 1768 answered with Question No. 1764.*

### **Public Services Card**

1769. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of challenging the decision made by the Data Protection Commission with regard to the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36783/19]

1824. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of the processing of data, production and administration of public services cards for those not availing of services with her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35511/19]

1825. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will report on the deletion of data related to the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35512/19]

1831. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if each person that had their data held by the State unlawfully has been communicated with. [35553/19]

1840. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to introduce amendments to section 263 or other sections of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 in relation to the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35627/19]

1897. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress made to date regarding providing an implementation plan to the Data Protection Commission identifying the changes she will make to the public services card scheme; the period within which those changes will be made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36770/19]

1898. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection if she has commenced the process of cessation (details supplied) regarding processing of personal data carried out in connection with the issuing of public services cards in circumstances in which a card is being issued solely for the purpose of a transaction between a member of the public and a specified public body; if she has contacted the public bodies that require the production of a card as a precondition of entering into transactions with individual members of the public; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36773/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1769, 1824, 1825, 1831, 1840, 1897 and 1898 together.

My colleague, Paschal Donohue T.D., Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, and I briefed Government earlier this week on the recent report of the Data Protection Commission (DPC) on the Public Services Card (PSC).

We acknowledged the finding of the DPC that the PSC is validly required for the purposes of transactions with my Department. About 2.5m of the over 3m active users of the PSC are beneficiaries of my Department's services, such as free transport and pension payments, and the DPC report confirms that both DEASP and its clients can continue to rely on the convenience of the PSC for these purposes. We also welcomed the DPC's clarification that nothing in the report or findings undermines or invalidates the use of any PSCs already in issue. This is particularly welcome given the very high level of citizen satisfaction with, and support for, the PSC.

We also updated the Government on our consideration of the DPC's other findings relating to the legal basis for the issue of the PSC for transactions with bodies other than DEASP and the transparency of information provided to people related to the PSC.

Following very careful consideration of the report and having taken the advice of the Attorney General's Office, we informed Government that we are satisfied that the processing of personal data related to the PSC does, in fact, have a strong legal basis in current legislation, that the retention of data is lawful and that the information provided to users does satisfy the requirements of transparency. On this basis, we believe that it would be inappropriate, and potentially unlawful, to withdraw or modify the use of the PSC or the data processes that underpin it as has been requested by the DPC.

Accordingly, it is intended, in line with decisions of successive Governments dating back to 1998, to continue to operate the PSC and the SAFE 2 identity authentication process on which it is based.

We acknowledged that the DPC has reached a different conclusion but are satisfied based on our Departments' consideration of the issue and the advice received from the Attorney General's Office that the correct, and lawful, approach to take is to continue to provide, and support the use of, the PSC, not just by DEASP but by the other public bodies that rely on it.

My Department subsequently wrote to the DPC, on my behalf, advising it of this decision. It also offered, together with the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, to meet with the DPC to clarify a number of matters and to identify through this clarification and, without prejudice to the position either of the DPC or the Department, if there were steps that could be agreed that would address the DPC's concerns.

It was hoped, that, through this process, we might have been able to resolve the matters in question without any need to refer them to the Courts for a definitive decision. However, the DPC has now declined to engage in any discussions and has indicated its intention to institute enforcement proceedings.

My Department is now considering the next steps given that it understands that the DPC is

initiating proceedings, which are subject to an appeals process in the Courts. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to make any further comment on this matter.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

### **Low Pay**

1770. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has examined the policy options in respect of low skill and pay, and in respect of work disproportionately done by women in circumstances in which such jobs congregate near dense urban labour markets, in view of the rise of same in another jurisdiction as per a report (details supplied). [36859/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Low Pay Commission was established in 2015 through the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Act 2015. Its principal function is, once each year, to examine the national minimum hourly rate of pay and to make a recommendation to the Minister regarding the rate, ensuring that all decisions are evidence-based, fair and sustainable, and do not create significant adverse consequences for employment or competitiveness.

It is the view of the Commission that a National Minimum Wage (NMW) provides the best model to establish a ‘pay floor’ below which no-one should be expected to work. A ‘pay floor’ protects those workers who are vulnerable and prone to being exploited.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the composition and profile of women on the National Minimum Wage, the Low Pay Commission produced a report on the preponderance of women on the national minimum wage in 2016.

The report found that the three key factors which explain the preponderance of women in low paid work are the

- Cost of Childcare
- Sector of Employment
- Whether working Part-time or full-time

These factors are interlinked; the high cost of childcare leads to many women taking up part-time or temporary work. As this type of work is most readily available in low-pay sectors such as retail and accommodation, women are found in these sectors in disproportionate numbers. Working within these sectors and working part-time greatly increases the likelihood of being in receipt of the NMW and may go some of the way towards explaining the preponderance of women on the NMW. The Government has recognised the impact and importance of the costs of childcare both to parents and to the labour market, and are taking steps to tackle the issue of affordability of childcare through the National Childcare Scheme.

Employment rights legislation was recently strengthened by the addition of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018, which is one of the most significant pieces of employment legislation in a generation. The Act delivers on the Programme for Government commitment to address the challenges of the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious employment. The key objective of the Act, which came into effect on 4 March 2019, is to improve the security and predictability of hours for those working in less secure employment arrangements and those working variable hours. In a changing world,

this reform ensures that the legal protections for all workers, including women, will match the conditions experienced by a modern workforce and make a real difference in the lives of thousands of workers.

*Question No. 1771 answered with Question No. 1764.*

### **Jobseeker's Benefit Appeals**

1772. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if jobseeker's benefit will be awarded on appeal to a person (details supplied). [34725/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was originally registered in that office on 23 August 2018 and was disallowed by an Appeals Officer on 24 January 2019.

After receiving additional documentation from the person concerned by way of representations from the Deputy the appeal decision is now under review. After consideration of the matter the Appeals Officer to whom the case has been assigned has decided to convene an oral hearing. The person concerned will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Applications**

1773. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an invalidity pension will be awarded to a person (details supplied). [34726/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions. Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) is a payment which allows people to return to work or self-employment (if they have reduced capacity to work) and continue to receive a payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

The lady concerned had been in receipt of PCB which had ceased from 26th Feb 2018. She applied for IP on March 13th 2019 and was determined as being eligible with effect from 14 March 2019. As she remains in employment her PCB payment has been reinstated with effect from 14 March 2019 at the rate applicable to a person who has a moderate incapacity for work which is 50% of the personal rate IP payment.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

1774. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; if not, if a new application needs to be made; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34772/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) was received in respect of this child on the 7th June 2018. The application was not allowed as it was considered that the child did not meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. A letter issued on the 4th September 2018 outlining the decision.

The right to request a review of the decision and/or appeal the decision directly to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) was outlined in the letter.

A request for a review of this decision was not received and an appeal has not been registered with the SWAO. A review of the decision can still be requested in this case. However, due to time that has elapsed since the original application, this would be most effectively progressed by completing the Dom Care 1 form, available on [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) outlining the child's current care needs and including any recent medical reports on their disability.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Payments**

1775. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the working family payment for a person (details supplied) will be backdated to when the qualified child returns to education; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34774/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children. In order to qualify for WFP, an applicant must have a qualified child and be engaged in full-time paid employment as an employee for not less than 38 hours per fortnight.

Under Social Welfare Legislation, a qualified child is defined as a child under 18 years of age or aged between 18 and under 22 and in recognized full-time day education.

Working Family Payment for the person concerned was due for renewal from 17 July 2019. The person's son turned 18 on 22 June 2019 and is not currently in full time education. As the person concerned does not have a qualified child as defined in legislation the claim was therefore disallowed.

A fulltime education certificate issued to the person concerned for completion by the College/University if the child dependent begins third level education. If the certificate is returned confirming that the child has commenced fulltime education the application for the person concerned will be considered from the date College commences.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### **State Pension (Contributory) Data**

1776. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the percentage of applicants who receive the full rate of old age contributory pension in tabular form; the number qualified for the maximum payable rate of contributory pension in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to 30 June 2019; if they were male or female; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34780/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** According to the records available to my Department, there were 419,451 state pension (contributory) claimants as at 30 June 2019. Of these, 233,077 claimants receive maximum rate of pension.

Under social welfare legislation, there are a number of ways to qualify for a state pension (contributory). With effect from 30 March 2018, pension entitlement of those born on or after 1 September 1946 can also be calculated under a new Total Contributions Approach (TCA), which includes provision for new HomeCaring Periods. Claimants are assessed under relevant calculation methods and paid the highest rate of pension achievable.

The numbers in receipt of maximum rate, per gender, for the years ending 2014 to 2018 and to end June 2019 are set out in the following table.

Period	Number	Female	Male	%Female	%Male	Total	% of all claimants
Year end 2014	Max rate	47,557	130,114	27%	73%	177,671	51%
Year end 2015	Max rate	49,978	135,813	27%	73%	185,791	51%
Year end 2016	Max rate	52,498	141,676	27%	73%	194,174	51%
Year end 2017	Max rate	55,172	147,446	27%	73%	202,618	51%
Year end 2018	Max rate	58,041	153,397	27%	73%	211,438	51%
End June 2019	Max rate	72,228	160,849	31%	69%	233,077	56%

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Social Welfare Offices

1777. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if INTREO centres in the north west will be downgraded and turned into front offices; if so, the reason for the downgrading; if her attention has been drawn to the potential negative effects this will have in terms of the provision of local services to persons seeking jobseeker's and other social welfare entitlements in view of the fact that the skill set will have been removed as a result of the loss of front-line staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34809/19]

1778. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the results from a number of piloted projects involving the downgrading of INTREO offices into front and back offices will be made available; if there were reported delays in claims being processed or other issues; if the results will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34810/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I

propose to take Questions Nos. 1777 and 1778 together.

A new operating model which seeks to make best use of resources by balancing workloads across the Intreo network is currently being introduced. This does not represent a downgrading of Intreo Centres. The new model utilises recent ICT developments implemented in Intreo Centres – collectively known as the digital claim - which have removed the location constraints of the previous paper based system and deliver the capability to distribute work to available resources across the Intreo network regardless of location. This enables the separation of Front Office customer facing functions and Back Office processing of claims and decision making which can now be undertaken via a back office that can utilise resources from across the country.

The new operating model was successfully piloted in late 2017 and early 2018 and the model has been approved for national implementation. It has now been implemented across the Department's Branch Office network and in eight Intreo Centres with rollout across the remainder of the Intreo network planned to complete in mid 2020.

Hope that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Invalidity Pension Applications

1779. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension review by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34811/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Following a review of her application, the lady referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 07 March 2019. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 12 September 2019. Any arrears due from 07 March 2019 to 11 September 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 27 August 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Ministerial Advisers Data

1780. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to her and the Minister of State in her Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34845/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under Government guidelines I am permitted to appoint a maximum of two Special Advisors.

Their annual salary is set out in the following table.

-	Position	Salary
Name	Role	Annual Salary
Name	Role	Annual Salary
Denise Duffy	Special Advisor to the Minister	€94,487

-	Position	Salary
Alex Connolly	Special Advisor to the Minister	€110,074*

\*Mr. Connolly is on secondment from Fáilte Ireland for the duration of his appointment and retains his conditions of service from that Body.

### Child Benefit Data

1781. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated annual extra cost that would be incurred if the age of eligibility for child benefit for those in full-time education was raised to 19 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34864/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The estimated annual cost that would incur in restoring the full rate of child benefit to age 19 is €99,503,040. This estimate is based on 59,228 recipients (derived from my Department's statistics on child benefit recipients). This costing represents the upper limit of what may be required. If the child benefit was restored to €70 (half the full rate) the costing is approximately €49,751,520 and if it was restored to €50 it would be €35,536,800.

### Household Benefits Scheme

1782. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to enhance the household benefits package in the context of budget 2020; if she will increase the electricity and gas allowance aspects for budget 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34887/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The household benefits package (HHB) comprises the electricity or gas allowance, and the free television licence. My Department will spend approximately €248 million this year on HHB for over 448,000 customers. The package is generally available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test. The package is also available to some people under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments.

Any decision to enhance the HHB package or to increase the electricity and gas aspect of the package would have budgetary consequences and would have to be considered in the context of overall budget negotiations. The Government has not made any decisions in relation to measures to be introduced in Budget 2020. The Government will finalise its consideration of the Budget in the coming weeks having regard to all of its commitments. The outcome of this process will be announced on Budget Day.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### State Pension (Contributory) Data

1783. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases due for review under the new total contribution system for assessing pensioners for the State pension (contributory); the number of cases reviewed and finalised

to date; the number of cases that have resulted in an increase of €20 and more each week; the number between €10 and €20 per week and less than €10 per week; the number of those that received an increase of less than €10 that are now receiving the maximum pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34911/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Since late September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of over 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 29 August 2019, 92,507 reviews have been completed; of these, 51,943 are women and 40,564 are men. Of the 51,943 women 27,915 (54%) received an increase while the rest remain on their existing rate. Of the 40,564 men ,9,746 (24%) received an increase and the remainder continue to received their same rate of payment.

Most of the remaining reviews for completion are awaiting additional information relating to gaps in the social insurance records of individuals requested by my Department. Review outcomes will issue to all remaining pensioners in the coming weeks.

The latest information available on the detailed increase in rate breakdown requested by the Deputy is as at the end of July 2019 and is provided in the table below.

Weekly personal rate increase	Number of all increases
€ 0.10 - €10.00	13,161
€10.01 - €20.00	3,378
€20.01 or more	18,598

As at the end of July, of those awarded an increase of less than €10.00 following review, 7,298 are now in receipt of the maximum rate of state pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1784. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a carer's allowance will be granted to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34921/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 30 May 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments, by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer, on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 15 July 2019 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### State Pension (Contributory)

1785. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the date from which the increase for a qualified adult payment as part of the State pension (contributory) has been means tested; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34926/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The current arrangements for the means testing of the increase for a qualified adult payment as part of the State pension (contributory) were introduced in section 15 of the Social Welfare Act 1995. The first regulations implementing these arrangements were subsequently introduced in March 1996.

The rate of the increase for a qualified adult depends on various factors including weekly income, the State Pension rate of the primary claimant, and whether the qualified adult is aged over or under 66 years. An example of the current rates are shown in the following table. The rate is tapered when gross weekly income is between €100 and €310. These tapered rates are adjusted if primary rates are adjusted in the annual Budget.

Yearly average PRSI contributions	Personal rate per week, €	Increase for a qualified adult (under 66), €	Increase for a qualified adult (over 66), €
State Pension (Contributory) rates from 29 March 2019			
48 or over	248.30	165.40	222.50
40-47	243.40	157.40	211.40
30-39	223.20	149.80	200.50
20-29	211.40	140.10	188.70
15-19	161.80	107.80	144.50
10-14	99.20	65.70	89.50

### Rent Supplement Scheme Data

1786. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of rent supplement at the end of June in each of the past five years; if persons can continue to be in receipt of the payment if the landlord does not enter the housing assistance payment agreement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34955/19]

1795. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of families on rent supplement at the end of each year from 2014 to 2018; the number of families in receipt of the scheme at the end of June 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35075/19]

1797. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons on long-term rent allowance that have been requested to transfer to the housing assistance payment scheme; the reason for this decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35124/19]

1895. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure on the rent supplement scheme in each of the past five years; the number of recipients in each of the years; and the projected figures for 2019. [36678/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1786, 1795, 1797 and 1895 together.

Rent supplement plays a vital role in supporting families and individuals in private rented accommodation, with the scheme supporting approximately 18,800 recipients for which the Government has provided €132.4 million for 2019.

The strategic goal of returning rent supplement to its original purpose, that of a short-term income support, has been primarily facilitated by the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). The “Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (July 2016), reiterated in the “Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021” (September 2018), is to provide 87,000 flexible housing supports through the HAP and Rental Accommodation Scheme between 2016 and 2021.

HAP has been rolled out on incremental basis since 2014 and as of 1st March 2017 is now available in all 31 Local Authorities (completing Action 2.3 of the Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness).

Through HAP, applicants, with long term housing needs assessments will be able to present to their relevant local authority for assessment for social housing, whereupon following confirmation of need, HAP support may be made available; traditionally these would have sought support through rent supplement as a first recourse.

As part of the transfer process to HAP from rent supplement, people currently in receipt of rent supplement for over 18 months are being requested to contact their local authority to have their housing needs assessed, with a view of transferring to HAP.

The target is to complete all transfers initially identified from rent supplement with long term social housing needs to HAP by 2020. This transfer programme remains in line with forecast with some 49,800 active HAP tenancies currently in place. Post 2020, the ongoing transfer to HAP from rent supplement will continue as tenancies are identified as suitable for HAP transfer.

Failure of a landlord to participate in HAP should not affect an existing customer’s entitlement to rent supplement, provided that the tenant has engaged with the local authority and/or Community Welfare Officer. I can assure the Deputies that officials in the Department continue to make every effort to ensure that persons in receipt of rent supplement are supported in the transfer to HAP.

Statistics in relation to rent supplement recipients and expenditure for the periods 2014 to 2018, along with projected figures for 2019, are provided in the attached tabular statement. The 2019 figures are predicated on current trends associated with Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP) and the underpinning macroeconomic conditions prevailing throughout the year.

Information on these recipients by family composition and the number of requests made

with respect to transfer to HAP are not maintained.

I trust that this clarifies the position for the Deputies.

**Tabular Statement:**

**Rent Supplement Recipient Numbers & Expenditure 2014 to 2019**

YEAR	Q2 (End June)	Q4 (End December)	COST €000
2014	75,710	71,533	338,208
2015	67,016	61,247	311,059
2016	54,181	48,041	275,294
2017	41,240	34,378	230,566
2018	28,978	24,303	179,500
2019	20,156	16,213*	132,395**

\* Forecast for expected Rent Supplement recipients at the end of the year.

\*\* 2019's Revised Estimate

**Social Insurance**

1787. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding PRSI dental check-ups (details supplied). [34973/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Entitlement to treatment benefit is based on having paid PRSI contributions, with customers required to have a certain number of PRSI contributions paid or credited in order to qualify. The number of contributions required varies with age, to take account of the capacity of the person concerned to have paid the required contributions. For example, a customer aged 20 needs a total of 39 qualifying PRSI weeks paid, while someone aged 25 to 59 needs 260, plus 39 in the governing contribution year (which this year is 2017).

The contribution conditions applying to the scheme and the precise age at which the conditions change are kept under review. I wish to assure the Deputy that all PRSI contributions paid are retained on the customer's record and, even if they are not sufficient to provide treatment benefit cover at present, they will help towards the provision of cover in the future.

I trust this helps clarify the position.

**Disability Allowance Appeals**

1788. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34993/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on the 1st August 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought.

When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Operation**

1789. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason persons already working on a community employment scheme are only given a limited time in employment when the schemes are not attracting many applicants to fill the places of those that have to leave; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35027/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Employment (CE) is a positive initiative that enables the long-term unemployed to make a contribution to their communities whilst up-skilling themselves for prospective future employment. It helps to break the cycle of unemployment and improve a person's chances of returning to the labour market.

CE participants between 21 and 55 years are entitled to one year on the programme. This can be extended by up to 2 more years if they are engaged in a recognised training or education award that is helping them progress towards employment. All CE participants age 55 and over can avail of 3 consecutive years on a CE scheme. The overall limit of participation on CE is 6 years from 1st January 2007 (7 years if on a disability payment). Persons aged over 62 can remain on the scheme to State Pension age subject to criteria and limitation.

A number of changes to the terms and conditions of participation on CE were introduced in 2017. The main purpose of these changes was to broaden the availability to a greater number of people on the Live Register and to standardise other conditions around the length of time a person can participate on a programme.

While participation on CE is a stepping stone back to employment, these positions are not full-time sustainable jobs. Nevertheless, I am fully committed to the future of community employment schemes, and I want to see them sustained.

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 with relevant Stakeholders and their submissions are being considered as part of the deliberation process. I expect to have a final report shortly.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1790. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35035/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 26 June 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this gentleman was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 27 August 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

1791. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35037/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on the 18th July 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought.

When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Payments**

1792. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a payment for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35038/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned was in receipt of Illness Benefit from the 15th June 2011 to the 2nd July 2011.

A cheque issued to her on the 5th July 2011 for €626.70 paying her for the full period of her claim. The person concerned contacted the Department in 2011 to inform officials that the cheque had been mislaid. A replacement cheque issued to her on the 23rd August 2011.

The cheque the person concerned found and returned to the Department in February 2019 was the first cheque issued to her on the 5th July 2019. As this cheque was replaced in August

2011, I am advised that the person is not due any further payment on their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Pensions Reform**

1793. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the detail of the general total contributions approach for self-employed persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35043/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The introduction of a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing the level of entitlement for all new state pension contributory claims was signalled by the then Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010. At that time it set a target date of 2020 for the implementation of TCA. More recently, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 targeted implementation of the TCA from Q3 of 2020. This is subject to the necessary legislation being enacted and supporting structures being in place.

Consultation is a very important part of the development and design of the new pension. With this in mind, I launched a public consultation on the design of the TCA on the 28th of May 2018 to which a wide variety of stakeholder groups were invited. A number of workshops were also held on the day to elicit views and feedback.

Shortly afterwards, Oireachtas members were invited to a detailed briefing by my officials in Leinster House. The consultation was open for over three months and the Department received almost 300 responses from individuals and organisations. Those submissions outlined the views of respondents on the issues of most interest to them including how self-employed people and Class S PRSI contributions since 1988 could be treated.

Having carefully examined the outputs of the consultation process, my Department is now designing the scheme and I intend to bring a proposal to Government setting out that design in the near future. When the Government has agreed the approach to be taken, I will initiate the work required to introduce this reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1794. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35067/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 17 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.

*Question No. 1795 answered with Question No. 1786.*

### **Invalidity Pension Reviews**

1796. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a review of an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35123/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The Department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 05 April 2019. He was disallowed IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 27 May 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

He requested a review of the decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his request. Following a review of all the information available it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. He was notified on 22 August 2019 of the outcome of the review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 1797 answered with Question No. 1786.*

### **Living Alone Allowance**

1798. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a living alone allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35144/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This gentleman's application for living alone allowance (LAA) was refused as he was not found to be living alone. He was notified in writing of this decision on 26 July 2019 and was also notified of his right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent social welfare appeals office (SWAO).

Following a request for a review of his decision, the person concerned was requested to submit further supporting evidence on 19 August 2019. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his LAA review and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1799. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35146/19]

6 September 2019

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An increased payment can be made where full-time care is being provided to two people.

The person concerned is in receipt of CA for one care recipient since 26 June 2008.

My department received an application for CA for a 2nd care recipient on 13 September 2018.

A natural justice letter was sent to the person concerned on 5 November 2018 in relation to their hours of employment.

Additional information was requested by a deciding officer on 11 May 2019.

A further information request in relation to the person's application was sent by a deciding officer on 20 August 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.

### **Carer's Allowance Review**

1800. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35149/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that the person being cared for must have such disability that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and is likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

My department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 6 February 2019.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied in respect of the care recipient.

The person concerned was notified on 16 May 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested a review of this decision and submitted further medical

evidence in support of his application on 10 July 2019.

This additional information is currently under consideration by a deciding officer of my Department.

Once the review is complete, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

1801. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35153/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 19 July 2019.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1802. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35161/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** This lady submitted an application for disability allowance on 8 April 2019.

The application, based upon the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and this lady was notified in writing of this decision on 31 July 2019. She was also notified the reason for it and of the option to submit further medical evidence in support of her application for review and of her right to appeal the decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

To date no request for an appeal or review has been received from this lady.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Appeals**

1803. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35162/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 30 July 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments of or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 7 August 2019 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1804. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35163/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I can confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this lady on 10 June 2019.

On 22 August 2019 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on her DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1805. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if additional time to gather medical evidence will be granted to a person (details supplied). [35165/19]

1847. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter will be addressed regarding a disability allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35691/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1805 and 1847 together.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 21 June 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments of (or on behalf of) the Deciding Officer on the grounds of the appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 15 July 2019 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal

based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the person concerned should submit any new evidence he may have in support of his disability allowance application as soon as he receives it. The appeals system is flexible and fair, allowing for further information to be submitted by the appellant up to and including the oral hearing, if the Appeals Officer decides that an oral hearing is appropriate in the case. Any new evidence obtained by the person concerned will be considered by the Appeals Officer.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1806. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35167/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 13 March 2019. The first payment was made by his chosen payment method on 7 August 2019.

Arrears of payment due issued to the person concerned on 14 August 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Appeals**

1807. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35168/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Following a successful appeal, this gentleman has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 19 December 2018. The first payment will be made by his chosen payment method on 28 August 2019.

Arrears of payment due, issued to the person concerned on 21 August 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Overpayments**

1808. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the proactive measures in place to ensure that there is not a build-up of debt owed to her Department by persons who are in receipt of a social welfare payment but who may not have a full entitlement to the payment in view of the fact that her Department regularly contacts

persons regarding overpayments that have occurred over a period of years as a result of possible undeclared income; if there can be a more timely exchange of information between the Revenue Commissioners and her Department to ensure these matters are picked up earlier to prevent large debts building up and the consequent issue of the person having to deal with the overpayments; if there is a protocol in place for the earlier exchange of information between the two organisations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35174/19]

1809. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the breakdown of debts owed to her Department of over €10,000; the number and amount due in respect of each scheme category; the proactive measures in place to prevent the build-up of such debts in respect of schemes in which the highest overpayments tend to arise; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35175/19]

1810. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the details of the debt owed in respect of debts of over €10,000 for each scheme; the years in which the debt arose; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35176/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1808 to 1810, inclusive, together.

Overpayments of social welfare assistance and benefit payments arise as a consequence of decisions made under the relevant sections of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 2005 (as amended). Where an overpayment is raised, the Department is obligated to make every effort to recover sums overpaid.

At the end of July 2019, the Department had almost 11,700 individual customer debts valued at over €10,000, with a total outstanding value of €326.6 million. A breakdown of the debts by scheme and by year raised are set out in tables 1 and 2 respectively below.

My Department has a number of measures in place to detect non-compliance in claims at the earliest possible opportunity, thereby preventing the build-up of large debts by customers of the Department. These measures include:

- reviewing claims on an annual basis across all social welfare schemes and programmes to ensure continued eligibility of customers. Claims are reviewed using a risk-based approach, in addition to random sample checks and specialist investigations. Reviews looking at the medical conditionality underpinning certain schemes are also undertaken;

- verification and validation of information provided by customers in support of an application for payment, including the requirement for original documentation and cross-checking with information already held by my Department and other public bodies;

- data-matching with other Government Departments and public bodies to identify non-compliant claims;

- the use of predictive modelling to detect non-compliant cases and improve non-compliance processes and controls; and

- conducting control surveys of various schemes on an annual basis to identify the risks and address any weaknesses within schemes.

As outlined above, for the past number of years, for control purposes, my Department has been actively engaged in data-matching with other Government Departments and public bodies. The aim of this work is to detect non-compliance as quickly as possible, thereby minimising the build-up of debts to my Department. To this end, there is an extensive legal structure to support

the sharing of data for the purpose of controlling the entitlement and payment of benefits.

Notifications received by my Department from the Revenue Commissioners when persons commence employment form one element of this data matching. This information is used to identify, at the earlier opportunity, customers who may be claiming payments from my Department beyond their period of entitlement.

In previous years, these notifications depended on the periodic returns by employers to Revenue. Since the advent of real-time Revenue data earlier this year, this data is now received in a much timelier manner which allows for potential overpayments to be identified and stopped much more quickly.

The legislative provisions that allow for the specific sharing of data with other bodies are contained in section 261 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 2006. In exercising these functions, the Department also operates in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation.

A Data Sharing Agreement is in place between my Department and Revenue to govern the transfer of data between the two organisations, in strict accordance with GDPR.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

TABLE 1 - As at end July 2019 - Outstanding customer debts valued over €10,000 - by Scheme		
Scheme Overpaid	Number of cases	Value Outstanding
Jobseeker's Allowance	3,093	€84,235,228
One Parent Family Payment	2,798	€71,382,792
Disability Allowance	1,056	€32,375,471
State Pension Non-Contributory	1,035	€40,697,930
Carer's Allowance	789	€22,252,247
State Pension Contributory	432	€12,246,413
Child Benefit	378	€6,557,206
Invalidity Pension	299	€8,186,648
Illness Benefit	298	€6,704,620
Widow(er)'s Pension Contributory	241	€8,327,958
Basic Supplement Welfare	213	€4,567,234
Rent Supplement	167	€3,821,148
Deserted Wife's Benefit	143	€6,316,791
Farm Assist	126	€4,044,291
Family Income Supplement	119	€2,468,202
Widow's Non Contributory Pension	75	€1,997,425
Jobseeker's Benefit	73	€1,120,563
Pre-retirement Allowance	51	€1,093,618
Back To Work Scheme	47	€794,618
Deserted Wife's Allowance	37	€1,491,901
Blind Person's Pension	34	€1,353,537
State Pension Transition	30	€661,073

Scheme	Number of cases	Value Outstanding
Back To Work Enterprise Allowance	30	€629,750
Mortgage Interest Supplement	23	€420,410
Disablement Benefit	20	€581,398
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	15	€540,960
Rent Allowance	15	€504,214
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	13	€337,349
Domiciliary Care	10	€154,722
Carer's Benefit	8	€147,461
Third Level Option	5	€108,821
Second Level Option	5	€82,463
Rural Social Scheme	3	€63,737
Part-time Job Incentive	3	€57,998
Diet Supplement	2	€21,148
Death Benefit	1	€112,229
Adoptive Parent Benefit	1	€28,299
Jobs Initiative Scheme	1	€14,738
Magdalen Commission Scheme	1	€14,620
National Internship	1	€12,784
Respite Care	1	€10,925
Partial Capacity Benefit	1	€10,678
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,693</b>	<b>€326,551,618</b>

Year debt raised	Number of cases	Value Outstanding
1984	3	€48,809
1985	2	€28,486
1986	13	€211,670
1987	12	€229,984
1988	26	€449,808
1989	38	€686,644
1990	41	€786,039
1991	36	€680,593
1992	56	€941,465
1993	38	€675,425
1994	74	€1,401,837
1995	82	€1,575,432
1996	94	€1,727,136
1997	117	€2,258,786

Year	Number of Debts	Value (€)
1998	108	€2,185,115
1999	129	€2,603,489
2000	121	€2,441,710
2001	119	€2,429,091
2002	100	€2,126,999
2003	290	€5,151,392
2004	626	€11,115,702
2005	406	€9,074,535
2006	314	€6,743,532
2007	248	€5,825,459
2008	288	€6,911,593
2009	414	€11,554,519
2010	518	€13,842,217
2011	618	€16,580,118
2012	649	€19,985,154
2013	910	€27,918,697
2014	824	€23,616,400
2015	848	€27,115,424
2016	770	€25,016,531
2017	982	€31,662,761
2018	1,030	€35,482,957
2019	749	€25,466,111
Total	11,693	€326,551,618

### Carer's Benefit Payments

1811. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of carer's benefit arrears for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35203/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a child or an adult in need of full-time care and attention. To qualify, the applicant must be providing full-time care and attention to a person requiring that level of care.

Under the provisions of the legislation a person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they can show that adequate provision has been made for the care of the care recipient(s) while they engage in employment, self-employment or on training or courses of education, provided that the combined hours from such activities do not exceed 15 hours per week outside your home and the earnings from employment do not exceed €332.50 per week.

As the hours of employment in this case were not reduced to a maximum of 15 per week until 17/6/19, Carer's Benefit can only be awarded from the following Thursday 20/6/19. The payment can continue for 104 weeks from that date while all other qualifying conditions continue to be satisfied.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

1812. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35291/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) was received from this lady on the 14th June 2019. Applications received early June 2019 are currently being finalised. The application will be considered by a deciding officer in due course and the decision notified to her as soon as possible.

Decisions on new applications are currently taking approximately 10 to 12 weeks.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Status**

1813. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35292/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 31st May 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought.

When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

1814. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35304/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) claim made by this lady has now been awarded and is in payment. A decision letter issued to her on the 30th July 2019 to inform her that her DCA was awarded on appeal, with effect from 1st August 2018.

Arrears due for this period issued with her August 2019 payment on the 20th August 2019.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

### Departmental Expenditure

1815. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by her Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by her Department over the next five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35340/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The amount expended on Lotus Notes licences by my Department from 2009 to 2019 and the projected expenditure for the subsequent five years is outlined in the table below.

Year	Expenditure
2009	€58,399.73
2010	€25,524.13
2011	€14,532.10
2012	€12,523.45
2013	€18,901.64
2014	€5,337.59
2015	€6,213.35
2016	€6,751.10
2017	€6,722.44
2018	€6,722.44
2019	€6,722.54
Total	€168,350.41
Projected five Years	€33,612.21

### Disability Allowance Payments

1816. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when disability allowance arrears will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35375/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 14 March 2018. The first payment was made by her chosen payment method on 7 August 2019.

Arrears of payment due issued to this lady on 19 August 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals

1817. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the procedure for the review of a decision made regarding a claim for supplementary welfare allowance; her views on whether the review should be dealt with by a different person within her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35376/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. The main purpose of the scheme is to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes.

Supports provided under the SWA scheme can consist of a basic primary weekly payment and/or a weekly/monthly supplement in respect of certain expenses, as well as single exceptional needs payments (ENPs) and urgent needs payments (UNPs).

Determinations made in relation to claims made under Sections 196, 197 and 198 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation Act) 2005, namely basic weekly SWA and supplements, can be appealed to the Social Welfare Appeals Office under Section 311 of that Act.

Determinations made in relation to claims made under Sections 200, 201 and 202 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation Act) 2005, namely allowances-in-kind, ENPs and UNPs, can be reviewed by a SWA Reviewing Officer under Section 323 of that Act.

In all cases where new facts or evidence is produced by the applicant, the officer who made the initial determination, or another officer, can review the claim and make a revised determination where appropriate.

Decisions on claims are communicated to customers in writing, as well as the customer's right to appeal or review, as appropriate.

I do not propose to amend these procedures at this time.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

1818. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a deserted wives payment for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35389/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Deserted Wife's Allowance is a means tested payment made to women under the age of 66 years who have no dependent children, who were deserted by their husband and who do not qualify for Deserted Wife's Benefit.

This person was in receipt of Deserted Wife's Allowance from 30/6/1988 to 1/12/1990. The person was paid One Parent Family Payment from 6/12/1990 to 24/6/2009. The person is in receipt of Carer's Allowance since 18/10/2007 to date.

The Deserted Wife's Allowance scheme is closed to new applicants since 2/1/1997, it is therefore no longer possible to apply for this payment. There is no provision in legislation to revert to Deserted Wife's Allowance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Applications**

1819. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for rent support in the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35401/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Rent supplement claim of the person concerned in this case was disallowed and a decision letter issued accordingly on 13/2/17 as they had failed to provide necessary supporting documentation required to provide for an accurate assessment of entitlement.

The person concerned appealed the decision. The appeal was disallowed by an independent Review Officer on 21/3/18 as the person concerned had failed to provide documents required to establish an entitlement to rent supplement. I am advised that there has been no further contact with my Department by the person concerned.

It is open to the person concerned to contact this Department if she wishes to pursue a new application for a rent supplement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Back to Education Allowance Applications**

1820. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which the back to education allowance is approved in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35404/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised that my Department has been unable to facilitate an answer to the Deputy's question in the absence of a PPS number. The Department contacted the Deputy who attempted to get a PPS number but was unable to provide it in the time available.

It is open to the Deputy to contact my Department when a PPS number is available for reference.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1821. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35415/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 19 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.

### **Treatment Benefit Scheme Eligibility**

1822. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an arrangement is in place for costs to be covered in respect of optical procedures in circumstances in which the process has been carried out and paid for on a private basis; if recoupment can be made based on the full PRSI records of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35448/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under the treatment benefit scheme, PRSI contributors with the required number of paid or credited contributions and their dependent spouses can avail of free eye examinations and the provision and repair of spectacles.

There is currently no provision under the scheme to cover any cost associated with cataract surgery or any of the associated procedures referred to in the Deputy's question.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Child Benefit Expenditure**

1823. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the annual budgetary cost of extending child benefit to students over 18 years of age until they complete their five- or six-year secondary education after transitioning from primary to secondary in the normal way; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35470/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid, as of end-July 2019 to almost 630,000 families in respect of nearly 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

Given the universality of Child Benefit, extending the payment in respect of full time students in second level education who are over 18 years of age would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context. The estimated cost of extending child benefit as proposed is estimated to be in the region of €80-100 million.

Families on low incomes may be able to avail of a number of social welfare schemes that support children in full-time education until the age of 22, including:

- Increase for a Qualified Child (IQCs) with primary social welfare payments;
- the Working Family Payment for low-paid employees with children;
- the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

These schemes provide targeted assistance that is directly linked to household income and thereby support low-income families with older children participating in full-time education.

*Questions Nos. 1824 and 1825 with Question No. 1769.*

## **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

1826. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on a review of a decision on an invalidity pension application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35517/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The Department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 13 December 2018. He was disallowed IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 12 March 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

He requested a review of the decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of his request. Following a review of all the information available it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. He was notified on 26 August 2019 of the outcome of the review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

## **State Pension (Contributory)**

1827. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if persons born before 1 September 1946 will be considered in the review of contributory pensions under the new aggregated contributions method of pension calculation; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there are persons born before that date who took time out of the workplace to care for family and view it as unfair not to be included in the review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35537/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A policy to introduce the Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pensions calculation was adopted by Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010, as was the decision to base the entitlements of all new pensioners on this approach from around 2020.

In January 2018, I announced the Government Decision to introduce a new interim Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to the calculation of State Pension that will allow pensioners who reached pension age from September 2012 (i.e., those born on or after 1 September 1946), to have their pension entitlement calculated by an interim “Total Contributions Approach” (TCA) which will include up to 20 years of new HomeCaring Periods. This approach is expected to significantly benefit many people, particularly women, whose work history includes an extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. The TCA will ensure that the totality of a person’s social insurance contributions - as opposed to the timing of them - determines their final pension outcome. The HomeCaring Periods can be claimed for any year in which they occurred - they are not limited to years since 1994.

People whose pensions were decided under the 2000-2012 ratebands (i.e., those born before 1 September 1946) were subject to a significantly more generous payment regime than those who qualified before or afterwards, as a Yearly Average of only 20 contributions per year (out

of a maximum of 52) could attract a 98% pension. The effect of those changes, as it impacted upon those new pensioners since 2012, will be familiar to anyone who followed the debate on this matter over the last 6 years. If pre-2012 pensioners were also allowed avail of HomeCaring Credits, their arrangements, as a group, would continue to be significantly more generous than those of post-2012 pensioners. There would also be a very significant cost which would be expected to be of the order of several hundred millions of euros each year. This in turn could significantly impact funds for future pension increases with consequential implications for pensioner poverty.

For those with insufficient contributions to meet the requirements for a State pension (contributory), they may qualify for a means tested State pension (non-contributory), the maximum personal rate for which is €237 (over 95% of the maximum rate of the contributory pension). This rate of payment does not include rent allowance, household benefits or fuel allowance. Alternatively, if their spouse is a State pensioner and they have significant household means, their most beneficial payment may be an Increase for a Qualified Adult, based on their personal means, and amounting up to 90% of a full contributory pension.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Farm Assist Scheme**

1828. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the means test will be increased for farm assist (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35539/19]

1829. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if changes (details supplied) to the means test for farm assist will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35540/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1828 and 1829 together.

The farm assist (FA) scheme is a means-tested payment for farmers on low incomes and is similar to jobseeker's allowance (JA). To qualify for the scheme a person must satisfy the means test and be engaged in farming. Recipients retain the advantages of the JA scheme such as the retention of secondary benefits and access to activation programmes. The 2019 Revised Estimates provide for expenditure of some €72 million for the FA scheme (which also includes the Fish Assist provision).

The assessment of means for the purpose of qualifying for FA is designed to reflect the actual net income from farming. Income and expenditure figures for the preceding year are generally used as an indicator of the expected position in the following year. However, account is taken of any exceptional circumstances to ensure that the assessment reflects the current situation accurately. In the case of capital assets, such as farm machinery and equipment, the capital cost is not allowed as an expense. An allowance is made for the depreciation of these assets instead. Where farm machinery or equipment is purchased outright, an allowance for depreciation relative to their usage is made. There would be a cost to increase the depreciation to a standard rate of 10% which could only be considered in a budgetary context.

Farm machinery depreciation is calculated on the gross output of the farm, not on the gross income. Gross Output is the sum of all sales and grants plus any other farm income, less the cost of animal purchases only (expenses are not included). The means assessment for the FA scheme, including the current guidelines for determining depreciation of farm equipment and

machinery is detailed on the Departmental website at the following link: <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Farm-Means---Assessment-of-Income-from-Farming.aspx>.

Once land is under forestry it is considered as being used for husbandry and it does not attract a capital value for means assessment purposes. The forest premium scheme applies to farmers and others who have land under afforestation. Premiums paid under this scheme are assessed as farm income for the FA means test. However, allowances are made in respect of any necessary expenditure incurred with regard to the scheme. The afforestation grant scheme is available to private landowners for projects approved by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine. It is designed to cover only the costs involved in planting, maintenance etc so monies accrued from this grant are not assessable as means for FA.

I want to advise the Deputy of the improvements to the FA scheme in recent years. Budget 2017 fully reversed the previous cuts to the means test. The changes included that 70% of farm income is now assessed as means, down from 100% (which is equivalent to a 30% income disregard) and there is an additional annual means disregard of €254 for each of the first two children and €381 for the third and subsequent children. Budget 2019 also provided for a €5 per week increase in the personal rate of payment for FA from €198 to €203 per week from 25 March 2019 with proportionate increases for qualified adults and children.

Any further changes to the FA scheme would have to be considered in a budgetary context and within the scope of the overall resources available for welfare improvements.

### **Gender Recognition**

1830. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding the review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35547/19]

1832. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when decisions will be taken on the review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35557/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1830 and 1832 together.

In July 2018, I published the Report of the Group Established to Review the Operation of the Gender Recognition Act 2015. The recommendations in the report of the Review Group involve issues that are complex and it has been necessary to take some time to take advice and consider them in detail. That said, a number of recommendations are more administrative in nature and these are currently being progressed at official level.

A report is being prepared under section 7 of the Gender Recognition Act 2015, in response to the review, and I expect to be in a position to lay it before the Houses of the Oireachtas in the near future.

*Question No. 1831 answered with Question No. 1769.*

*Question No. 1832 answered with Question No. 1830.*

### **Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Applications**

1833. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a partial capacity application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35560/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Partial Capacity Benefit allows a person who has been in receipt of Illness Benefit for six months and who may not have full capacity for work, to return to employment and continue to receive a partial or full payment from the Department.

The rate of payment is based on the assessment of the person's restriction on capacity for work; either moderate, severe or profound and the person retains 50%, 75%, or 100% of their Illness Benefit payment respectively.

The Partial Capacity Benefit claim from the person concerned has been processed. A letter issued on the 16th August 2019 informing him that following a review of the medical evidence provided, he has been assessed as having a severe restriction on his capacity for work.

The person concerned should inform the Department in advance of starting work in order for his Partial Capacity Benefit to be put into payment.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1834. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35575/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The table below contains my Department's expenditure to date on external consultancies and bodies who delivered training on all aspects of GDPR. In addition my Department undertakes in house training and awareness initiatives on GDPR on an ongoing basis including a data protection e-learning training module which is available to all staff.

External consultancies	Cost
ALLONE Corporate Solutions Ltd.	€2,245
Bridgecastle Info Management T/A Castlebridge	€36,264
CMG Professional training	€2,350
Institute of Public Administration	€1,350
International Association of Privacy Professionals	€445
Irish Academy of Computer Training (IACT)	€36,912
Law Society of Ireland	€1,650
PDP	€3,990
Public Affairs Ireland	€43,052
Total	€128,258

## **Child Benefit Eligibility**

1835. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if child benefit will be extended to families in receipt of the working family payment whose children are over 18 years of age and still attending second level school; her views on the fact that a school child sitting the leaving certificate is fully dependent on his or her parents and the loss of €140 a month is considerable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35596/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid, as of end-July 2019 to almost 630,000 families in respect of nearly 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

Given the universality of Child Benefit, extending the payment in respect of full time students in second level education who are over 18 years of age would have significant cost implications and would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

In addition to the Working Family Payment, families on low incomes may be able to avail of a number of social welfare schemes that support children in full-time education until the age of 22, including:

- Increase for a Qualified Child (IQCs) with primary social welfare payments;
- the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

These schemes provide targeted assistance that is directly linked to household income and thereby support low-income families with older children participating in full-time education.

## **Working Family Payment Applications**

1836. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a working family payment application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35617/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children. In order to qualify for WFP, an applicant must have a qualified child and be engaged in full-time paid employment as an employee for not less than 38 hours per fortnight.

To qualify for Working Family Payment a person must be in employment working a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight as defined in legislation Article 175 of S.I 142/2007.

Working family payment for the person concerned was due for renewal on 4 July 2019. From the information provided and our records at the time of renewal the person concerned did not meet the condition of being in employment for a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight and the claim was disallowed.

The person concerned has appealed the decision and the file has been referred to the Appeals Office.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1837. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a disability allowance will be approved for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35619/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 14 June 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this gentleman was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 22 August 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Benefit Eligibility**

1838. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a special needs assistant who worked full-time before switching to part-time work and then was made redundant would be assessed for social supports based on the assistant's time as a part-time worker only or would also have his or her record as a full-time worker considered when calculating his or her rate of social welfare support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35621/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Jobseeker's Benefit (JB) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) are the two main income supports available from my Department to people who have lost work and are unable to find alternative full time employment. JB is a social insurance based scheme and applicants must have sufficient insurance contributions to qualify. If a person is not entitled to JB they may be able to claim the means tested JA support.

To qualify for JB a person must be available for and genuinely seeking full time employment. They must also be fully unemployed for four days in any period of seven consecutive days. The social insurance contribution condition for JB requires a jobseeker to have at least 104 weeks qualifying PRSI contributions paid since they first started work and 39 weeks qualifying PRSI contributions paid or credited in the relevant tax year, or 26 weeks qualifying PRSI paid in the relevant tax year and 26 weeks qualifying PRSI paid in the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year. The relevant tax year is the second last complete tax year before the year in which the JB claim was made. So, for claims made in 2019 the relevant tax year is 2017. This requirement demonstrates that the person has a reasonable connection to the workforce.

The rate of payment of JB is graduated according to a person's earnings in the relevant tax year rather than by the number of hours they worked in that year. The reason for the link between the rate of payment and the person's earnings is to ensure that disincentives to employment are not created. Details of the graduated JB rates are shown in the table below:

Average Weekly Earnings	Personal Rate	Increase for a Qualified Adult (IQA)
Less than €150	€91.10	€87.20
€150.00-€219.99	€131.00	€87.20
€220.00-€299.99	€159.00	€87.20
€300.00 or more	€203.00	€134.70

Where a person does not qualify for JB or has an entitlement to JB at a lower graduated rate they can opt to apply for JA. Depending on the person's means they may be entitled to the maximum personal rate of JA which is the same as the maximum personal rate for JB.

The Deputy should advise the person concerned to contact their local Intreo Centre to discuss the appropriate support for their particular circumstances.

I trust this information is useful for the Deputy.

### Disability Allowance Applications

1839. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35624/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Following the submission of further medical evidence by the person concerned, their case has been reviewed and they have been awarded disability allowance with effect from 23 January 2019. The first payment was made on 28 August 2019.

Arrears of payment due issued to the person concerned on 23 August 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 1840 answered with Question No. 1769.*

*Question No. 1841 answered with Question No. 1764.*

### Departmental Customer Charters

1842. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of complaints her Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if her attention has been drawn to issues and-or problems in having complaints registered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35643/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) is committed to delivering an excellent Customer Service experience. My Department aims to provide the best possible service at all times, ensuring all customers are served in a fair, courteous and timely manner, be informed of their rights and entitlements, be provided with full and clear information and have their privacy respected.

If a person is dissatisfied with the standard of service that they have received, in the first instance, they are advised to convey their concerns to the section of the Department with which they have been dealing. If the issue is not resolved to their satisfaction, a person can submit a

formal complaint, either locally or to the Department's dedicated Customer Service Unit.

The predominant way that such feedback is received is online, using the Customer Feedback Form, which is accessed on the Department's website at: <https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/secure/Submit-a-comment-or-compliment.aspx>

Alternatively, a person can make contact by phone, letter, email or speak to a member of staff in any of our Intreo offices around the country.

Once a comment, compliment or complaint is received, an acknowledgement is issued within three working days including a reference number. Complaints are then forwarded to the Customer Service Officer(s) within the relevant business area(s) to be investigated and responded to within 15 working days. If it is not possible to issue a response within that timeframe, an interim response will issue and provide an expected completion date. All complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and impartially, and the outcome of the investigation will be reflected in the final response.

If the response is not satisfactory, a review of the complaint can be requested, with an explanation to why they are unhappy with the original response. A review is conducted by another Customer Service Officer, in many cases the line manager of the original responder.

If the review does not resolve the issue, the complainant is advised that they can contact the Office of the Ombudsman to seek to have the matter examined by that office.

1,045 complaints/ comments were registered in 2017.

1,810 complaints/ comments registered in 2018.

971 complaints/ comments registered in the year to end July 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **State Pensions Reform**

1843. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a change to the calculation for the State pension (contributory) will be introduced for those who are unable to avail of the home caring periods scheme or the homemaker's scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35665/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A policy to introduce the Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to pensions calculation was adopted by Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010, as was the decision to base the entitlements of all new pensioners on this approach from late 2020.

In January 2018, I announced the Government Decision to introduce a new interim Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to the calculation of State Pension that will allow pensioners who reached pension age from September 2012 (i.e., those born on or after 1 September 1946), to have their pension entitlement calculated by an interim "Total Contributions Approach" (TCA) which will include up to 20 years of new HomeCaring Periods. This approach is expected to significantly benefit many people, particularly women, whose work history includes an extended period of time outside the paid workplace, while raising families or in a caring role. The TCA will ensure that the totality of a person's social insurance contributions - as opposed to the timing of them - determines their final pension outcome. The HomeCaring Periods can be claimed for any year in which they occurred - they are not limited to years since 1994.

People whose pensions were decided under the 2000-2012 ratebands (i.e., those born before 1 September 1946) were subject to a significantly more generous payment regime than those who qualified before or afterwards, as a Yearly Average of only 20 contributions per year (out of a maximum of 52) could attract a 98% pension. The effect of those changes, as it impacted upon those new pensioners since 2012, will be familiar to anyone who followed the debate on this matter over the last 6 years. If pre-2012 pensioners were also allowed avail of HomeCaring Credits, their arrangements, as a group, would continue to be significantly more generous than those of post-2012 pensioners. There would also be a very significant cost which would be expected to be of the order of several hundred millions of euros each year. This in turn could significantly impact funds for future pension increases with consequential implications for pensioner poverty.

For those with insufficient contributions to meet the requirements for a State pension (contributory), they may qualify for a means tested State pension (non-contributory), the maximum personal rate for which is €237 (over 95% of the maximum rate of the contributory pension). This rate of payment does not include rent allowance, household benefits or fuel allowance. Alternatively, if their spouse is a State pensioner and they have significant household means, their most beneficial payment may be an Increase for a Qualified Adult, based on their personal means, and amounting up to 90% of a full contributory pension.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1844. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35688/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I can confirm that the Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from the person concerned on 9 November 2018. This application for DA was refused on failing to supply the information which was requested by a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) and they were notified in writing of this decision on 21 March 2019.

This gentleman requested a review of the decision by a deciding officer (DO) and submitted additional evidence for consideration on 12 June 2019. The application has been referred back to the SWI for a report on the person's means and circumstances.

Once the SWI has submitted his/her report to DA section, a decision will be made on the application and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1845. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35689/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 29 May 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this gentleman was substantially restricted

in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 21 August 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1846. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35690/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 17 April 2019. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 8 August 2019 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 1847 answered with Question No. 1805.*

### **Disability Allowance Appeals**

1848. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35692/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, including that deduced at the oral hearing, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 19 July 2019.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Applications**

1849. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on an application for the working family payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[35730/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work weekly payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children.

An application for WFP was received from the person concerned on 08 August 2019.

The person concerned has been awarded WFP with effect from 08 August 2019 to 05 August 2020. The first weekly payment and all arrears owing will issue to their selected financial account on 27 August 2019.

The person concerned was notified on 23 August 2019 of this decision and of the right of review and appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1850. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35749/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I can confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this lady on 17 May 2019.

On 27 August 2019 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on her eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on her DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1851. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35762/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 21 August 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.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals**

1852. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a rent support increase will be arranged in the case of a person (details supplied) notwithstanding replies to previous Parliamentary Questions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35780/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned had their Rent Supplement claim reviewed in April 2019. The amount payable did not change as there was no change in circumstances.

My Department has not been made aware of any change in the person's circumstances since this review. If there has been a change in circumstances, such as an increase in rent, the person concerned should contact my Department and seek a new review of their Rent Supplement claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Overpayments**

1853. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the basis on which a person (details supplied) came to receive an overpayment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35781/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned is in receipt of a weekly basic supplementary welfare allowance payment (BASI). One of the qualifying conditions for this payment is that a person must satisfy a means test and other social welfare payments are assessable as means.

The spouse of the person concerned is currently in receipt of a half-rate carer's allowance payment. An overpayment occurred as the half-rate carer's payment was not assessed as means at the time of application. Carer's allowance payment has now been assessed as means with effect from 11/7/19 and the weekly BASI payment has been reduced accordingly.

This Department notified the person concerned by letter dated 26/7/19 that it would recover the resulting debt by reducing his weekly BASI payment by 15% of his personal rate. The person concerned was given the opportunity to advise the Department of any facts or circumstances that may be relevant to the repayment of the debt. The person concerned was also advised that overpayment deductions would begin 3 weeks from the date of the letter.

There has been no contact to date from the person concerned regarding the recoupment of the debt, but the community welfare officer will contact the person concerned to discuss the reduction of the weekly repayment.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1854. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance will be processed and approved in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35783/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is

habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 23 July 2019. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1855. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which provision can be made to facilitate a partial social welfare payment in the case of a person (details supplied); the extent to which payment is available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35791/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Based on the evidence supplied in support of their application for disability allowance (DA), this person's application was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. They were notified in writing of this decision on 20 March 2019.

The person concerned requested an appeal of the decision. The social welfare appeals office (SWAO) decided that the medical qualifying condition was satisfied and the DA was awarded to the person concerned with effect from 30 January 2019.

DA is a means-tested payment. Means have been assessed from the employment of the person concerned and a reduced amount of DA was awarded. If the circumstances of the person have changed they can request a review of their means and we can adjust their DA payment accordingly.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Partial Capacity Benefit Scheme Applications**

1856. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on an application for partial capacity benefit by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35798/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Partial Capacity Benefit allows a person who has been in receipt of Illness Benefit for six months and who may not have full capacity for work, to return to employment and continue to receive a full or partial payment from the Department.

The rate of payment is based on the assessment of the person's restriction on capacity for work; either moderate, severe or profound, and the person retains 50%, 75%, or 100% of their Illness Benefit payment respectively.

The Partial Capacity Benefit claim from the person concerned has been processed. A letter issued on the 27th August 2019 informing her that she has been assessed as having a moderate restriction on her capacity for work.

6 September 2019

The person concerned should inform the Department in advance of starting work in order for her Partial Capacity Benefit to be put into payment.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Status**

1857. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an oral hearing for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35839/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case.

The arrangements for this oral hearing will be finalised by the end of this week and the appellant will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

1858. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on an invalidity pension review claim by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35972/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The Department received a claim for IP for the lady concerned on 07 February 2019. Her claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on 24 May 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review or appeal.

The lady concerned requested a review and lodged an appeal of the decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) and submitted further medical evidence in support of her request. Following a review of all the information available to date, it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision. A submission has been prepared by the Department and forwarded to the SWAO for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Blind Person's Pension Data**

1859. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the number of persons in receipt of the blind pension at year end 2018, by gender and county. [36027/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The number of persons in receipt of Blind Pension at end of 2018 was 1,174. The breakdown of gender and county are detailed below:

County	Male	Female	Total
Carlow	15	8	23
Cavan	9	3	12
Clare	10	4	14
Cork	49	44	93
Donegal	30	33	63
Dublin	157	158	315
Galway	44	24	68
Kerry	24	22	46
Kildare	21	10	31
Kilkenny	13	14	27
Laois	12	11	23
Leitrim	3	3	6
Limerick	25	24	49
Longford	7	4	11
Louth	27	15	42
Mayo	24	23	47
Meath	14	17	31
Monaghan	8	3	11
Offaly	12	15	27
Roscommon	6	5	11
Sligo	14	24	38
Tipperary	25	21	46
Waterford	16	19	35
Westmeath	9	15	24
Wexford	22	30	52
Wicklow	18	11	29
Total	614	560	1174

### Blind Welfare Allowance

1860. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to introduce a measure to disregard the blind welfare allowance for means testing purposes; the full-year cost of disregarding the blind welfare allowance in the means test for the disability allowance; the number of persons affected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36028/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The blind welfare allowance is a means-tested payment from the Health Service Executive to people who are blind or visually impaired. The allowance is paid to eligible people from 18 years of age.

Blind welfare allowance is considered as means when applying for disability allowance and means are calculated in accordance with Part 2 of Schedule 3 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 as amended. All cash income to the person (and, where relevant, to the person's spouse, civil partner or cohabitant) is assessed except for specific exclusions.

There are currently just over 3,700 people receiving the blind welfare allowance. It is estimated that about 760 recipients of means tested payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection would be impacted by disregarding this allowance in the calculation of their means. The estimated full year cost of this disregard is €2.3 million.

Any changes to the treatment of blind welfare allowance in the means testing of social welfare payments would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals**

1861. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36065/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 6th March 2019. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 8th May 2019 setting out the decision of the deciding officer to refuse the allowance.

An appeal was registered by the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 27th May 2019. As part of the appeals process, the application was re-examined by a deciding officer and the person concerned was notified on the 20th August 2019 that the review was unsuccessful. An appeal submission was prepared and forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the 20th August 2019 for consideration by an Appeals Officer. The Social Welfare Appeals Office will contact her directly about the outcome of the appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Consultations**

1862. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 782 of 9 July 2019, the work undertaken by the data specialist her Department engaged at a cost of €97,150 in 2019; if they were engaged on matters in respect of the public services card and or reports examining the public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36079/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The work undertaken by the data specialist related to the provision of technical assistance in relation to data analysis and statistical modelling work that is ongoing in the Department. The data specialist was an expert in SAS, the statistical software package used by the Department.

I can confirm the data specialist was not engaged in respect of the Public Services Card and/or reports examining the Public Services Card.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

## **Departmental Staff Recruitment**

1863. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of recruiting ten additional medical assessors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36105/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget. Any additions above and beyond this require the approval of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

The staffing needs for all areas within my Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the ongoing need to respond to new and changing demands in a wide range of services. This is to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

The estimated full year cost of recruiting ten additional medical assessors would be approximately €1,277,870.00. This calculation is based on the DPER recommended standard estimation methodology using service-wide averages, covering pay and non-pay costs.

## **Illness Benefit Applications**

1864. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on the average wait time for applicants to receive illness benefit; the length of time applications are taking to process; if the process is handled in a timely and efficient manner; her plans to streamline the process further; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36111/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Currently, the average time to award an Illness benefit claim is one week. Applicants for Illness Benefit who are due a payment, and whose medical certificates and claims are in order, receive their payment promptly.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

## **Departmental Internships**

1865. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in her Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if her Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36147/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department has not issued or granted unpaid internships over the past five years.

My Department runs two annual internship programmes which are advertised in participating colleges. Up to nine interns are assigned to the Information Systems Internship Programme and up to four are assigned to the Data Science/Statistics Internship Programme. The programmes run for six and nine months respectively and the interns are assigned at the Executive

Officer grade.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

1866. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36169/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 24 June 2019. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received and the case referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals**

1867. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a jobseeker's appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36179/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeal of the person concerned took place on 20 August 2019 and that the Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

1868. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a matter (detail supplied); if further discussions have taken place with unions on the matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36208/19]

1877. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter regarding proposed industrial action by community employment supervisors

will be examined (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36466/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1868 and 1877 together.

First, I wish to acknowledge the valuable and dedicated service that Community Employment (CE) sponsor organisations provide in running CE Schemes all over the country. CE supervisors, as employees of these organisations, are an integral part of that good work. We simply could not sustain a lot of our local community services without their work and it is, of course, a concern to me that the Supervisors felt compelled to take industrial action earlier this year.

As the Deputy is aware the industrial action relates to a claim by CE supervisors and assistant supervisors who have been seeking for a number of years, through their union representatives, the allocation of Exchequer funding to implement a 2008 Labour Court recommendation relating to the provision of a pension scheme.

I would like to confirm that it was never intended that my Department would withdraw funding from any CE sponsor as a result of industrial action by CE supervisors. However, sponsors were asked to ensure that their application for funding for payroll costs for the period of industrial action reflected the withdrawal of labour, in accordance with industrial relations practice.

It is important to emphasise the fact that CE scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive public funding. They are not employees of my Department or public servants, and as such were not subject to pay reductions, pension contributions or the Pension-related Deduction (PRD) under the provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) which only applied to public servants.

The State is not responsible for funding pension arrangements for employees of private companies, even where the companies in question are reliant on State funding. Pension arrangements are a matter to be agreed between employees and their employers. All employers, including CE sponsoring organisations, are legally obliged to offer access to at least one Standard Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) under the Pension (Amendment) Act 2002. CE supervisors may qualify for the State Pension (Contributory) if they have accrued sufficient PRSI contributions. The State Pension (Contributory) is not means-tested.

The issue was examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A number of Departments including my own Department were represented on this group, as were the unions and Pobal.

A detailed scoping exercise was carried out with input from the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) on the potential costs of providing Exchequer support for the establishment of such a pension scheme for employees across the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland. This exercise estimated a potential cost to the State of between €188 million per annum and €347m depending on the numbers involved, which is hard to establish. This excludes any provision for immediate ex-gratia lump sum payment of pension as sought, which could entail a further Exchequer cost of up to €318 million.

Notwithstanding the above, I am currently engaging with representatives of CE supervisors to discuss issues arising following the 2008 Labour Court Recommendation (LCR 19293). All parties to the engagement process have agreed that the detail of the discussions should remain confidential while the engagement is ongoing and I would ask Deputies to respect these wishes

and allow the talks to continue free from speculation which might prove unhelpful. I expect that it will take a number of weeks to reach a conclusion.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Cyber Security Data**

1869. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if her Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36227/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department has a dedicated and fully trained cyber security team. Staff receive regular training to become proficient with new products, to update their skills, and to advance their knowledge of cyber security. My Department has also engaged an independent security partner who supplements and advises the cyber security team.

I am advised that my Department maintains a register of security related events and that security events are processed within a central Security Incident and Event Management platform. This platform is monitored, and all security events are fully investigated by the cyber security team and appropriate actions are taken.

### **Departmental Operations**

1870. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and-or disaster recovery sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36243/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised that my Department has a Disaster Recovery plan, a business continuity plan and a Disaster Recovery site all of which are regularly reviewed and tested.

### **Disability Allowance Data**

1871. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases approved for a disability allowance and in which the arrears due have not been paid to date; the reason for the delay; when the matter will be rectified; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36257/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** When a disability allowance (DA) application is being awarded and the person was in receipt of another social welfare payment there are a number of necessary administrative steps which must be completed before arrears are issued.

In these cases, once the first payment of DA has been issued, there will be inter-scheme adjustment required to reconcile overlapping benefit periods. In other cases the amount due to the person concerned may need to take account of an outstanding debt owing to the department.

Once these calculations have been made, the final arrears due can be established and paid.

Due to the above reasons the current number of cases awaiting arrears stands at 1,042.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Benefit Payments**

1872. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of persons (details supplied) will be examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36350/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A jobseeker's payment is paid for days of unemployment where the person is not in receipt of holiday pay from their employer for those days and where they also satisfy the conditions of the scheme.

In general, there is no delay in processing jobseeker benefit claims in Intreo Centres if the relevant claim application forms and supporting documentation are completed by the customer, in a timely manner.

Seasonal workers should apply for jobseeker's benefit as soon as they become unemployed. Initially, when a person makes an application for jobseeker's benefit, 3 waiting days apply and payment is made from the 4th day of the claim where there is no accrued holiday entitlement from their employer.

If, however, a person makes a repeat claim for jobseeker's benefit within 26 weeks of their previous claim, the repeat claim links to the earlier claim and no waiting days apply.

People who are laid off on a temporary basis during the school breaks and who have previously been in contact with the Department, are issued with a repeat jobseeker's application form and holiday form in advance of the school holiday periods. This advance process facilitates an efficient service to these customers and allows for speedy processing of their claim when the period of unemployment actually arises. It is important that customers complete these forms and bring them with them when they call to their Intreo Centre or Branch Office to make their claim. However, it is important to note that these customers are still required to sign on for each period of unemployment.

There have been some claim processing delays in recent weeks which are due to the seasonal increase in claims over the summer period. These are being worked down at present.

I want to assure the Deputy that prompt processing of all claims remains a priority for my Department. Scheme areas are monitored on an on-going basis and processing procedures are reviewed to ensure that claims are paid to customers as quickly as possible.

If the Deputy could provide the specific details of any such cases my Department can follow up accordingly.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Treatment Benefit Scheme Eligibility**

1873. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection if the treatment benefit scheme will be extended to allow parents that pay PRSI contributions to claim for their dependent children's eye care and glasses while they are in secondary school in view of the fact that the free eye care scheme ends when a child leaves primary school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36389/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Entitlement to treatment benefit is based on having paid PRSI contributions, with customers required to have a certain number of PRSI contributions paid or credited in order to qualify. The scheme is based entirely on the PRSI records of the claimant or if they are a dependent adult, their spouse/partner's PRSI record. The number of contributions required varies with age, to take account of the capacity of the person concerned to have paid the required contributions. The scheme is not available for dependent children.

Any changes to the current arrangements would have to be considered in an overall policy and budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Pacáiste Sochair Teaghlaigh**

1874. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí an féidir aon eisceacht a dhéanamh, agus iarratas ar Íocaíocht do Theaghlaigh i bhFostaíocht á mheasúnú, maidir leis an riail go gcaithfear 38 uair an chloig oibre a dhéanamh sa choicís, i gcás múinteoir (sonraí tugtha) atá ag cónaí ar oileán amach ón gcósta agus a bhfuil triúr páistí aici agus a bhíonn ag múineadh ar feadh 21 uair an chloig sa choicís ar meán; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36393/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Is éard atá san Íocaíocht do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht (ÍTF/WFP) ná íocaíocht inoibre a bhfuil taca ioncaim á chur ar fáil tríthi d'fhostaithe a bhfuil leanaí acu agus atá ar thuilleamh íseal i gcomparáid le líon a dteaghlaigh.

Chun cáiliú don Íocaíocht do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht, ní mór don iarratasóir, nó ní mór don iarratasóir agus a c(h)éile, a p(h)áirtneir nó a c(h)omhchónaitheoir, a bheith ag gabháil d'fhostaíocht chúititheach lánaimseartha mar fhostaí ar feadh méid nach lú ná 38 n-uaire an chloig in aghaidh na coicise (nó 19 n-uaire an chloig in aghaidh na seachtaine) – tá feidhm ag Alt 232(2) (c) den Acht Comhdhlúite Leasa Shóisialaigh 2005 mar a fhoráiltear in Airteagal 175 d'IR 142/2007, arna leasú. Ní foláir an coinníoll príomha fostaíochta seo a chomhlíonadh ar bhonn leanúnach. Chun críche na hÍocaíochta do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht, sainmhínítear an fhostaíocht lánaimseartha mar fhostaíocht ar phá a mhaireann 38 n-uaire an chloig in aghaidh na coicise (nó 19 n-uaire an chloig in aghaidh na seachtaine) ar a laghad. Tá na hearnálacha go léir d'iarratasóirí ar an Íocaíocht do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht agus d'fhaighteoirí na hÍocaíochta do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht faoi réir an choinníll cháiliúcháin seo agus faoi réir an choinníll teidlíochta leantaigh seo ó thaobh an Íocaíochta do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht a fháil, gan beann ar chineál a bhfostaíochta ná ar phatrún oibre a bhfostaíochta.

Ní dhéanann an reachtaíocht rialúcháin leasa shóisialaigh foráil maidir le díolúine ón gcoinníoll príomha a luaitear thuas (uaireanta an chloig a oibrítear) ó thaobh na teidlíochta ar an Íocaíocht do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht.

Fuarthas iarratas ar an Íocaíocht do Theaghlach i bhFostaíocht an 24 Meitheamh 2019 ón duine lenar bhain agus dícheadaíodh an t-iarratas sin toisc nach gcomhlíontar an coinníoll fostaíochta a luaitear thuas.

Cuireadh cinneadh na Roinne in iúl an 15 Lúnasa 2019 don duine lenar bhain agus insíodh don duine sin freisin faoin gceart achomhairc chuig Oifig neamhspleách na nAchomharc Leasa Shóisialaigh.

Tá súil agam go soiléiríonn sé seo an scéal don Teachta.

### **Working Family Payment Eligibility**

1875. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the policy reason for the rule that a person must be working 38 hours in a fortnight to be eligible for the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36394/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work support which provides an income 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. To qualify for WFP, a person must be engaged in full-time insurable employment which is expected to last for at least 3 months and be working for a minimum of 38 hours per week or 19 hours per week. A couple may combine their hours of employment to meet the qualification criteria.

The “hours worked” eligibility criterion has been reduced significantly since the introduction of the scheme in 1984, from 30 hours per week to 19 hours per week in 1996. Indeed, in-work supports work very well with the vast majority of families and facilitate an element of choice which allows them to select the option which suits them best.

It is crucially important that WFP does not inadvertently subsidise unsustainable low earnings or encourage employers to offer minimal hours of employment. The longer term goal of WFP, as an incentive to take up and remain in work, could be compromised if the nature of the work taken up is not ultimately sustainable without ever-increasing and perhaps ultimately unsustainable levels of subvention.

Notably every 1000 additional claimants would increase the budget by almost €7.02m. A 10% increase in the current numbers of WFP recipients (5,300 claimants) would increase the budget by €37.2m. Therefore any plans to reduce the WFP hours-worked threshold would have to be considered in the overall budgetary context.

The rationale for 38 hours per fortnight requirement is based on a number of reasons:

- Unemployed couple families are incentivised to gain employment with the option to combine their hours to reach the minimum requirement and raise themselves out of poverty by increasing their income.

- A working lone parent who works 15 hours per week is raised significantly above the poverty line and is therefore incentivised to work additional hours to qualify for WFP.

- WFP is not paid with Jobseekers Transitional Payment so a change in hours would not affect this group other than aggravate the ‘cliff effect’ of coming off the dual OPF/WFP payment.

A possible reduction in hours could also result in the following behavioural effects:

- A reduced incentive to increase part-time hours, resulting in low incomes.

- Permits employers to offer reduced hours contracts resulting in WFP subsidising earnings

- Possible incentive for those on higher earnings to reduce hours to qualify.

WFP is not intended to subsidise unsustainably low earnings or incentivise employers to offer minimal hours of employment. WFP as a policy instrument is designed to provide in-work support and not contribute to greater number of workers in low hours employment.

### **Social Insurance Fund**

1876. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 1222 of 7 September 2018, the progress made in respect of the 4% PRSI charge in cases in which there is debt forgiveness in relation to the property of a person in view of the fact that Finance Act 2013 provided for the losses incurred not to be subjected to the income tax rules; when there will be consistency between her Department in respect of the same losses for assessment under PRSI; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36424/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The issue to which the Deputy refers is the tax provision applying to the release/forgiveness of a debt relating to land held as trading stock. This provision applies to individuals -

- who own land as part of their trade,
- the value of that land was previously written down, in many cases giving rise to large trading losses, and
- who benefitted from debt forgiveness on borrowings made to purchase that land.

The 2013 tax provision was introduced to ensure that, where loans are taken out to acquire land by individuals engaged actively or otherwise in a trade of dealing in or developing land and these loans are subsequently released or forgiven, the amount forgiven is treated as a receipt of income. The debt forgiveness is accordingly regarded as “reckonable income” for PRSI purposes and is liable to PRSI at the Class S rate of 4%.

While generally PRSI and tax rules are similar, they do differ in terms the treatment of trading losses carried forward from a previous year. Tax is charged after losses brought forward from previous years while PRSI is charged only on the profits generated in a particular year, without regard to losses in prior years. This difference means that the treatment of debt forgiven needs to ensure that it does not give rise to a loss of PRSI income.

My Department is finalising its examination of this issue to ensure the appropriate treatment of debt forgiven for PRSI purposes and will liaise with the all relevant bodies on completion of its deliberations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 1877 answered with Question No. 1868.*

### **Child Benefit Eligibility**

1878. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend the child benefit payment to cover pupils who will be 19 years of age sitting their leaving certificate (details supplied). [36510/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child Benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. Child Benefit is currently paid, as of end-July 2019 to almost 630,000 families in respect of nearly 1.2 million children, with an estimated expenditure of more than €2 billion in 2018.

Extending the payment in respect of full time students in second level education who are over 18 years of age would have significant cost implications and would have to be considered in an overall budgetary context. The estimated cost of extending child benefit as proposed is estimated to be in the region of €80-100 million.

Families on low incomes may be able to avail of a number of social welfare schemes that support children in full-time education until the age of 22, including:

- Increase for a Qualified Child (IQCs) with primary social welfare payments;
- the Working Family Payment for low-paid employees with children;
- the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

These schemes provide targeted assistance that is directly linked to household income and thereby support low-income families with older children participating in full-time education.

### **Departmental Strategies**

1879. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when she plans to publish the new social inclusion strategy, which was due for publication in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36580/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The new social inclusion strategy “Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2019-2025”, is being finalised and I expect that the new strategy will be published shortly.

### **Jobseeker’s Allowance Payments**

1880. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to increase the rate of jobseeker’s allowance being paid to young persons who are unable to live with family and are experiencing homelessness; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36582/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Reduced rates for JA recipients aged 18-25 were introduced on a phased basis to tackle high youth unemployment and to prevent long term welfare dependency. This is in line with other EU and OECD jurisdictions. Receiving the maximum rate of JA without a strong financial incentive to engage in education or training can lead to long-term welfare dependency from a young age. If a young jobseeker participates in education or training the personal rate that applies is €203 per week.

There are a number of measures in place to assist young people into employment or training. In 2013 the EU adopted a Council Recommendation to member states on a Youth Guarantee. Under the Youth Guarantee process a case officer engages with the young jobseeker on a

monthly basis, to prepare and implement a personal progression plan for employment, tailored to their specific skillset.

Where young people do not find work quickly, they are supported through placement on employment and training schemes, which are closely aligned to the needs of the labour market. For example, the Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) which I launched last year is a work experience scheme targeted exclusively at young jobseekers facing barriers to employment and participants on the scheme receive a payment of €229.20 per week. These policies have been effective in reducing both youth and long-term unemployment. For example, the most recent data shows that Irish youth unemployment has fallen from a peak of 31.2% in 2012 to 14.7% in August 2019.

My Department actively engages with Tusla and non-Government organisations to provide supports to vulnerable young people leaving care who are experiencing homelessness or who are in insecure situations. Age-related reduced rates of payment do not apply in certain circumstances, such as when the claimant has a dependent child or was in State care during the 12 months prior to the age of 18 years. The Department's Community Welfare service engages with a range of stakeholders and advocacy groups working with vulnerable young people and may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help with essential expenses which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. ENPs can be paid to assist with rent deposits and the costs of setting up home.

Any changes to the rate of payments for young jobseekers would have to be considered in a budgetary context and within the scope of the overall resources available for welfare improvements.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Applications**

1881. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for jobseeker's allowance will be accepted in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36593/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned is currently in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance and has made an application for Back To Education Allowance (BTEA). The BTEA application was refused by a Deciding Officer on 3rd September 2019 as the person concerned is under 21 years of age, not 3 months in receipt of a qualifying payment and already holds a level 5 qualification. This was communicated to the person concerned by letter which issued on the 3rd September 2019.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Eligibility**

1882. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a review into the qualification for the working family payment can be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36594/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional income

support to employees on low earnings with children. In order to qualify for WFP, an applicant must have a qualified child and be engaged in full-time paid employment as an employee for not less than 38 hours per fortnight.

All household income is assessable for Working Family Payment.

We received your representations on 3rd September 2019. As a result of your representations we intend carrying out a review of the working family payment entitlement for the person concerned. When this has been completed we will contact you with the outcome of this review.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### **Invalidity Pension**

1883. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) can transfer to invalidity pension from their present payment if they qualify for a disablement payment or alternative; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36595/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 16 May 2019. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 19 September 2019. Any arrears due from 16 May 2019 to 18 September 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on 04 September 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Payments**

1884. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a working family payment can be adjusted in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36604/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Based on the evidence supplied in support of their application for disability allowance (DA), this person's application was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied. They were notified in writing of this decision on 20 March 2019.

The person concerned requested an appeal of the decision. The social welfare appeals office (SWAO) decided, that the medical qualifying condition was satisfied and the DA was awarded to the person concerned with effect from 30 January 2019.

DA is a means-tested payment. Means were assessed from the employment of the person concerned and a reduced amount of DA was awarded. Additional evidence was received from the person concerned on 23 August 2019 and a review of this persons means was carried out. On 4 September 2019, the person concerned was informed of this decision and she was also

notified of her right to seek a review of this decision or appeal directly to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

1885. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on the review of further medical evidence submitted in support of an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36608/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of an Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed in the light of additional evidence or new facts.

I am advised that the person concerned has submitted additional evidence and that the Appeals Officer is finalising a review of this case. The person concerned will be contacted when the review of his/her appeal has been finalised later this week.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

1886. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which means are calculated in respect of a person's house not occupied by him or her claiming a social welfare payment, the amount allowed for the mortgage and whether or not if rent received from the property is considered the value of the means as opposed to the value of the property less the mortgage; if the same means test rules apply to applications in respect of carer's allowance and supplementary welfare allowance applications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36611/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Social welfare legislation provides that the means test takes account of the income and assets of the person (and spouse/partner, if applicable) applying for the relevant scheme. Income and assets include income from employment, self-employment, occupational pensions, maintenance payments as well as property owned (other than the family home) and capital such as savings, shares and other investments. The assessment of capital reflects the fact that there is an expectation that people with reasonable amounts of capital and property are in a position to use that capital or to realise the value of property to support themselves without having to rely solely on a means-tested welfare payment.

In the assessment of property, all second homes must be capable of being sold, let or put to profitable use before a capital value assessment is applied. If a property is let, the capital value of the property is assessed and the income from the letting is not assessed. Any outstanding

mortgage registered against the property is deducted from the market value to find the capital value.

If a person leaves their home due to old age or incapacity, either on a temporary basis or indefinitely, the value of their home will not be assessed as means. However, if it is put to profitable use (for example, rented out), the capital value of the house will then be assessed as means.

The formula for assessing means from capital for all social welfare payments (except Disability Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance) is as follows:

Capital	Weekly means assessed
First €20,000	Nil
Next €10,000	€1 per €1,000
Next €10,000	€2 per €1,000
Balance	€4 per €1,000

The formula for assessing means from capital for Disability Allowance is as follows:

Capital	Weekly means assessed
First €50,000	Nil
Next €10,000	€1 per €1,000
Next €10,000	€2 per €1,000
Balance (any capital over €70,000)	€4 per €1,000

The formula for assessing means from capital for Supplementary Welfare Allowance is as follows:

Capital	Weekly means assessed
First €5,000	Nil
Next €10,000	€1 per €1,000
Next €25,000	€2 per €1,000
Balance	€4 per €1,000

### Social Welfare Benefits Data

1887. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost in 2020 for each one euro and each one per cent increase in each social welfare rate and principal adult social welfare rates, respectively. [36670/19]

1891. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated additional cost for each one euro and each one per cent increase in the qualified child payment in respect of children from 12 years of age and older. [36674/19]

1892. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost for each week the fuel allowance season is extended. [36675/19]

1893. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated first and full year cost for each one per cent increase and one euro increase in the rate of fuel allowance, respectively. [36676/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1887 and 1891 to 1893, inclusive, together.

The estimated cost for each week the fuel allowance season is extended is €8.4 million.

The estimated full year cost for each one per cent increase and one euro increase in the rate of fuel allowance is €2.4 million and €10.5 million respectively.

The estimated additional cost for each one euro and each one per cent increase in the qualified child payment in respect of children from 12 years of age and older is €6.1 million and €2.7 million, respectively.

The estimated cost in 2020 for each one euro and each one per cent increase in each social welfare rate and principal adult social welfare rates are shown in the following tables. (Totals may not be exact due to rounding).

It should be noted that these figures are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2020.

1% increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Social Insurance Schemes		€m	€m	€m
State Pension (Contributory)		€50.92	€6.84	€57.76
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension	Under 66yrs	€3.29		€3.29
	Over 66Yrs	€12.49		€12.49
Deserted Wife's Benefit	Under 66yrs	€0.30		€0.30
	Over 66Yrs	€0.78		€0.78
Invalidity Pension		€6.29	€0.52	€6.80
Partial Capacity Benefit		€0.19	€0.03	€0.21
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)		€0.12		€0.12
Death Benefit Pension		€0.10		€0.10
Disablement Pension		€0.60		€0.60
Illness Benefit		€5.18	€0.24	€5.42
Injury Benefit		€0.08	€0.00	€0.09
Incapacity Supplement		€0.09	€0.01	€0.10
Jobseeker's Benefit		€3.55	€0.18	€3.74
Carer's Benefit		€0.31	€ -	€0.31

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1% increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Maternity & Adoptive Benefit		€2.67	€ -	€2.67
Paternity Benefit		€0.14	€ -	€0.14
Total Social Insurance Schemes				€94.92
Social Assistance Schemes				
State Pension (Non Con)		€11.76	€0.25	€12.01
Blind Person's Pension		€0.11	€0.01	€0.12
Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con) Pension		€0.13		€0.13
Deserted Wife's Allowance		€0.01		€0.01
One-Parent Family Payment		€4.11		€4.11
Carer's Allowance	Under 66yrs	€5.24	€ -	€5.24
	66yrs or Over	€0.27	€ -	€0.27
Half Rate Carer's Allowance	Under 66yrs	€1.40		€1.40
	66yrs or Over	€0.95		€0.95
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)		€0.05		€0.05
Jobseeker's Allowance Max Rate		€14.06	€2.15	€16.20
JA age 18 to 24 on €107.70 rate		€0.67	€0.00	€0.67
JA age 25 on €152.80 rate		€0.15	€0.00	€0.15
Disability Allowance		€15.81	€1.09	€16.90
Farm Assist		€0.58	€0.16	€0.73

1% increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Employment Support Schemes (BTWA & BTEA)		€0.80	€0.11	€0.91
Employment/ Internship Schemes (CE, Tús, RSS etc.)		€3.82	€0.51	€4.33
Supplementary Welfare Allowance		€1.72	€0.17	€1.90
Total Social Assistance Schemes				€66.08
OVERALL TOTAL		€148.73	€12.27	€161.00

€1 increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Social Insurance Schemes		€m	€m	€m
State Pension (Contributory)		€20.80	€2.80	€23.59
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension	Under 66yrs	€1.58		€1.58
	Over 66Yrs	€5.06		€5.06
Deserted Wife's Benefit	Under 66yrs	€0.15		€0.15
	Over 66Yrs	€0.32		€0.32
Invalidity Pension		€3.02	€0.24	€3.25
Partial Capacity Benefit		€0.09	€0.01	€0.11
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)		€0.06		€0.06
Death Benefit Pension		€0.04		€0.04
Disablement Pension		€0.25		€0.25
Illness Benefit		€2.54	€0.13	€2.67
Injury Benefit		€0.04	€0.00	€0.04

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€1 increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Incapacity Supplement		€0.04	€0.01	€0.05
Jobseeker's Benefit		€1.75	€0.10	€1.84
Carer's Benefit		€0.14	€ -	€0.14
Maternity & Adoptive Benefit		€1.09	€ -	€1.09
Paternity Benefit		€0.06	€ -	€0.06
Total Social Insurance Schemes				€40.3
Social Assistance Schemes				
State Pension (Non Con)		€4.96	€0.11	€5.07
Blind Person's Pension		€0.06	€0.00	€0.06
Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con) Pension		€0.07		€0.07
One-Parent Family Payment		€2.02		€2.02
Carer's Allowance	Under 66yrs	€2.39	€ -	€2.39
	66yrs or Over	€0.10	€ -	€0.10
Half Rate Carer's Allowance	Under 66yrs	€0.64		€0.64
	66yrs or Over	€0.37		€0.37
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)		€0.03		€0.03
Jobseeker's Allowance Max Rate		€6.92	€1.16	€8.08
JA age 18 to 24 on €107.70 rate		€0.59	€0.00	€0.60
JA age 25 on €152.80 rate		€0.09	€0.00	€0.09

€1 increase in each payment rate		Personal	Qualified Adult	Total
Disability Allowance		€7.79	€0.59	€8.38
Farm Assist		€0.28	€0.08	€0.37
Employment Support Schemes (BTWA & BTEA)		€0.40	€0.06	€0.46
Employment/ Internship Schemes (CE, Tús, RSS etc.)		€1.69	€0.27	€1.97
Supplementary Welfare Allowance		€0.86	€0.09	€0.95
Total Social Assistance Schemes				€31.65
OVERALL TOTAL		€66.31	€5.65	€71.96

### Direct Provision Payments

1888. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost in 2019 to date and in the previous four years of income and other supports to those accommodated under the direct provision system; and the number supported in 2019 and in the previous four years. [36671/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection administers the daily expenses allowance (DEA) which is paid to protection applicants living in accommodation provided by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department of Justice and Equality. The Government has provided €9.38 million for the allowance in 2019. The weekly rates of payment were increased in Budget 2019 from €21.60 per adult to €38.80 and from €21.60 per child to €29.80.

There are currently 3,920 DEA claims in payment, in respect of approximately 4,300 adults and 1,770 children residing in direct provision accommodation centres and temporary emergency accommodation.

In addition, under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off, exceptional expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. Applicants for international protection can access exceptional needs payments as these are not subject to the habitual residence condition which applies to most social welfare payments.

ENPs paid to persons in the direct provision system are largely towards clothing costs, transport costs and child related items such as prams/buggies. Supports may also be provided

towards costs associated with moving into the community such as rent deposits and the purchase of items associated with setting up home.

Protection applicants with children may also access the back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) as this is not subject to the habitual residence condition. This scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the extra costs when children start school each autumn. The Government has provided €57.2 million for the scheme in 2019 which operates from June to September.

Since 2018 applicants for international protection who have not received a first instance decision on their protection application for 9 months (and that delay cannot be attributed to the applicant) can apply for a renewable permission to take up employment/self-employment and have full access to the labour market. Such persons may access the Department's Public Employment Service through the Department's Intreo Centre network where Case Officers will assist, guide and support these clients in their job seeking efforts and/or educational needs. Where a protection applicant with children is in employment, they may qualify for the working family payment, subject to the rules of the scheme.

The following tabular statement provides details requested by the Deputy. Table 1 provides details of expenditure and numbers of claims under the daily expenses allowance scheme, previously the direct provision allowance.

Table 2 provides details of the number of payments made and expenditure under the ENP scheme to persons resident in direct provision accommodation centres in 2019 and in the previous four years. This includes payments to protection applicants and people who have received a decision on their application. In addition, ENPs are paid to applicants for international protection who are placed in temporary emergency accommodation but as this expenditure is not reported separately it is not included in this table.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Tabular statement

Table 1 Number of DEA Payments and Expenditure in the direct provision system

Year	Number of Claims (at year end)	Expenditure
2015	2,990	€3.85m
2016	2,600	€3.99m
2017	3,080	€4.91m
2018	3,340	€6.36m (Provisional Out-turn)
2019	3,920 (Aug 31st)	€9.38m (Revised Estimate)

**Table 2:** Number of ENPs and expenditure made to persons residing in direct provision accommodation centres, 2015-2019

Year	Number of Payments	Expenditure
2015	15,800	€1.26m
2016	18,100	€1.37m
2017	19,500	€1.50m
2018	22,500	€1.82m
2019 (up to 31/8/2019)	13,400	€1.10m

*Question No. 1889 answered with Question No. 1762.*

### **Parental Leave Expenditure**

1890. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost in 2020 of paid parental leave for each additional week added to the scheme. [36673/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** In Budget 2019 I announced the introduction of a new social insurance based parent's benefit scheme to take effect in late 2019. The Department of Justice and Equality has responsibility for the legislation for the new parent's leave and my Department is responsible for the associated parent's benefit.

The new scheme will provide two weeks paid leave to both parents, including those who adopt a child, who are employees or self-employed and who take parent's leave from their employment to care for their child. This is in addition to existing maternity, paternity and adoptive leave entitlements. The scheme will support parents during the first year of the child's life, in line with the Programme for Government commitment. Child development outcomes are strongest when parents are facilitated to provide extended care for their children within the home during this first year.

Parent's benefit will be paid at the same rate as existing maternity and paternity benefits at €245 per week. Two weeks parent's benefit is estimated to cost approximately €32m in a full year. It is estimated that each additional week of parent's benefit will cost €15.8m in a full year.

There will also be additional costs for employers covering substitution pay costs. Public service pay costs is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Decisions around the extension of parent's benefit would have to be considered in a budgetary context and the impact of additional leave on employers.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Questions Nos. 1891 to 1893, inclusive, answered with Question No. 1887.*

### **Fuel Allowance Data**

1894. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost for each one euro increase in the income means test applied to the fuel allowance scheme. [36677/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Fuel allowance is paid to people who are dependent on long-term social welfare payments and who are unable to provide for their own heating needs. Recipients of non-contributory social welfare payments who are eligible to apply for fuel allowance are accepted as satisfying the means test.

The fuel allowance means test is linked to the maximum rate of the state pension (contributory); fuel allowance applicants and members of their household may have a combined assessable income of up to €100 a week above this rate. The income means test applied to the fuel allowance scheme automatically increases with the state pension (contributory) rate.

The Department is compiling the data requested and will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

*Question No. 1895 answered with Question No. 1786.*

### **Community Employment Schemes Operation**

1896. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to a decision by Solas to withdraw community employment staff from a family resource centre (details supplied) following antisocial behaviour in the vicinity; the steps she will take to ensure staff can return to their placements and resume the provision of services in view of the essential family support services which this centre provides to the highly vulnerable local community. [36693/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department supports a number of Community Employment (CE) projects in the Ballymun area who in turn place CE participants with local resource centres.

CE participants are employed directly by CE Sponsor organisations, who are independent companies and employers in their own right. These sponsoring bodies are responsible for the health and safety policies for their employees in accordance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation, and the Department has no role in this regard.

I trust this matter clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Questions Nos. 1897 and 1898 answered with Question No. 1769.*

### **Carer's Allowance Payments**

1899. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if outstanding arrears due to a person (details supplied) will issue with regard to carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36785/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 28 September 2017.

The evidence before the deciding officer showed that the person concerned was engaged in employment outside the home in excess of 15 hours per week.

Accordingly, the person concerned was notified on 20 October 2018 that he was not entitled to CA, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

The person concerned requested an appeal of this decision and submitted additional evidence to show that he was not working in excess of 15 hours per week.

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Following this appeal the person concerned was awarded CA on 16 July 2019, with effect from 28 September 2017 and the first payment issued to his nominated bank account on 25 July 2019.

I can confirm that arrears of CA due from 28 September 2017 to 24 July 2019, will issue to the nominated bank account of the person concerned on 12 September 2019.

The person concerned was notified of this on 5 September 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

1900. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); if same will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36787/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 3 July 2019. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 25 September 2019.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

1901. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); if same will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36788/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 5 March 2019.

The application was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that every claimant shall furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence as may be required for the purposes of deciding the claim. The person concerned failed to provide the SWI with information that was required to determine if her means were below the statutory limit.

As the requested information was not supplied it was decided that the person concerned was not entitled to CA.

The person concerned was notified on 3 September 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.

### **Invalidity Pension Appeals**

1902. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a social welfare appeal with regard to a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); if same will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36790/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Invalidation pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The Department received a claim for IP for the lady concerned on 12 December 2018. The claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on 16 May 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

She requested an appeal of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of her request. Following a review of all the information available the Deciding Officer is satisfied that the medical conditions for the scheme are satisfied. The Deciding Officer wrote to the lady on 04 September 2019 requesting her birth certificate. As soon as this information has been received the IP claim will be finalised as quickly as possible and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **School Meals Programme**

1903. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address the situation in which schools (details supplied) have been left out of a school meals initiative in Ballymun, Dublin 9 and 11 when the profile of these schools is the same as the schools that have been included; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36839/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €57.6 million in 2019 representing an increase of €3.6 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

The scheme provides funding for a breakfast or snack for all children and lunch for up to 90% of children in DEIS schools for the entire school year from September to June.

The three schools identified by the Deputy are DEIS schools and are currently being funded for a breakfast/snack for all children and a lunch for up to 90% of children based on the enrolment figure provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

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Funding for additional clubs can only be considered where a historical entitlement exists. No historical entitlement to an additional club exists for these three schools.

Changes to increase the funding of the scheme, to provide a third food club in DEIS schools, would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

### **JobPath Programme**

1904. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will direct Turas Nua to cease contacting a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that they are in employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36841/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department selects long-term unemployed jobseekers for a range of activation supports and those most distant from the labour market to secure and sustain full-time paid employment. These supports include the JobPath service.

Certain groups of people are excluded from referral to JobPath, one such group being Education Sector Workers.

As a school warden the customer in question is an Education Sector Worker, however, due to a clerical error they were referred for activation support to JobPath but the person in question has been withdrawn with immediate effect. My officials have advised that their claim is now correctly categorised, which will ensure that if they remain as an education sector worker, they will not be selected again for referral to JobPath during periods of unemployment.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits**

1905. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the action she plans to take to address the need to expedite the processing of carer's allowance and benefit applications (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36911/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

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.

My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed as quickly as possible.

In general, social welfare schemes with a number of complex qualifying conditions can take longer to process. In some cases the documentary evidence provided at initial application stage is incomplete or insufficient and this can lead to delays in processing.

At the end of July 2019 the average waiting time for a decision on a new CA claim and

CARB claim was 14 weeks. Where any scheme area experiences delays, all possible steps are taken to improve processing times. This includes the assignment of additional resources, where available, and the review of business processes, to ensure the efficient processing of applications. Work is currently underway to re-assign a number of staff on a temporary basis to assist with claim processing. The position will be kept under active review to ensure waiting times are reduced.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Data**

1906. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of restoring the weekly income disregard to €165.62 for all lone parents receiving the one parent family payment, jobseeker's transitional payment and jobseeker's allowance. [36928/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The cost of increasing the value of the weekly income disregard for all lone parents receiving the One Parent Family Payment, Jobseekers Transitional Payment and Jobseekers Allowance to €165.62 for 2019 would be approximately €12.4 million euro.

The costings do not take into account potential behavioural changes or the inflow of new entrants that could arise from the introduction of higher income disregards and which could give rise to additional costs.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility**

1907. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will review the scenario whereby a family qualifies for the working family payment but receipt of the payment puts it above the income threshold for social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34976/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Applications for social housing support are assessed by the relevant local authority, in accordance with the eligibility and need criteria set down in section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the associated Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended.

The 2011 Regulations prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area concerned, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy. The 2011 Regulations do not provide local authorities with any discretion to exceed the limits that apply to their administrative areas.

Under the Household Means Policy, which applies in all local authorities, net income for social housing assessment is defined as gross household income less income tax, and the universal social charge. Most payments received from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection are assessable, including the Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement). The Policy provides for a range of income disregards, and local authorities also have discretion to decide to disregard income that is temporary, short-term or once off in nature.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of

the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of future-proofing.

Given the cost to the State of providing social housing, it is considered prudent and fair to direct resources to those most in need of social housing support. The current income eligibility requirements generally achieve this, providing for a fair and equitable system of identifying those households facing the greatest challenge in meeting their accommodation needs from their own resources.

However, as part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports in each local authority area is underway. The review will also have regard to current initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and cost rental and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

### **Environmental Impact Assessments**

1908. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on whether the system applied here under Directive 2011/92/EU adequately minimises damage to the environment from public and private projects; if he will undertake a review of the system in order to address gaps in the implementation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35113/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The objective of Directive 2011/92/EU, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and of human health through the establishment of minimum requirements for the environmental impact assessment of projects. The EIA Directive therefore ensures that certain public and private projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment may only be granted consent after an assessment with regard to their effects on the environment has been carried out.

Directive 2011/92/EU has been amended by Directive 2014/52/EU in order to strengthen the quality of the EIA procedures. There are numerous consent systems in Ireland which incorporate EIA and which are governed by separate pieces of legislation that are the responsibility of different Government Departments. In this context, transposing legislation implementing the changes required by Directive 2014/52/EU in respect of a number of these consent systems has already been completed while the remaining legislative amendments required are being progressed as a priority across the relevant Government Departments. In respect of the consent systems governed by legislation which falls under the remit of my Department, the 2014 Directive has been fully transposed into planning legislation by way of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, which entered into force 1 September 2018 and I consider that the planning system fully implements the EIA Directive, as amended. My Department is working to finalise transposing legislation as a matter of priority in relation to the foreshore licensing, dumping at sea permit and waste water discharge authorisation systems.

Having regard to the significant work both completed and underway by the relevant Departments to transpose Directive 2014/52/EU into Irish law, involving extensive review of the legislation underpinning the various consent systems which incorporate EIA, these systems will fully implement the EIA Directive, as amended, once the transposition of Directive 2014/52/EU

has been finalised across all relevant consent systems in Ireland which incorporate EIA.

### **Environmental Protection Enforcement**

1909. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the regulations regarding the spreading of slurry; if there are specific distances from households that spreading is not permitted; his plans to introduce new rules in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35708/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017 give legal effect in Ireland to the Nitrates Directive and to our Nitrates Action Programme (NAP). The Regulations focus, *inter alia*, on the management of livestock manures and other fertilisers. In accordance with the requirements of these regulations, all fertilisers (including slurry) must be stored and managed in a responsible manner to ensure the protection of water quality. The Regulations do not specify distances in relation to spreading fertiliser in proximity to dwellings. However, in order to protect water quality, they do include provisions regarding the required distances for spreading organic fertiliser from a surface watercourse, a borehole and a spring or well used for the abstraction of water for human consumption. Local authorities, under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are the authorities charged with the monitoring and enforcement of these regulations.

### **Regional Development Policy**

1910. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if progress has been made with respect to the regional spatial and economic strategy since 3 May 2019, which is being produced by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36330/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The making of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a function of the relevant Regional Assembly, in this case the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), under Section 21 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The NWRA, at its meeting on 9 November 2018, adopted a Draft RSES for public consultation. Further to a ten-week statutory public consultation period and the preparation of a Director's Report on submissions made, the Assembly, at a meeting on 26 April 2019, agreed to make a series of material and non-material amendments to the draft RSES.

Further to the local elections and subsequent nominations from local authorities to form a new Assembly, the incoming Regional Assembly met on 25 July 2019 to consider material amendments to the draft RSES. The amendments were placed on display on 4 August 2019 for a period of public consultation that will run until 11 October 2019.

Further to consideration of submissions on material amendments by Assembly members, it is envisaged that the final RSES will be adopted during November 2019. The adoption of the RSES will require the review and update processes in respect of City and County Development Plans in the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area to commence within six months, or if relevant, recommence within three months.

## County Development Plans

1911. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter regarding the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36339/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The making of a County Development Plan is a reserved function of the relevant planning authority, in this case Mayo County Council. It is a requirement that a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) be prepared as part of the plan-making process for any County Development Plan. This is to inform the planning authority on matters such as the appropriate location for zoned land and, following the adoption of the plan, to assist in the preparation, where appropriate, of local area plans and the determination of planning applications.

To guide the preparation of SFRAs, Ministerial guidance entitled *The Planning System and Flood Risk Management* was issued in 2009 under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). As part of the preparation of the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020, an SFRA was prepared that included a Stage Two Initial Flood Risk Assessment of 11 settlements across the County. This was to give a further level of assessment of flood risk in these more urban locations.

The County Development Plan SFRA will be complemented by, where appropriate and relevant, local area plan flood risk assessments, flood risk assessments for particular development proposals and further more detailed work carried out as part of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) project by the Office for Public Works.

Following the forthcoming adoption of the North and West Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy, which is expected by November 2019, Mayo County Council will follow the statutory adoption process for recommencing a review of the County Development Plan, which will include a new SFRA for the County, that may consider any new or updated information.

### Property Registration Authority Data

1912. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount collected in search fees by the Land Registry in 2018; and the cost of eradicating search fees on its data sets. [36705/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Land Registry Map is available online and may be searched free of charge. In 2018 there were 2,568,068 online map searches carried out in this manner. Name and area searches incur a €5 fee as do inspections of ownership details on a Folio. The relevant fees received by the Property Registration Authority for 2018 are set out in the following table. All fees are remitted to the Exchequer.

Land Registry services	Fee	2018 Volumes	Fees Received 2018
Online Map Search	No charge	2,568,068	€0
Name Search	€5.00	140,374	€701,870
Area Search	€5.00	13,001	€65,005
Total			€766,875

Land Registry services	Fee	2018 Volumes	Fees Received 2018
View Ownership Details on Folio (in PDF format)	€5.00	977,131	€4,885,655
Total for Searches and subsequent viewing of Folios			€5,652,530

### Water Quality

1913. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the arrangements for measuring lead levels in public drinking water supplies; if the latest results will be provided by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36764/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the supervisory authority for public water supplies in Ireland. Irish Water is responsible for monitoring public water supplies while local authorities are responsible for monitoring water provided by other suppliers. The roles of the water supplier, the EPA and the Health Services Executive (HSE) in relation to measuring lead levels in public drinking water supplies are set out in the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 (as amended), a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas library.

The EPA's Drinking Water Reports for Public Supplies and Private Water Supplies are available on the EPA website, including information on compliance with lead parameters.

The Government published a National Strategy to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Drinking Water in June 2015. In response to the recommendations of this strategy, Irish Water prepared a detailed Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Plan to identify measures to mitigate the risks to human health posed by the presence of lead in drinking water. Irish Water has indicated that it will remove all lead in public supply pipes over the next ten years. They have also put in place an interim water treatment programme to protect consumers from lead exposure while this replacement programme is implemented.

Irish Water is responsible for the service pipe up to the property boundary; however, most lead pipes are within the property boundary and are the responsibility of the property owner. My Department has introduced a grant scheme to assist owners of premises connected to a domestic water supply with the costs of replacing lead piping or related fittings located within the internal distribution system of the premises, as defined in the Water Services Act 2007. The grant is administered by local authorities and information on how to apply for this grant is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/leaflet\\_-\\_grant\\_to\\_replace\\_lead\\_pipes\\_and\\_fittings.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/leaflet_-_grant_to_replace_lead_pipes_and_fittings.pdf).

### Local Authority Housing

1914. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated cost of deep retrofitting all local authority and social housing stock to the highest standard by unit; and the cost of installing solar panels in the same housing stock. [34715/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There are circa 138,000 social housing homes nationally in the ownership of local authorities.

My Department has been funding an Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme for these properties since 2013. The Programme has 2 Phases - Phase 1, which comprises the bulk of the work undertaken to date, has focused on the lower cost improvements such as cavity wall and attic insulation, while Phase 2 targets higher cost measures, such as fabric upgrades, glazing/heating upgrades and the installation of photovoltaic panels. As local authorities progress further into Phase 2 of this programme the aim will be to bring the deep retrofit of the social housing stock to the 'cost optimal' equivalent performance, or a BER of B2.

In the period 2013 to date in 2019, some €134 million in exchequer funding has been provided under the Programme to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels in almost 70,000 local authority homes. In addition, energy efficiency measures have been incorporated into the 9,000 plus vacant social housing homes that have been returned to productive use under the Voids Programme since 2014.

The cost of carrying out an energy retrofit on a social housing home depends on a wide range of factors including dwelling size, year of construction, dwelling condition, and construction type. While initial indications suggest that investment in the region of €2 billion may be required to complete the retrofitting of the local authority housing stock, a detailed analysis of the stock is required to profile both the further works required to homes that have had lower cost improvements carried out under Phase 1 and under the Voids Programme, and the works required to the remainder of the stock. Work in this regard will be carried out with local authorities in the context of the application process for funding under the Energy Efficiency Programme in 2020.

### Fire Service

1915. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when guidelines will be published in relation to new battery stations; when international best practice for fire crews will be established in relation to dealing with these stations should they go on fire; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34735/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The provision of fire services, including the requisite premises, personnel, appliances and equipment, is a statutory function of fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and fire services are provided by local authorities in accordance with this legislation.

My Department supports fire authorities mainly through setting national policy and co-ordinating its implementation; providing capital funding for fire appliances, emergency equipment and the construction and upgrading of fire stations; centralised training programmes and co-ordination of the development of guidance on operational and other fire service related matters.

The development of battery storage compound projects is subject to Planning and, where applicable, Building Regulation requirements. Where applications are made for approval of battery storage projects, fire service personnel provide input into appropriate fire safety and fire-fighting requirements based on international experience and best practice. Where a particular premises is regarded as having high fire risk, local fire services develop Pre-Incident Plans (PIPs) and undertake familiarisation visits to such sites within their areas of responsibility.

Fire fighting, in areas of particular risk, including battery storage facilities, is also being

considered in the context of Standard Operational Guidance (SOG) developed by my Department's National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management.

### **Wind Energy Guidelines**

1916. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter regarding a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34763/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines in line with the "preferred draft approach" which was announced in June 2017 by the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, in conjunction with the then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. The review is addressing a number of key aspects including sound or noise, visual amenity setback distances, shadow flicker, community obligation, community dividend and grid connections.

As part of the overall review process, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process.

While the revised draft guidelines had been expected to be published in Quarter 1 2019, some delays to the planned schedule arose, due to the publication of updated World Health Organisation (WHO) noise standards and the need to focus on certain Brexit-related planning issues.

As part of the SEA process, there will shortly be an eight-week public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report. Finalised Guidelines will be prepared following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions received during the consultation phase, and the conclusion of the SEA process. My Department is aiming to commence the public consultation later this month.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála, must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

The current Guidelines, inter alia, offer advice to planning authorities in determining applications for planning permission. However, proposals for wind energy developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning Acts, in the same manner as other proposed developments. Therefore, it is not intended to place a moratorium on planning applications for wind farm developments, as referred to, pending the finalisation of the revisions to the 2006 Guidelines.

### **Derelict Sites**

1917. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount paid each month during the period 30 January 2015 to June 2016 by the owners of a derelict site (details supplied) to Galway City Council in respect of the standard annual 3% levy on derelict sites; the amount paid each month during the same period by the owners in fines for non-compliance with notices to carry out works to render the property non-derelict; if the derelict site levy and fines are still being paid; the works carried out by the site owners to render the site non-derelict since the property was added to the derelict sites register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34767/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The information requested by the Deputy is not collected by my Department.

Under section 8 (Part II) of the Derelict Sites Act 1990, each planning authority is required to maintain a register of derelict sites, including derelict houses and structures, in their respective functional areas and to have it available for inspection at its offices during office hours. In addition, some planning authorities publish their register online, although this is not required by statute. The register is required to contain the following information:(a) particulars of any land in their functional area which, in their opinion, is a derelict site,(b) the name and address of each owner and occupier, where these can be ascertained by reasonable enquiry,(c) particulars of any action taken by the local authority under this Act or under any other enactment in relation to the site,(d) in the case of land owned or occupied by a local authority, particulars of the use, if any, which is being made of the land and particulars of any purpose for which the land is intended to be used,(e) particulars of the market value of urban land as determined by the local authority, or by the Valuation Tribunal on appeal, in accordance with the provisions of section 22, and(f) such other particulars as may be prescribed.

The specific information requested in relation to the site concerned can be obtained by contacting Galway City Council at [housing@galwaycity.ie](mailto:housing@galwaycity.ie).

### **Planning Issues**

1918. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of residents in both the Citywest and Tallaght areas of Dublin 24 regarding the introduction of the fast-track planning application; if An Bord Pleanála will have regard to the local area plans completed by the local authority for both Citywest and Tallaght town centre in approving new developments; the requirements of An Bord Pleanála to adhere to these under current legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34820/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 9 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (the 2016 Act), requires An Bord Pleanála (the Board), when making a decision on a planning application for a Strategic Housing Development (SHD), to have regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to situate the proposed development, the development plan for the area and any relevant local area plan, any submissions or observations received, the potential effects on the environment or on a European site - as the case may be - of the proposed development, as well as any relevant Ministerial or Government policies, including any guidelines issued by my Department.

When making its determination, the Board is further required under section 9 of the 2016 Act to consider the report of the relevant planning authority on the proposed development. The report includes the authority's opinion on the proposed development, a recommendation on

whether to grant or refuse permission and the views of the elected members on the proposed development as expressed at a meeting of the Area Committee or Municipal District, where such a meeting has taken place.

Planning authorities play a central role in the determination of SHD applications. The pre-application stage relating to a proposed SHD project requires the prospective applicant, in the first instance, to consult with the relevant planning authority prior to engaging in formal pre-application consultations with the Board. In addition, the planning authority is required to submit to the Board its written opinion on the proposed development with regard to the provisions of the relevant development plan or local area plan in advance of the formal pre-application consultation meeting with the prospective applicant. Planning authority officials with sufficient knowledge and expertise in the matter concerned are required to attend any such formal pre-application consultation meetings between the Board and the prospective applicant.

Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, I am specifically precluded from exercising power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

### **Planning Issues**

1919. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when his Department will conduct a review of the new fast-track planning application for large residential developments; if submissions will be invited from the public in respect of these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34821/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As part of the actions under the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (the Act) introduced new streamlined arrangements to enable planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHDs) of 100 housing units or more, or student accommodation or shared accommodation developments of 200 bed spaces or more, to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

The primary purpose of the SHD arrangements is to support efficiency in the planning decision-making process, providing greater certainty for developers in terms of the timeframes within which proposals for such developments can be determined, while also fully respecting the need to ensure proper planning and sustainable development, the statutory requirements for consultation and consideration of observations submitted.

The Act provides that the SHD arrangements apply for an initial period until the end of 2019. Section 4(2)(a) of the Act provides that not later than 30 October 2019, the operation and effectiveness of the SHD arrangements must be reviewed and a report of my conclusions from the review must be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

In this regard, I have established a Review Group to assess the operation and effectiveness of the SHD provisions and to report back to me by end September 2019. The membership of the Review Group is as follows:

- Mr. John Martin, former Principal Planning Adviser in my Department (Chairperson),
- Mr. David Silke, Housing Agency,
- Mr. David O'Connor, former Chief Executive, Fingal County Council, and

- Mr. Liam Conneally, Director of Services, Clare County Council, (nominated by the County and City Management Association).

To augment the work of the Review Group, a public consultation on the SHD arrangements was advertised and held in July 2019.

Following the statutory review, section 4(2)(b) of the Act provides that I may extend, by order, the SHD arrangements for a further limited period of 2 years, up to the end of 2021, to coincide with the remaining timeframe of Rebuilding Ireland.

### **Proposed Legislation**

1920. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the land development agency legislation; when it is planned for the agency to proceed to acquiring brownfield sites within the M50 for residential development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34822/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The General Scheme of the Bill to establish the Land Development Agency (LDA) on a primary legislative basis was approved by Government and has now been published. It has been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny which is set to begin in the coming weeks. It is intended that the LDA Bill will be published and brought before the Oireachtas later this year.

The LDA has not been given a specific mandate to acquire brownfield sites within Dublin’s M50 area. However, the LDA can do so if it identifies strategic opportunities within the area where it could unlock development, particularly where it would not otherwise happen without its intervention.

The LDA is also reviewing lands in State ownership and is engaging with the relevant local authorities in respect of the regeneration of brownfield areas in Dublin and other cities on an ongoing basis.

### **Land Development Agency**

1921. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the consultation which has been undertaken with the four Dublin local authorities in respect of the forthcoming work of the land development agency to build new residential communities in their administrative areas; the way in which this will be co-ordinated with the local authorities’ existing local area plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34823/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Extensive consultation has taken place and is ongoing between the Land Development Agency (LDA) and the four Dublin local authorities. The discussions have centred around both how the LDA can assist with the formulation of plans to deliver affordable housing on local authority owned lands, and the LDA’s plans for sites in its initial portfolio that are located in the Dublin area.

Any planning applications that are made pursuant to these engagements will be consistent with the development plans, local area plans and national planning policy.

## **Fire Service**

1922. **Deputy Kate O’Connell** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to increase the necessary equipment and resources of Dublin Fire Brigade in view of the increasing height and density of new residential developments; the way in which new development would impact on the area serviced by the Tallaght fire station, Dublin 24; the way in which the station is to be upgraded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34824/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The provision of fire services is a statutory function of fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. In the case of Dublin, the City Council provides fire services on behalf of the other three Dublin local authorities also.

My Department supports fire authorities mainly through setting national policy and co-ordinating its implementation; providing capital funding for fire appliances, emergency equipment and the construction and upgrading of fire stations; centralised training programmes and co-ordination of the development of guidance on operational and other fire service related matters.

In relation to fire service response, the management of resources, equipment and the number and type of fire appliances is a matter for each of the fire authorities based on their assessment of local needs and requirements. Continued investment in the national fleet is one of the key priorities for my Department’s Fire Services Capital Programme. Under the capital programmes since 2008, my Department has funded nine ‘Class B’ appliances and two turntable ladders for Dublin. My Department continues to work closely with fire services in Dublin in relation to further priority projects.

Fire safety issues are kept under review by the Management Board of my Department’s National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM).

In terms of buildings, the primary statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of persons using any building rests with the persons having control of those buildings. The design and construction of buildings in the first instance, including in-built fire safety features such as building layout, means of escape and fire resistance are critical for protecting persons from fire. Safety features, such as fire detection and alarm systems, support safe evacuation of occupants and the containment of fires. The appropriate fire safety measures in any building are based on the scale, density and height of the building and are set out in national Building Regulations and associated Technical Guidance and Codes of Practice.

The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) in my Department published a Report in 2016 titled “Local Delivery – National Consistency”, which includes information on the Area Risk Categorisation process and the fire services provided in Dublin. Fire service response to any particular incident or category of incidents is determined by the Chief Fire Officer, taking account of national policy and guidance. A National Incident Command System was developed by the NDFEM in 2009 and was introduced nationwide with appropriate training and support materials. The Incident Commander decides on the appropriate course of action to be taken in any given situation, taking into consideration the balance of needs, risk and resources, with particular regard to health, safety and welfare of fire-fighters.

In relation to fighting fires in high-rise buildings, my Department issued guidance entitled “Fighting Fires in High-Rise Buildings” in April 2011. This was part of a suite of 47 Standard Operational Guidance (SOG) documents developed between 2010 and 2012 by fire service personnel and issued by the NDFEM. A copy of the SOG concerned, SOG 3.02, is available on my De-

partment's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/Community/FireandEmergencyServices/FileDownload%2C33367%2Cen.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/Community/FireandEmergencyServices/FileDownload%2C33367%2Cen.pdf).

There has been a steady decline in the number of fire incidents and the number of fatalities resulting from fires in Ireland over the past decade. Using the three-year averaged annual fire death rate per million of population metric, Ireland is among the countries where fire fatalities are seen to have been reduced to under 6 fire deaths per million of population. Work must continue in order to avoid the tragedy of fatalities from fire, the vast majority of which occur in the home. However, the positive impact of better fire safety design in buildings, effective fire safety management by those with statutory responsibility in large and complex buildings and improvements in community fire safety strategies, as well as fire services response, all contribute to an enhanced fire safety. These important matters are kept under constant review at local and national level.

### Legal Proceedings

1923. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of planning approvals by An Bord Pleanála of residential developments of over 100 units under the accelerated planning process for large-scale developments which have been challenged in the courts; the number of such challenges which have been successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34836/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** While the State may be a co-respondent or notice party in certain legal challenges against planning decisions of An Bord Pleanála, this would not always be the case. Full details in relation to the number and nature of such cases would be held by the Board and the management of such cases is a matter for the Board itself. Under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, I am specifically precluded from commenting or exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which the Board is or may be concerned.

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 in this regard is [Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie](mailto:Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie).

### Ministerial Advisers Data

1924. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to him and the Ministers of State in his Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34849/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Two Special Advisers, Mr. Jack O'Donnell and Mr. Paul Melia, are employed in my Department.

The salary details of both advisers are set out in tabular form as follows.

Name	Payscale
Paul Melia	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€85,823 - €105,552).
Jack O'Donnell	Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€85,823 - €105,552).

There are no Special Advisers employed in respect of the Ministers of State in my Department.

### Harbours and Piers Development

1925. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the technical assessment by the marine licence vetting committee which was being undertaken in February 2019 concerning Schull Harbour development; the commencement date for the work to begin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34873/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The technical assessment by the Marine Licence Vetting Committee was completed on 3 April 2019. The lease is currently being drafted by the Chief State Solicitor's Office and once it is signed by all parties, it will be a matter for the applicant to decide when they will commence construction.

### Rent Increases

1926. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position in relation to areas not under rent pressure zones in which rent is increasing and in which landlords put up rent by over 30% in the expectation that the area will be declared a rent pressure zone in the future; the options available for tenants in these situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34885/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** For tenancies in Local Electoral Areas (LEA's) which have not yet been designated as a Rent Pressure Zone, the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015, enacted on 4 December 2015, amends Section 20 to provide that rent reviews can only take place every 24 months rather than every 12 months, unless there has been a substantial change in the nature of the accommodation that warrants a review. The review of rent will still be on the basis of the market rent. The landlord must also provide three examples of rents for similar properties in a comparable area to demonstrate this.

Tenants must be given 90 days' notice of new rent and can make an application for dispute resolution to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) if they have not been given the required notice, or if they feel the rent increase is in excess of the market rent. These provisions have effect notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in a lease or tenancy agreement.

Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended, provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure

Zone. For the purpose of the Act, 'area' is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Up until recently, for an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must have satisfied the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as inserted by section 36 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016):

(i) the annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and

(ii) the average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (i.e the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,169.12 per month in Q1 2019).

However, on 30 May 2019, I signed the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019 which appointed 31 May 2019 and 4 June 2019 as the dates on which specified provisions of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 came into effect, including provisions in respect of the average rent qualifying criterion for RPZ designation. Specifically, in terms of criteria (ii) above, the rent of a dwelling in the Greater Dublin Area (Kildare, Wicklow and Meath) will now be compared to the average rent across the country, excluding Dublin rents; and the rent of a dwelling outside of the Greater Dublin Area will be compared to the average rent across the country, excluding Greater Dublin Area rents.

Each quarterly RTB Rent Index Report includes a summary, in Table 9, of the data used to establish whether each Local Electoral Area fulfils the criteria for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. This ensures transparency in relation to the position of individual areas in terms of average rent levels and increases.

Further information on Rent Pressure Zones and designations is available on my Department's website at [www.housing.gov.ie/PUBLICATIONS](http://www.housing.gov.ie/PUBLICATIONS), by searching 'rent pressure zones - information'.

The Rent Index, which is published each quarter, allows the Housing Agency to recommend areas to be considered for designation using the new criteria as set out in the 2019 Act. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found that additional areas meet the new criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

## **Wastewater Treatment**

1927. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1545 of 17 April 2019, when the revision of the grant scheme to householders that incur expenditure directly as a result of having to upgrade their wastewater systems following an inspection by their local authority will be completed and implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34890/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Work is at an advanced stage of development of the new scheme referred to by the Deputy. I expect that the process will be substantially completed over the coming month when the necessary regulations dealing with the financial assistance arrangements and related administrative matters are put in place. This will enable a circular letter, terms and conditions, guidance and the application form to issue to local authorities shortly thereafter.

**Wastewater Treatment**

1928. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the recoupments by his Department to local authorities each year since 2014 in relation to grants for the upgrading of domestic wastewater treatment systems by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34891/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The following table sets out the recoupment by my Department to local authorities each year since 2014 under the funding scheme for on-site wastewater treatment systems (septic tanks).

Local Authority	Amount (€) recouped to Local Authority	Amount(€) recouped to Local Authority	Amount (€) recouped to Local Authority			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (up to 31/8/2019)
Carlow	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cavan	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,370.95	8,000.00	2,500.00
Clare	0.00	21,270.53	10,500.00	11,700.00	9,954.40	8,000.00
Cork	0.00	10,098.98	27,132.56	6,276.34	15,385.59	2,732.52
Donegal	0.00	15,281.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	81,987.50
Dublin South	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00
Fingal	0.00	2,951.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Galway	15,300.06	28,912.20	6,744.00	26,199.44	22,500.00	35,772.87
Kerry	0.00	9,359.06	16,542.38	9,581.18	6,526.39	20,485.06
Kildare	0.00	8,000.00	0.00	4,000.00	9,000.00	0.00
Kilkenny	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00
Laois	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	9,448.00	4,000.00	0.00
Leitrim	2,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,203.10	14,500.00
Limerick	14,500.00	17,661.60	17,238.72	6,500.00	28,250.00	14,931.86
Longford	4,000.00	6,500.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00	2,500.00
Louth	4,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mayo	0.00	23,818.60	19,538.56	36,923.14	31,501.20	39,778.64
Meath	30,476.00	12,536.20	41,000.00	29,000.00	30,500.00	58,560.49
Monaghan	0.00	17,053.00	12,837.00	0.00	20,448.60	2,500.00
Offaly	0.00	12,126.51	0.00	0.00	8,000.00	0.00
Roscommon	4,000.00	40,251.28	16,000.00	25,000.00	15,296.00	12,000.00
Sligo	11,161.75	22,106.00	8,821.74	4,000.00	4,000.00	0.00
Tipperary	9,741.25	0.00	10,290.78	4,000.00	6,500.00	4,000.00
Waterford	0.00	0.00	4,903.20	0.00	0.00	4,488.00
Westmeath	2,896.20	150.00	3,690.89	0.00	6,354.77	4,000.00
Wexford	0.00	8,482.45	12,760.00	17,822.63	58,078.50	34,550.31
Wicklow	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,500.00	0.00	0.00
Totals	€98,575.26	€256,558.87	€211,999.83	€199,321.68	€289,498.55	€351,287.25

**Local Authority Housing Eligibility**

1929. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if consideration is being given to amending the financial thresholds for social housing in view of the fact that many persons find themselves outside the threshold but have no other

housing options; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34922/19]

1952. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the income limit for family units applying for social housing will be reviewed with a view to raising same (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35387/19]

1973. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the proposed date for the completion of the net income limits for social housing assessments review; when it will be completed and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35975/19]

1993. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to publish the review of income eligibility limits for social housing; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the inadequate income limits in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan are depriving persons on low income of applying for local authority housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36436/19]

2002. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the reviews of income limits for social housing by local authorities will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36613/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1929, 1952, 1973, 1993 and 2002 together.

Applications for social housing support are assessed by the relevant local authority, in accordance with the eligibility and need criteria set down in section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the associated Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011, as amended.

The 2011 Regulations prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area concerned, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy. The 2011 Regulations do not provide local authorities with any discretion to exceed the limits that apply to their administrative areas.

Under the Household Means Policy, which applies in all local authorities, net income for social housing assessment is defined as gross household income less income tax, and the universal social charge. The Policy provides for a range of income disregards, and local authorities also have discretion to decide to disregard income that is temporary, short-term or once off in nature.

The income bands are expressed in terms of a maximum net income threshold for a single-person household, with an allowance of 5% for each additional adult household member, subject to a maximum allowance under this category of 10%; and 2.5% for each child, subject to a maximum allowance under this category of 10%.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of future-proofing.

Given the cost to the State of providing social housing, it is considered prudent and fair to direct resources to those most in need of social housing support. The current income eligibility requirements generally achieve this, providing for a fair and equitable system of identifying

those households facing the greatest challenge in meeting their accommodation needs from their own resources.

However, as part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports in each local authority area is underway. The review will also have regard to current initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and cost rental and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

### **Private Rented Accommodation**

1930. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount allocated to each local authority to carry out inspections of private rented dwellings in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34940/19]

1931. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason improvement notices have not been issued in respect of all private rented dwellings which failed to meet the regulatory requirements (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34941/19]

1932. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of improvement notices in respect of private rented dwellings which resulted in the carrying out of the prescribed works and successful passing of the follow-up inspection by the local authority in each of the years 2014 to 2018, by local authority, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34942/19]

1933. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of tenancies which have ended as a result of the private rented dwelling failing the local authority inspections; the proportion of same which were registered HAP properties in each of the years 2014 to 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34943/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1930 to 1933, inclusive, together.

The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, set out a series of measures to be introduced to ensure the quality of private rental accommodation by strengthening the applicable standards and improving the inspection and enforcement systems.

Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 made under section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992. The regulations focus on tenant safety and include measures covering heating appliances, carbon monoxide and window safety. My Department published a guidance document to assist and support local authorities in implementing the Regulations in July 2017. All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations.

Under Section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations rests with the relevant local authority. Section 18A of the 1992 Act provides that where, in the opinion of a housing authority, a landlord is contravening or has contravened the standards, the authority may issue an improvement notice. It is a matter for the relevant housing authority to decide whether to issue an improvement notice in each individual case.

Between 2005 and 2018, over €39 million has been paid to local authorities to assist them in the performance of their functions under the Housing Acts, including the inspection of rented accommodation. Over 258,000 inspections were carried out during this period.

The Rental Strategy recognises the need for additional resources to be provided to local authorities to aid increased inspections of properties and ensure greater compliance with the Regulations. Exchequer funding of €4.5 million is being made available to local authorities in 2019 for this purpose, with the intention of providing further increases each year in the period to 2021 to facilitate a targeted inspection coverage of 25% of rental properties annually at that stage.

Detailed information in relation to inspections carried out by each local authority since 2005 is available on my Department's website at the following link:

[www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-building-and-private-rented/private-housing-market-statistics](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-building-and-private-rented/private-housing-market-statistics).

Details of the amounts paid to each local authority since 2014 are set out in the following table:

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Local Authority	€	€	€	€	€
County Councils					
Carlow	38,300	30,500	35,050	35,500	41,450
Cavan	80,800	63,300	73,400	53,000	64,400
Clare	54,800	56,750	66,250	52,450	56,850
Cork	82,300	61,700	80,950	125,800	91,600
Donegal	57,600	52,200	52,850	92,950	122,850
Dun L Rathdown	51,600	38,450	42,200	50,700	161,750
Fingal	32,950	27,550	36,250	86,450	295,350
Galway	5,950	8,700	3,000	118,800	84,250
Kerry	71,200	224,450	95,450	79,950	105,750
Kildare	63,400	52,450	40,400	46,150	64,500
Kilkenny	44,700	42,750	33,150	94,000	59,600
Laois	17,600	7,700	4,500	17,250	33,400
Leitrim	6,350	8,200	5,500	11,600	19,900
Limerick	41,300	99,050	137,950	106,600	123,600

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Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Local Authority	€	€	€	€	€
Longford	5,550	5,050	4,900	7,200	32,700
Louth	2,300	-	-	-	59,984
Mayo	10,200	25,650	10,100	23,000	75,400
Meath	14,300	14,800	11,900	38,500	42,150
Monaghan	38,900	38,700	30,600	42,150	48,150
Tipperary	19,100	10,300	11,000	72,550	104,900
Offaly	5,250	4,150	3,900	12,800	20,650
Roscommon	76,600	74,800	13,550	33,300	39,700
Sligo	88,700	60,972	44,150	33,750	56,450
South Dublin	289,900	189,450	152,350	169,750	208,500
Waterford	89,100	87,800	84,300	113,900	76,300
Westmeath	86,450	90,650	36,450	92,950	59,600
Wexford	90,800	21,050	19,100	41,950	91,650
Wicklow	36,600	-	-	-	-
City Councils					
Cork	137,100	111,650	110,750	86,350	76,750
Dublin	369,050	354,250	452,100	240,350	692,750
Galway	17,000	19,650	10,250	22,450	26,750
Total Payment	2,025,750	1,882,672	1,702,300	2,002,150	3,037,634

Information in relation to the number of improvement notices in respect of private rented dwellings which resulted in the carrying out of the prescribed works and successful passing of the follow-up inspection by the local authority as well as the number of tenancies which have ended as a result of the private rented dwelling failing the local authority inspections is not held by my Department.

At the end of Q2 2019, a total of 14,478 households were reported on the HAP Shared Services Centre system as having exited HAP: this included tenant led exits; compliance exits; transfers to other forms of social housing; and landlord exits. This report is based on cessations as submitted by local authorities. Reasons for these cessations are typically provided by the tenant and/or landlord. To end Q2 2019, 399 exits from the scheme were reported as relating to property standards.

1934. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the criteria used to determine whether a housing assistance payment, HAP, property has passed or failed a standards inspection by the local authority for the purposes of HAP eligibility; the local authorities that employ the building standards regulations in respect of such inspections, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34944/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP) is underpinned by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. Under section 41 of the 2014 Act, local authorities are required to commence the inspection process within 8 months of the commencement of HAP support being provided in relation to a particular dwelling, if the dwelling was not already inspected within the previous 12 months. Local authorities carry out HAP inspections as a subset of their overall private rented inspections programme.

The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 specify requirements in relation to a range of matters, such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, natural light and safety of gas, oil and electrical supply. With very limited exemptions, these standards apply to all local authority and voluntary housing units, as well as private rented residential accommodation with a small number of exceptions, such as holiday homes. My Department also published a guidance document to assist and support local authorities in implementing these Regulations.

The HAP legislation provides a very structured, time bound system where serious lack of compliance exists and can result in termination of HAP payment. A property may fail an inspection for a range of reasons, and not all are serious. In many cases, the property owner is required to make small adjustments to come into compliance. If a tenant believes their property does not comply with minimum standards, they should discuss this with the landlord in the first instance.

Failure to comply with the minimum standards can result in penalties and prosecution. Local authorities can issue Improvement Notices and Prohibition Notices to landlords who breach the minimum standards regulations. An Improvement Notice sets out the works that the landlord must carry out to remedy a breach of the regulations.

In the case of a Prohibition Notice being enforced, a local authority may provide, or continue to provide, HAP in respect of that property for a period of 13 weeks, to enable the household to find an alternative dwelling.

## **EU Directives**

1935. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to discussions at EU level regarding the potential partial liberalisation of the water market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34947/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is not aware of any particular policy proposals at EU level relating to the issue referred to. There is currently a proposal to recast the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the quality of water intended for human consumption, known as the Drinking Water Directive. While the proposed recast Directive makes provision for greater information to be published on the cost, efficiency and quality of water supplies it does not contain proposals in relation to liberalisation of the water market. My Department continues to update the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government on the progress of this proposed Directive.

## **Rent Supplement Scheme**

1936. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding landlords that do not want to enter the housing assistance payment scheme with a local authority but have existing tenants that are in receipt of rental supplement; if they can continue on same; the engagement he has with the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to ensure that some persons are not left homeless as a result of landlords not entering into the HAP agreement in circumstances in which there is no suitable alternative rental accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34954/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. It is available in all local authority areas and its introduction ensures that all social housing supports can be accessed through the local authorities.

HAP will replace Rent Supplement (RS) for those with a long-term housing need, who qualify for social housing support. However, RS will remain available through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) to households as a short-term income support. The strategic aim is to complete the majority of transfers from long-term RS to HAP by end 2020, as outlined in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

HAP provides fast, flexible housing support to all eligible households in the area of their choice. Individuals, who in the past were reluctant to avail of full time work as they would lose their Rent Supplement support, can now move to HAP and avail of full-time employment and retain their housing support, with an adjustment in their differential rent.

HAP plays a vital role in housing eligible families and individuals. At the end of Q2 2019 there were more than 48,000 households having their housing needs met via HAP.

A landlord or an agent acting on behalf of a landlord is not legally obliged to enter into a tenancy agreement with a HAP recipient. However, on 1 January 2016, the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 introduced “housing assistance” as a new discriminatory ground. This means that discrimination in the provision of accommodation or related service and amenities against people in receipt of rent supplement, HAP or other social welfare payments is prohibited. Further information is available at [www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/i-have-an-issue-with-a-service/i-have-an-issue-about-accommodation/](http://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/i-have-an-issue-with-a-service/i-have-an-issue-about-accommodation/).

If a person feels that they have been discriminated against by a landlord or their agent, they can make a complaint under the Equal Status Acts to the Workplace Relations Commission; further information is available on the Commission’s website, [www.workplacerelations.ie](http://www.workplacerelations.ie).

Administration of the HAP scheme is a matter for the relevant local authority. The transfer of existing long-term rent supplement tenancies is continuing, with ongoing engagement between local authorities and local DEASP offices. Failure of a landlord to participate in HAP should not affect an existing customer’s entitlement to rent supplement, provided that the tenant has engaged with the local authority and/or Community Welfare Officer within the HAP transfer process.

I continue to keep the operation of HAP under review but I am currently satisfied with how the scheme is operating and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting current housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme set out in Rebuilding Ireland.

## **Pyrite Remediation Programme**

1937. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the proposed pyrite scheme; the details of same; the funding in place for the scheme; when it is due to commence; the way in which a homeowner can apply for the scheme; the number of homes that will be accepted to the scheme; the criteria needed to be granted a place on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34969/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In October 2018, the Government approved in principle the development of a grant scheme of financial assistance to support affected homeowners in the counties of Donegal and Mayo to carry out the necessary remediation works to dwellings that have been damaged due to defective concrete blocks.

In May 2019, agreement was reached with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to allocate €20 million to a scheme for this purpose from within the €2.4 billion housing budget for 2019. Funding for future years will be agreed on an annual basis as part of the normal Estimates process.

The full terms and conditions of the scheme are being finalised, again in consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This process will take account of the engagement that my Department is currently having with both Donegal and Mayo County Councils. In this regard, officials from my Department continue to meet with both local authority teams to discuss implementation arrangements for the scheme and further engagement will take place over the coming weeks.

On completion of this work, it is intended to revert to Government on the matter. The aim will be to complete the outstanding work without delay in order to ensure that the scheme can get underway as early as possible.

### **Planning Issues**

1938. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding unauthorised reports in planning; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34990/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My role, as Minister, in relation to the planning system is mainly to provide and update the legislative and policy guidance framework. The legislative framework comprises the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, (the Act) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

With regards to policy guidance, my Department has issued a large number of planning guidelines (available on my Department's website, [www.housing.gov.ie](http://www.housing.gov.ie)) under section 28 of the Act, to which planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are obliged to have regard in the exercise of their planning functions. The day-to-day operation of the planning system is, however, a matter for the planning authorities.

In this regard and in accordance with planning legislation, enforcement of planning control is a matter for the relevant planning authority which can take action if a development does not have the required permission, or where the terms of a permission have not been met.

Under the Act, it is obligatory for the planning authority to follow up substantive written complaints of breaches of the planning code, unless it considers the complaint to be trivial or vexatious, or without substance or foundation.

Once a planning authority has received a written complaint and forms the view that unauthorised development may have been, is being or may be carried out, it must issue a warning letter to the owner or person carrying out the development unless the development in question is of a trivial or minor nature.

After issuing the warning letter the planning authority will carry out an investigation with a view to deciding whether further action is required. In making its decision, the authority must take into account the original written complaint received and any representations from the person who was served with the warning letter.

Where the planning authority establishes, having carried out an investigation that unauthorised development is being carried out which is not trivial or minor, and the person carrying out the development does not move to remedy the situation (e.g. by removing the offending development or by applying for permission), the planning authority must in general take further action e.g. issue an enforcement notice or seek a court order.

Under section 30 of the Act, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case, including an enforcement issue, with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

In May 2013, a Ministerial Policy Directive was issued to all planning authorities under section 29 of the Act, reminding them of their statutory obligations under Part VIII of the Act relating to enforcement. The Policy Directive required that planning authorities ensure that sufficient and appropriate human resources are made available for enforcement purposes. It also required planning authorities to undertake appropriate monitoring of planning enforcement and directed them to prioritise large-scale unauthorised development and enforcement cases.

Further to this Policy Directive, it is a matter for planning authorities to ensure that they utilise resources appropriately for efficient and effective planning enforcement.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes Status**

1939. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the proposed public water schemes for Murrisk, Lecanvey, Kilsallagh and Louisburgh, County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35005/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. Irish Water, as a single publically owned national water services authority, is taking a strategic, nationwide national utility approach to asset planning and investment, and meeting customer requirements.

Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) published in 2015 sets out the strategic objectives for its delivery of water services over 25 years up to 2040 in order to ensure the provision of clean safe drinking water, effective management of wastewater, environmental protection and support for social and economic development. The Irish Water Business Plan, Transforming Water Services in Ireland to 2021 (also published in 2015), sets out its short to medium term planning in implementing the first phase of the Water Services Strategic Plan.

On 21 May 2018, I published the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025, following its approval by Government. The Policy Statement gives clear direction to strategic planning and decision making on water and wastewater services in Ireland. The Policy Statement sets out a series of high-level policy objectives across the three thematic areas of Quality, Conservation,

and Future Proofing, which must be pursued when planning capital investment and framing current spending plans. The Policy Statement is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/water\\_services\\_policy\\_statement\\_2018-2025\\_0.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/water_services_policy_statement_2018-2025_0.pdf).

I approved Irish Water's Strategic Funding Plan 2019-2024 on 7 November 2018, following its consideration by Government. The Strategic Funding Plan sets out Irish Water's operational and capital expenditure plans, and is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/irish\\_water\\_strategic\\_funding\\_plan.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/irish_water_strategic_funding_plan.pdf)

Based on the Strategic Funding Plan, Irish Water's next Capital Investment Plan for the five year period from 2020 to 2024 will set out the financial plan for capital investments to support Irish Water's strategic objectives, as set out in the WSSP and in its Strategic Funding Plan, to deliver improvements to water services where they are needed most. Irish Water will also take account of developing subsidiary programmes within its investment plan to assist in implementing the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan, including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, as well as ongoing reviews of local authority statutory land use plans. I understand that it has brought forward proposals for a Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme which will support a number of the National Policy Objectives and National Strategic Outcomes under the National Planning Framework. The Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme is intended to provide water and wastewater growth capacity in smaller settlements which would not otherwise be provided for in Irish Water's Investment Plan. Irish Water will work with local authorities across the country in ensuring that investment is made where it is needed most, aligned to local authority core strategies. It is in that context that investment decisions in relation to individual projects will be made.

Irish Water has established a dedicated team to deal with representations and queries from public representatives. The team can be contacted via email to [oireachtasmembers@water.ie](mailto:oireachtasmembers@water.ie) or by telephone on a dedicated number, 1890 578 578.

Separately, on 8 February this year, I announced details of the measures being funded through my Department under the Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021. Local authorities were invited to submit their bids for the funding of schemes or projects in their functional areas and Mayo County Council included a scheme at Murrisk in its application to my Department under the new Programme.

My Department is currently considering local authorities' bids for funding allocations. An Expert Panel has been put in place to support the evaluation process. In addition to providing an expert perspective, the Panel brings independence, openness and transparency to the bids evaluation process which is done on a national prioritised basis. The Expert Panel's membership includes Departmental, stakeholder and independent representation.

The Expert Panel has made recommendations to my Department on the suitability of schemes and projects for funding based on objective criteria which are set out in the framework document issued to local authorities when requesting proposals. I expect to conclude the consideration of the Panel's recommendations and to make an announcement of the allocations shortly.

### **Approved Housing Bodies**

1940. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding the approved list of charitable housing bodies that apply for funding

towards building homes for qualifying persons; the way in which this list is compiled; if monitoring of activities takes place; if local authorities have a role in monitoring the housing bodies activities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35013/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In order to be eligible for funding for the construction of social housing, housing bodies must be registered as Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in accordance with Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992.

To become an AHB, the body must comply with a range of criteria including that it is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Details on how to apply for approved status along with a list of existing AHBs can be found on my Department's website at the following link:

[www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/voluntary-and-cooperative-housing/approved-housing-bodies-AHBs](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/voluntary-and-cooperative-housing/approved-housing-bodies-AHBs).

AHBs are, by definition, non-profit, independent legal entities with independent governance structures. Each AHB must have a properly functioning governing body, or board of directors/trustees, which is directly responsible for the commissioning of housing projects and services, the ownership, management and maintenance of dwellings and compliance with all statutory regulations.

The oversight of AHBs is currently conducted through the Voluntary Regulation Code (VRC), Building for the Future, A Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland. The VRC is overseen by the Interim Regulation Committee (IRC), based in the Housing Agency.

Since the Code was put in place, any AHB applying for housing funding from my Department and local authorities must furnish proof of compliance with the Voluntary Code. Since January 2017, only those AHBs that have undergone a satisfactory assessment as part of the annual assessment process by the Regulation Office are considered eligible for funding for the provision of social housing.

All funding to AHBs is provided via the local authorities as the latter are the statutory housing authorities for their areas. All social housing provision in each area, including by AHBs, must be provided with the approval and oversight of the local authorities. The local authority determines whether an AHB project is to be approved or not, based on housing need and suitability of the proposed development. The AHB enters into a contract with the local authority and must abide by the terms and conditions of the relevant scheme.

The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019 was published on 30 July 2019. The Bill provides for the establishment of an independent Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority, enhancing the regulation of AHBs for the purposes of supporting stronger governance and the financial viability of the sector, with a particular focus on safeguarding the significant public investment being made in the delivery of social housing by AHBs. Similarly, the Bill will provide assurance to tenants, the public and potential investors that the sector is well regulated.

### **Derelict Sites**

1941. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the schemes rolled out by his Department in an effort to deal with derelict buildings; the details of same; his plans for one-off housing and dwellings; and if he will make a statement on

the matter. [35057/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

Local authorities have been provided with a number of powers and measures to deal with the issue of derelict buildings. There also exists a framework of overarching policy and capital funding which provides support to development, including urban regeneration.

Under the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, the Repair and Leasing Scheme has been introduced to assist property owners in bringing vacant properties back into use for social housing purposes. The scheme is particularly targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required standard for rental properties.

Subject to the suitability of the property for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs is met upfront with a capital loan from the local authority or an approved housing body (AHB) up to a maximum of €40,000, and up to a maximum of €50,000 in the situation where the property is a former bedsit. This allows the property owner to sign-up to a lease arrangement with a local authority or an AHB for a period of time that is linked to the value of the repairs, subject to a minimum lease period of 5 years. Up to end Q1 2019, a total of 102 homes had been brought back into use under the scheme.

A similar measure entitled the Buy and Renew Scheme supports local authorities in purchasing and renewing housing units in need of repair which can then be made available for social housing use. It is a matter for each local authority to determine the suitability of a property for social housing. Important considerations in that regard include the location of a property in relation to housing need and demand, the design and scale suitability of a property for social housing use, and the costs and practicality of acquiring and remediating a property.

The Buy and Renew Scheme particularly focuses on older vacant homes to help tackle the problem of dereliction and improve the appearance of the community. As a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme, it provides the option for suitable properties to be purchased rather than leased, if that is the preference of the owners of vacant properties. Since its introduction, local authorities have delivered over 430 new social homes under the scheme. Activity in this regard is largely delegated to local authorities so they can respond flexibly to all opportunities to provide new social housing.

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 imposes a general duty on every owner and occupier of land to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the land does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site. The Act also imposes a duty on local authorities to take all reasonable steps, including the exercise of appropriate statutory powers, to ensure that any land within their functional area does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site.

Local authority powers include requiring owners or occupiers to take appropriate measures on derelict sites, acquiring derelict sites by agreement, or compulsorily, and to apply a derelict sites levy on derelict sites. It is a matter for local authorities to determine the most appropriate use of the legislation within their respective functional areas.

Under the Act, local authorities are required to maintain a derelict sites register, which includes the name and address of each owner and occupier, where these can be ascertained by reasonable enquiry, of any land which, in the opinion of the local authority, is a derelict site. Under section 8(5) of the Act, a copy of the derelict sites register for any local authority can be inspected at the offices of that authority during office hours. Members of the public can engage with their local authority in relation to addressing individual derelict sites in their local areas. The 1990 Act does not differentiate between one-off houses and any other type of derelict site.

The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 enables local authorities to apply a levy to vacant and underutilised sites in urban areas. The main objective of the Vacant Site Levy is to incentivise the development of such sites for both the provision of housing and the development and renewal of land, and to facilitate the most efficient use of such land and sites and enable them to be brought into beneficial use. The levy applies to all sites, both public and privately owned, which exceed 0.05 hectares on residential land or regeneration land and which meet the relevant criteria. In order to avoid a double levy on any site, the Derelict Sites Levy is not payable for any site subject to the Vacant Site Levy.

Under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018, both the Derelict Sites Levy and the Vacant Sites Levy will increase from 3% to 7% of the market valuation of relevant sites with effect from January 2020. This change in the rate of the levies is intended to ensure that the levies have more meaningful impact and that the powers of local authorities in tackling dereliction and vacancy are strengthened for the purpose of bringing relevant sites into productive use, thereby facilitating urban regeneration and development while also combatting land hoarding.

In addition, the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2018, which came into operation on 8 February 2018, provide for an exemption from the requirement to obtain planning permission in respect of the change of use of certain vacant commercial premises, including vacant areas above ground floor premises, to residential use. This measure is aimed at facilitating the productive re-use of qualifying vacant commercial buildings as homes, while also facilitating urban renewal and the bringing on stream of increased housing supply.

Project Ireland 2040, launched by the Government in February 2018, is the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the period 2018 to 2027, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, and the 20-year National Planning Framework (NPF).

The NDP established four new funds, with a combined allocation of €4 billion to 2027. The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), which is the fund operated by my Department, was launched last year and has an overall provision of €2 billion to 2027. €58m is available in 2019 to provide initial support to the 88 projects announced last November on foot of the first call for proposals.

The URDF was established to support applicant-led projects that will contribute to regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns, in line with the objectives of the NPF and the NDP. The aim is to achieve more compact, sustainable and mixed use development, with a view to ensuring that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit. This will be done by supporting proposals that contribute to the re-development of key brownfield areas, including areas containing derelict sites and buildings, both by enabling infrastructure and new master-planned development proposals.

While the URDF is not intended to provide direct support for particular housing projects, some of the projects it is currently supporting will enable a significant proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and towns.

With regard to one-off housing and dwellings, my Department established a working group to review and, where necessary, recommend changes to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Once ongoing deliberations by the working group are completed, I will be in a position to finalise and issue to planning authorities revisions to the 2005 Guidelines.

### Housing Assistance Payment Data

1942. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons on the housing assistant payment scheme at the end of each year from 2014 to 2018; the number of families on the scheme at the end of June 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35074/19]

**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 now available to all eligible households throughout the State, following a phased roll out across local authorities over a number of years, commencing in 2014.

Details on the number of households supported by HAP at the end of each year from 2014 to 2018 are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of Households Supported by HAP at year end
2014	485
2015	5,853
2016	16,493
2017	31,228
2018	43,443
2019	48,261 (to end Q2)

My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of the scheme and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme outlined under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan.

### Rent Pressure Zones

1943. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if Athy local electoral area will be designated as a rent pressure zone; the rent increases in the area over the past two years by quarter; if HAP thresholds will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35084/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended, provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone. For the purpose of the Act, ‘area’ is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001.

Previously, for an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must have satisfied the criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as inserted by section 36 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016), as follows:

- (i) the annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last

six quarters; and

(ii) the average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (i.e the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,169.12 per month in Q1 2019).

However, on 30 May 2019, I signed the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019 which appointed 31 May 2019 and 4 June 2019 as the dates on which specified provisions of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 came into effect, including provisions in respect of the average rent qualifying criterion for RPZ designation. Specifically, in relation to criteria (ii) above, the rent of a dwelling in the Greater Dublin Area (Kildare, Wicklow and Meath) will now be compared to the average rent across the country, excluding Dublin rents; and the rent of a dwelling outside of the Greater Dublin Area will be compared to the average rent across the country, excluding Greater Dublin Area rents.

Each quarterly RTB Rent Index Report includes a summary in Table 9 of the data used to establish whether each Local Electoral Area fulfils the criteria for designation as a Rent Pressure Zone. This ensures transparency in relation to the position of individual areas in terms of average rent levels and increases. The quarterly Rent Index Reports are available to view on the RTB's website at the following link: <https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/news/latest-data-from-rtb-quarterly-rent-index-2>.

Further information on Rent Pressure Zones and designations is available on my Department's website at [www.housing.gov.ie/PUBLICATIONS](http://www.housing.gov.ie/PUBLICATIONS), by searching 'rent pressure zones - information'.

While rental inflation in the Athy LEA has been above 7% in 4 of the last 6 quarters, the standardised average rent in Athy in Q1 2019 was €801.55, which is below the Non-Dublin Standardised Average Rent of €879.25 per month, thereby not satisfying the criteria for designation as an RPZ.

Under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, tenants source their own accommodation in the private rented market. The tenancy agreement is between the tenant and the landlord and is governed by the Residential Tenancies Acts. The accommodation sourced by tenants should be within the prescribed maximum HAP rent limits, which are based on household size and the rental market within the area concerned.

Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit in circumstances where it is necessary, because of local rental market conditions, to secure appropriate accommodation for a household. It is a matter for the local authority to determine if the application of the flexibility is warranted on a case by case basis.

I am satisfied that the existing arrangements under the HAP scheme provide adequate flexibility and discretion to local authorities, where necessary, to support households in securing accommodation. Accordingly, I have no plans at present to increase HAP rent limits, a course of action which could have inflationary effects on rents and thereby have a potentially detrimental impact on the wider rental market, including for those households who are not receiving HAP support.

### **Electoral Register**

1944. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment the position regarding the eligibility of persons who are homeless for inclusion on the register of electors in order to participate in elections; the process and systems in place to allow persons to obtain polling cards for elections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35107/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** In order to vote at an election or a referendum a voter must be registered in the appropriate register of electors for that election or referendum. The Electoral Act 1992 provides for the registration of voters where they are ‘ordinarily resident’. Depending on the circumstances, the registration authority may consider it appropriate to register a homeless person at a particular hostel or hub where they are residing, either permanently or temporarily.

While the registration of all voters is a matter for the registration authorities, I would expect, in the circumstances, that they take a reasonable and common-sense approach to the inclusion of homeless persons in the register of electors.

Under electoral law, local returning officers are responsible at an election or a referendum for sending a polling information card to those whose name is on the register of electors. A polling information card does not confer a right to vote at an election or referendum nor is it required by a person in order to cast his or her vote. Provided a person is on the register of electors, he or she can vote.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes Status**

1945. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of a group wastewater scheme (details supplied). [35132/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 8 February this year, I announced details of the measures being funded through my Department under the Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021. Local authorities were invited to submit their bids for the funding of schemes or projects in their functional areas and Limerick City and County Council included the scheme referred to in its application to my Department under the new Programme.

My Department is currently considering local authorities’ bids for funding allocations. An Expert Panel has been put in place to support the evaluation process. In addition to providing an expert perspective, the Panel brings independence, openness and transparency to the bids evaluation process which is done on a national prioritised basis. The Expert Panel’s membership includes Departmental, stakeholder and independent representation.

The Expert Panel has made recommendations to my Department on the suitability of schemes and projects for funding based on objective criteria, which are set out in the framework document issued to local authorities when requesting proposals. I expect to conclude considerations of the Panel’s recommendations and to make an announcement of the allocations shortly.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Data**

1946. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of approvals given to local authorities regarding unsold affordable houses that did not sell at the time and approval was given to them to be leased to an approved hous-

ing body; if local authorities can now sell these houses to the original approved housing body or another approved housing body in view of the fact that this would give security for tenants as some of the lease agreements are short term and it would also allow the approved housing body carry out maintenance on these properties and keep them in a proper condition, which they are not in a position to do so at the moment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35282/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In April 2009, my Department issued guidance to local authorities on the use of unsold affordable dwellings as a means to meet social housing need. This was to be achieved through the social housing leasing programme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), with the dwellings being leased or managed by an Approved Housing Body (AHB) or private management company for a period of up to 5 years, with an option to extend the agreement to a maximum of 10 years. These dwellings are funded under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). The number of unsold affordable dwellings supported by SHCEP at end 2018 was 2, 049.

As the 10 year period is now coming to an end in respect of many of these dwellings, my Department has established an internal working group to consider a long term strategy for unsold affordable dwellings. The principal task of the group is to consider options for these dwellings and facilitate consultation with local authorities, AHBs and the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) as to what future action may be appropriate.

In that regard, the Department is currently undertaking a data gathering exercise in relation to this issue. When this exercise is complete, and following consultation by the Department with all relevant stakeholders (including local authorities, AHBs and the HFA), updated guidance on the options available to local authorities in respect of their unsold affordable dwellings will be issued.

### **Homeless Accommodation Provision**

1947. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the communications that took place between his Department and the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and an approved housing body (details supplied) regarding the provision of services at a location; if funding could have been provided to renovate this building under the capital assistance scheme; his views on whether it would have been appropriate to allocate funding under this scheme that would benefit a private company endeavouring to make a profit as was proposed in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35289/19]

1977. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the communications that have taken place between his Department and the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and approved housing bodies or commercial companies regarding the provision of homeless services at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36098/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1947 and 1977 together.

My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility for the provision of accommodation and related services rests with individual housing authorities.

While responsibility for the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities, the administration of homeless services is organised on a regional basis. Within each region, a Consultative Forum exists and it is the role of the Management Group of this forum to assess the need for homeless accommodation and related services in each region, in this case the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DHRE).

I can confirm that an Approved Housing Body applied, in consultation with the DHRE, to my Department for capital funding, under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), for the acquisition of the property referred to. This application was received by my Department in early July 2019. However, my Department was subsequently advised by the DRHE that the application for funding was being withdrawn, before an assessment of the application in question had been completed by my Department.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Provision**

1948. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the communications between his Department and an approved housing body (details supplied) in respect of the provision of accommodation at a site; if the provision of funding is under consideration for this building under the capital assistance scheme; his views on whether it is appropriate to provide funding under the scheme for the benefit a private company intent on making a profit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35290/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, 50,000 new social housing homes are to be delivered by 2021, through local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), using a range of funding streams including the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF).

Market conditions in many cases mean that turnkey arrangements are highly appropriate in terms of delivery timescale and cost. Turnkeys are, in the main, homes built by developers on private land under contract for local authorities or AHBs. They are a good source of social housing that can often be delivered quickly, and often in areas where the local authority does not have land. All local authorities actively consider this source in addition to all other delivery mechanisms. These can be projects that are unbuilt but have planning permission in place, that may be unfinished/partially built/under construction, or largely completed but with 'finishing out' works to be done.

All funding provided to AHBs to support this activity is made available by my Department through local authorities. Indeed, local authorities, as the statutory housing authorities, are the decision makers in relation to the suitability of a proposed social housing project. For example, local authorities are required to ensure that any project appropriately reflects the housing need in that particular area and that there is sufficient need in the area to support the units over time; the properties comply with relevant standards and regulatory requirements; and the objectives of creating and maintaining sustainable communities are being met.

In recent years, the main source of funding to AHBs for social housing delivery, including turnkey projects, is through borrowings and support from local authorities through the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) and Payment and Availability (P&A) programme. The loan (capital advance) is available up to a maximum of 30% of the value of the acquisition or construction of the dwellings and it is repayable at the end of the term which can be up to 30 years. The balance of the investment required is borrowed separately by the AHB, and in the main, from the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). CALF is targeted at projects where the AHBs does

not have sufficient financial capacity in the initial years of a loan to service the debt or may require some up-front capital to secure the lending in the first place. AHBs can only avail of this funding if they enter into a P&A agreement with the local authority for the same period, making the relevant properties available for social housing - providing accommodation for people on the relevant local authority's waiting list, for the same period of time.

Applications for P&A-CALF funding are made to local authorities by AHBs and normally consist of a completed application form and a financial model showing the capital cost, income and operational costs projected over the P&A term sought, and other relevant supporting documentation.

I can confirm that an AHB applied to the relevant local authority for CALF funding to progress a turnkey project at the site referred to. The project has the support of the local authority and has met all of the requirements for funding, in line with Departmental policies and financial assessments. My Department issued formal approval for this project in May 2019.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

1949. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by his Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by his Department over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35344/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department spent a total of €191,531 (including VAT) on Lotus Domino Enterprise Client Access Licences from 2009 to 2019.

The system is now replaced with a Build to Share Application, developed and maintained centrally by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and therefore there is no projected expenditure for the renewal of such licences.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

1950. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is an exception to the rule that 3% of the 10% required as a deposit must come from regular savings in the context of the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme in cases in which the applicant has proven an ability to pay through paying rent and can meet the deposit requirement as a result of receiving a lump sum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35363/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme is designed to enable credit worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties. The low rate of fixed interest associated with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan provides first-time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not otherwise have been able to afford at a higher interest rate.

To support prudential lending and consistency of treatment for borrowers, a Loan to Value ratio of 90% applies to the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan as per the Central Bank's prudential lending guidelines. Therefore, in order to avail of the loan, applicants must have a deposit

equivalent to 10% of the market value of the property.

Applicants must provide bank or similar statements (such as post office, credit union etc.) for a 12-month period immediately prior to making an application, clearly showing a credible and consistent track record of savings. The cash savings should be no less than 3% of the market value of the property. Gifts are permissible up to 7% of the market value of the property, where their source is verified.

Exceptions to the above can be made where an applicant/applicants can clearly demonstrate a consistent and credible record of savings or rent payment through their bank account, which at a minimum is equal to the proposed monthly loan repayment.

For prospective purchasers of newly-built properties, the availability, through the Revenue Commissioners, of the Help to Buy Initiative for first-time buyers may provide additional assistance to prospective applicants for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan.

Further information, including a Frequently Asked Questions section, is available on the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan website at <http://rebuildingirelandhomeloan.ie>.

### **Local Authority Management**

1951. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he plans to appoint a permanent chief executive to Galway County Council to replace the acting chief executive; the last date on which there was a permanent chief executive in Galway County Council; the reason for the delay in appointing a permanent chief executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35382/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The last permanent Chief Executive of Galway County Council retired on 4 July 2014. A temporary chief executive was appointed at that time, pending a permanent appointment. In that regard, during the intervening period there has been extensive policy development processes examining optimum arrangements for local governance in Galway. Arising from these processes, in June 2018 the Government decided in principle to implement the unanimous recommendation of the Expert Advisory Group to amalgamate Galway City and County Councils by 2021.

In order to progress matters, the Local Government Bill 2018 contained provision for a single chief executive post with dual responsibility for Galway City and County Councils, to, inter alia, progressively implement organisational integration in advance of a full merger. However, these provisions were removed from the Bill through an amendment approved in the Seanad.

In light of the foregoing, it is appropriate to review the position in relation to the filling of the post of Chief Executive of Galway County Council on a permanent basis. That process is underway and will be concluded as quickly as possible.

*Question No. 1952 answered with Question No. 1929.*

### **Capital Assistance Scheme**

1953. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason rent is being raised in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35410/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The property the Deputy is referring to has received funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS). Where sheltered housing is provided by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) under CAS, my Department's guidance states that rents should be at levels which are reasonable having regard to tenant's incomes and the outlay of the AHB on the accommodation.

My Department does not play a role in the setting of individual rents for CAS schemes but the relevant local authority should be consulted and should ensure that agreement on the calculation of an economic rent is in place. As responsibility for the administration of CAS is a matter for the local authority, the Deputy may wish to pursue the case referred to with Kerry County Council.

### **Local Authority Housing Maintenance**

1954. **Deputy Danny Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is sufficient funding for local authorities to refurbish void houses that need to be brought up to a standard to offer to new occupants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35461/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock is a matter for each individual local authority. This includes the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs.

The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The purpose of the Voids Programme is to ensure that vacant units are actively targeted, with a view to minimising the turnaround and re-let time of these units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

Earlier this year, local authorities submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this programme in 2019. These proposals were evaluated and approval was given to proceed with works to 1,466 void properties with a remediation cost of some €27.3m. Given the availability of funding, the completion of the works concerned is now a matter for individual local authorities.

### **Planning Issues**

1955. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a decision will be made on a stage 4 approval for a housing project (details supplied) submitted to his Department on 19 July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35479/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In relation to the housing project referred to by the Deputy, I can confirm that stage 4 approval issued from my Department to Galway County Council on 20 August 2019.

### **Planning Issues**

1956. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment when a decision will be made on a stage 1 approval for a housing project (details supplied) submitted to his Department on 1 July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35480/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In December 2016, my Department issued Stage 1 approval for the acquisition and refurbishment of the housing project referred to by the Deputy, with an approved budget of €1.175m. The scope of the project has since been altered by the Approved Housing Body and a revised Capital Appraisal (Stage 1) was received, initially in January 2019, with further options also being provided since then. The revised project is showing substantial cost increases from the initial budget approval and my Department is liaising with Galway County Council in this regard.

### Legislative Measures

1957. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to introduce legislation that includes co-living arrangements; if so, the timeline for same; if it will mirror existing legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35559/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2019 regulate the landlord-tenant relationship in the private rented sector, including tenancies in co-living dwellings, and set out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. The Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2019 apply to every dwelling that is the subject of a tenancy, subject to a limited number of exceptions. The dwellings to which the Act does not apply are set out in section 3(2) of the Act and include, for example, a dwelling within which the landlord also resides.

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Act to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. Where a dwelling is occupied by a person under a tenancy, arrangement or agreement to which the Act does not apply, such as instances where a bona fide licensing arrangement exists, the RTB does not have any function in relation to such agreements or arrangements.

If a dispute arises as to whether a purported licence in a co-living dwelling is in fact a tenancy, the RTB can determine the matter and if it is a tenancy, the Residential Tenancies Acts apply. Where the owner of a dwelling enters into an agreement with a person for the occupation of that dwelling, it is a private contractual matter between the parties as to whether that agreement is a licence or a tenancy.

Given the relatively new nature of this form of accommodation, my Department will monitor the emerging shared accommodation sector and is keeping all aspects under review.

### Consultancy Contracts Data

1958. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35579/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

External consultancies have not, to date, been used to advise my Department on issues relating to GDPR. My Department has, however, procured in-house training on GDPR and data protection matters from three companies as detailed below. The services provided involved training staff in a classroom-type setting as well as the development of an e-learning module to be undertaken by all staff in the Department. Individual staff members have, separately, also been supported to attend GDPR-related courses and conferences hosted by external bodies.

Supplier	Description	Payment Date	Amount
AllOne Corporate Solutions Ltd	GDPR Training	12/06/2018	1,200.00
IACT (Irish Academy of Computer Training)	Provision of Departmental GDPR eLearning Module	06/02/2019	16,000.00
Colleary and Company	Data Protection Impact Assessment Training	05/03/2019	1,450.00

**Tenant Purchase Scheme Review**

1959. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the review of the local authority tenant purchase scheme; if tenants have an entitlement to purchase by way of a lump sum; if Part V houses will be included in the scheme; if persons have an entitlement to purchase with income other than from employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35626/19]

1969. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to allow tenants of voluntary housing agencies to purchase their homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35766/19]

1974. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will review the tenant (incremental) purchase scheme and the €15,000 minimum income requirement to avail of the scheme due to the significant number of persons being denied the scheme albeit living in the homes for decades in some cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35978/19]

1986. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if local authorities will be allowed discretion regarding the income threshold under the tenant purchase scheme for isolated rural houses for which there is no housing demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36272/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1959, 1969, 1974 and 1986 together.

The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015, provide the basis for the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme for existing local authority houses. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant local authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direc-

tion issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, local authorities can include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income.

The scheme only provides for the purchase of local authority houses owned by the relevant local authorities and does not extend to houses owned by Approved Housing Bodies (AHB), as the ownership of these properties remains with the AHB.

The minimum income criterion was introduced in order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. Applicants must demonstrate that they have an income that is long-term and sustainable in nature. This ensures that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

It should be noted that the financing of any house sold under the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme is a separate matter from the eligibility criteria for the scheme. If the tenant is deemed eligible under the scheme, he or she may fund the purchase of a house from one, or a combination, of his/her own resources or a mortgage provided by a financial institution or a local authority house purchase loan.

The provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, are designed to enable the development of mixed tenure sustainable communities. Part V homes are excluded from the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016 to ensure that homes delivered under this mechanism will remain available for people in need of social housing support and that the original policy goals of the legislation are not eroded over time. The continued development of mixed tenure communities remains very important in promoting social integration.

Local authorities may also, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper stock or estate management. It is a matter for each individual local authority to administer the Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the governing legislation for the scheme, and in a manner appropriate to its housing requirements.

In line with the commitment given in the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, a review of the operation of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase (Incremental) Scheme has been completed and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

I intend to bring a comprehensive package of social housing reform measures to Government in the near future and the relevant recommendations made in the Review of the Tenant Purchase Scheme will be progressed as part of that process. Following consideration of a number of implementation issues arising, in that context, I expect to be in a position to publish the Review.

### **Departmental Customer Charters**

1960. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of complaints his Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if his attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35647/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

My Department is committed to providing a high quality service to all our customers. On occasion, it receives complaints from members of the public in relation to their interaction with the Department and we welcome these insofar as they may lead to service improvements. My Department considers every complaint received and aims to resolve it within 15 working days, in accordance with our Quality Customer Service Charter, unless there are particular reasons why this cannot be done.

The number of complaints received in my Department in since 2017 (other than Met Éireann) is set out in the first table below. Since the introduction of GDPR, my Department's policy in relation to correspondence received in its Quality Customer Service office is to retain emails and letters for no longer than 12 months unless the issue is not resolved within that time.

Year	No of complaints
2017	4
2018	11
2019	3

The table below gives the number of complaints recorded by Met Éireann (a Division of my Department) on its customer service system and refer to a range of issues relating to its high profile service to the public. While there was a significant increase in complaints to Met Éireann in 2018, the extreme weather last year impacted on the number received, as did the introduction of Met Éireann's new website and app, which would be expected in the early period following the introduction of new services of this kind.

Year	Number of complaints
2017	120
2018	840
2019	131

My Department's Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan, which set out the complaints process, are available on my Department's website at [www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/customer-service/quality-customer-service](http://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/customer-service/quality-customer-service).

### Home Loan Scheme

1961. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason persons that are successful in obtaining a Rebuilding Ireland home loan are required to obtain mortgage protection insurance as part of the scheme which is considerably more expensive than insurance they can obtain themselves (details supplied); if his attention has been drawn to same; if so, his plans to change same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35653/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

The local authority mortgage protection insurance (MPI) scheme has applied to all house purchase loans approved by local authorities after 1 July 1986, including the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan introduced on 1 February 2018.

The Consumer Credit Act 1995 applied conditions on lenders which applied to local authorities as well as commercial lenders. Under section 126 of the Act, the lender is legally required to ensure that a prospective borrower has mortgage protection insurance in place before drawing down a mortgage. Where a lender offers a particular policy, sub-section 2(d) of section

126 of the Act provides that the borrower can source an alternative policy to suit their needs. However, sub-section 2(d) does not apply to local authorities.

One of the conditions of the MPI scheme, which is a group policy, is that it is obligatory for all local authority borrowers who meet the eligibility criteria to join the scheme. Altering this condition would have a negative impact on the scheme and increase the cost for all existing borrowers. A local authority housing loan applicant who is not eligible for the local authority MPI scheme must source a suitable comparable individual MPI policy from the market.

The scheme is subject to periodic review and competitive tendering in accordance with the terms of EU Directives relating to the award of public service contracts. This is to ensure that the most appropriate cover at the best value for money is secured for local authority borrowers over the entire life of their mortgages.

The most recent public procurement competition for the provision and administration of this MPI scheme was conducted by the Office of Government Procurement. The contract resulting from this open tender competition came into effect from 1 January 2017 and is due to expire on 31 December 2020.

### **Homeless Persons Data**

1962. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of deaths of homeless persons by county in each of the years 2016, 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35675/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation and associated services for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities.

My Department publishes data on a monthly basis regarding the number of homeless persons accommodated in all forms of emergency accommodation funded and overseen by housing authorities. These reports are based on data provided by housing authorities and are produced through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), the single integrated national data information system on State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements overseen by housing authorities.

The monthly reports outline the number of individuals accommodated in emergency accommodation over a designated survey week, including a breakdown by local authority, and can be accessed using the following link:

*[www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data)*.

My Department does not collect the data referred to the Deputy.

### **Commencement of Legislation**

1963. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when section 49 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 will be fully commenced thus enabling planning applications for data centres to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35680/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 49 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 will be commenced after the necessary preparations by An Bord Pleanála, and other necessary supporting requirements, have been completed. My Department is working towards the completion of this process as soon as possible.

### Housing Assistance Payment Data

1964. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average monthly housing assistance payment for each of the past five years; the average monthly HAP payment for each county; and the highest HAP payment made in 2018 and to date in 2019. [35684/19]

1965. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the differential between the monthly cost of paying a housing assistance payment, a REIT provided social house and the cost of building a social house; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35685/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1964 and 1965 together.

Under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, tenants source their own accommodation. The accommodation sourced by tenants must be within the prescribed maximum HAP rent limits, which are based on household size and the rental market within the area concerned.

Each local authority has statutory discretion to agree to a HAP payment up to 20% above the prescribed maximum rent limit to secure appropriate accommodation for a household requiring such assistance. In addition, the normal 20% discretion beyond the rent limits may be increased up to 50% for homeless households in the Dublin Region. The list of HAP rent limits for each local authority are available on the Irish Statute Book website at: [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/56/made/en/print](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/56/made/en/print).

In addition, section 43(2)(b) of the Housing (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2014 allows me in my role as Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to determine the maximum amount of rent in respect of which housing assistance will be provided by a local authority for classes of qualified household, other than those prescribed in regulations, having regard to the composition of the household and the location of the dwelling.

In relation to HAP payments, which are the agreed monthly landlord payment made under the HAP scheme in relation to an individual tenancy, the table below lists the average monthly housing assistance payment for each of the past five years and the average monthly HAP payment for each county. These statistics should be considered in the context of the phased roll-out of the scheme over a number of years. While Homeless HAP has been available in all Dublin local authorities since 2015, the HAP scheme generally only became available in Dublin City, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown in 2017. As expected, urban tenancies are more costly than rural tenancies, so average costs increased commensurately.

The highest HAP payment made in 2018 and to date in 2019 was €2,500 for a HAP tenancy in the administrative area of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. This would be an exceptional case, based on very specific circumstances, and, as can be seen below, does not reflect average HAP payments in that area.

Local Authority	Avg. Payment 2014	Avg. Payment 2015	Avg. Payment Q4 2016	Avg. Payment Q4 2017	Avg. Payment Q4 2018	Avg. Payment Q1 2019
Carlow County Council	-	482	521	542	554	554
Cavan County Council	-	-	-	430	449	455
Clare County Council	-	370	409	430	459	465
Cork City Council	-	563	647	722	764	774
Cork County Council	663	576	629	689	727	737
Donegal County Council	-	342	363	383	392	394
Dublin City Council	-	979	1,244	1,258	1,290	1,292
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Co.	-	620	1,085	1,286	1,343	1,359
Fingal County Council	-	1,060	1,333	1,292	1,325	1,340
Galway City Council	-	-	762	784	795	807
Galway County Council	-	500	612	652	701	711
Kerry County Council	-	-	477	502	512	516
Kildare County Council	-	927	885	911	919	921
Kilkenny County Council	473	474	527	556	576	578
Laois County Council	-	-	-	535	573	581

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Local Authority	Avg. Payment 2014	Avg. Payment 2015	Avg. Payment Q4 2016	Avg. Payment Q4 2017	Avg. Payment Q4 2018	Avg. Payment Q1 2019
Leitrim County Council	-	-	450	408	414	414
Limerick City and County Council	501	456	512	552	579	584
Longford County Council	-	-	400	397	405	408
Louth County Council	679	491	622	764	833	846
Mayo County Council	-	-	468	489	501	506
Meath County Council	-	682	851	904	936	937
Monaghan County Council	348	379	427	457	480	490
Offaly County Council	-	409	453	482	508	515
Roscommon County Council	-	-	-	447	454	457
Sligo County Council	-	450	474	488	503	506
South Dublin County Council	1,058	1,006	1,104	1,147	1,213	1,230
Tipperary County Council	-	437	454	471	488	492
Waterford City and County Council	478	427	465	489	509	513
Westmeath County Council	-	-	-	540	551	559

Local Authority	Avg. Payment 2014	Avg. Payment 2015	Avg. Payment Q4 2016	Avg. Payment Q4 2017	Avg. Payment Q4 2018	Avg. Payment Q1 2019
Wexford County Council	-	-	-	502	520	527
Wicklow County Council	-	-	750	975	998	1,005
Average Monthly Landlord Payment	523	527	636	735	801	817

The HAP scheme has been structured in a way that protects exchequer funding, by ensuring that payments are made only on valid and complete applications. For this reason rent is generally paid in arrears, which ensures that money is only paid in respect of time that the property has actually been occupied by the tenant.

Limerick City and County Council provides a highly effective transactional shared service on behalf of all HAP local authorities. This HAP Shared Service Centre (SSC) manages all HAP related rental transactions for the tenant, local authority and landlord.

Once a HAP application has been received and confirmed as valid by the relevant local authority, it is then processed by the HAP SSC. On average, HAP applications are processed by the HAP Shared Service Centre within 1 working day of receipt. Any rental payment arising for a given month will then be made to a landlord on the last Wednesday of that month.

I continue to keep the operation of HAP under review but I am currently satisfied with how the scheme is operating and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting current housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme set out in Rebuilding Ireland.

Over the course of Rebuilding Ireland, the Government is committed to meeting the housing needs of over 138,000 households. This will be achieved through blended delivery, with over 50,000 homes being delivered through build, acquisition and leasing programmes, and some 88,000 further households being supported through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). A social house building programme is already well underway, with local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies significantly expanding new build output year on year.

It is not possible to directly compare monthly HAP costs to homes delivered through social housing build programmes. It would depend on a number of variables including - duration of tenancy; location of tenancy; type of property; household composition etc.

The total expenditure for the period 2016-2018 on current funded delivery programmes including HAP, SHCEP and RAS was in the region of €1.17 billion. This funding supported the delivery of nearly 57,000 additional housing solutions, in addition to meeting the ongoing costs of the 34,000 tenancies brought forward from 2015, meaning that, overall, more than 90,500 households were supported through this funding.

At the end of 2018, the housing needs of some 90,500 households were being supported under current-funded programmes. If all of the funding provided for these 90,500 households had been transferred to capital expenditure, to support building or buying homes, it would have delivered approximately 5,500 homes, leaving no resources available to support the other 85,000

households. Looking at it another way, it would take almost €20 billion to provide a new build local authority home for the 90,500 households supported under current-funded programmes at end-2018.

In 2019, a further 22,388 households will benefit through these current funded housing delivery schemes, meaning that with the 2019 budget provision of €712 million across the 3 schemes, a total of €1.88 billion, over the 4 years 2016 to 2019, will have ensured that up to 112,000 families and individuals will have had their housing need met.

### Housing Adaptation Grant Funding

1966. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount allocated to each local authority under the housing adaptation grant scheme for persons with a disability in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35693/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department provides funding under the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, in respect of private houses. There are three separate grant schemes available, being the Housing Aid for Older People Grant, the Mobility Aids Grant and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability. Funding of €71.25 million has been allocated for the three schemes in 2019, with responsibility for the apportionment between the individual schemes being a matter for each local authority.

Information on these grant schemes for the years 2016 - 2018, showing the numbers of grants funded per annum and the funding provided to each local authority, is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics).

The following table contains details of the 2019 exchequer funding drawn down by all local authorities in respect of these grants up to the end of August this year. These amounts do not necessarily represent what each local authority has spent, as funding may have been spent but not yet claimed from my Department. Also, the amounts shown for exchequer draw down are topped up by each local authority's own 20% contribution.

Local Authority	Exchequer draw down up to 31 August 2019
Carlow	€760,231
Cavan	€283,853
Clare	€790,100
Cork County	€1,469,782
Cork City	€311,419
Donegal	€536,075
Dublin City	€4,270,982
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	€603,777
Fingal	€997,998
Galway County	€703,812
Galway City	€466,613
Kerry	€1,098,828
Kildare	€760,569

Local Authority	Exchequer draw down up to 31 August 2019
Kilkenny	€930,682
Laois	€128,148
Leitrim	€104,476
Limerick	€1,201,874
Longford	€187,173
Louth	€280,066
Mayo	€878,227
Meath	€998,640
Monaghan	€945,482
Offaly	€120,672
Roscommon	€435,670
Sligo	€568,806
South Dublin	€1,231,339
Tipperary	€1,455,303
Waterford	€686,406
Westmeath	€353,003
Wexford	€1,154,390
Wicklow	€435,215

Over the course of each year, my Department works closely with all local authorities, to monitor spend and to achieve a full drawdown of the available funding. As the year progresses, any underspend is redistributed to those local authorities with high levels of grant activity who sought additional funding.

### Fire Service

1967. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the chemical make-up of fire fighting foams used by each county and city fire brigade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35694/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** The provision of fire services, including premises, personnel, appliances and equipment, is a statutory function of fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003 and fire services are provided by local authorities in accordance with this legislation.

My Department supports fire authorities mainly through setting national policy and co-ordinating its implementation; providing capital funding for fire appliances, emergency equipment and the construction and upgrading of fire stations; centralised training programmes and co-ordination of the development of guidance on operational and other fire service related matters.

Foam products are a widely available firefighting medium, and are most effective in the case of certain categories of fires – for example, fires involving flammable liquids, where the foam layer forms a barrier between the oxygen in the air and the burning liquid. They may also be deployed at hazardous material incidents and some foams are used to improve the ‘wetting’ capability of water, by reducing its surface tension.

Decisions to deploy foam products are taken at the discretion of incident commanders,

drawing from their fire service training and standard operational guidance. Some firefighting foams can have effects on the environment, and fire services incident commanders balance the use of and the amounts of foam deployed, taking account of the particular circumstances of each case.

Information regarding the specific makeup of firefighting foams in use by individual fire services is not available in my Department. However, I understand that fire services generally carry a range of foam in stock suitable for the identified fire risks within their functional areas.

### **Local Authority Funding**

1968. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when funding will be made available to carry out works to a local authority (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35720/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Disabled Persons Grants (DPG) Scheme applies to works that are necessary to address the needs of older people or people with a disability in local authority housing. This may involve minor adaptations such as stair-lifts, grabs -rails, showers, wet-rooms, ramps etc. It also provides funding for more major adaptations such as extensions, for example in the case of overcrowding, or the installation of a downstairs bedroom or bathroom.

Some €15 million is being made available under the scheme in 2019, an increase of over €1 million on 2018 levels. On top of this exchequer funding, the local authority makes a further 10% contribution in respect of these grants. It is a matter for local authorities to prioritise the works to be funded under the scheme in their area, in the context of available funding and in line with the terms of the DPG scheme.

The available funding for 2019 was apportioned across local authorities having regard to individual funding requests. My Department will review the 2019 allocations and funding draw-down later this month with a view to considering the allocation of additional funding should it become available.

It is open to all local authorities to seek additional funding in 2019, once their allocation is fully expended and the relevant funding recouped from the Department. To date in 2019, Kerry County Council has recouped its allocation of €300,000 and my Department approved a further €68,000 which has also been drawn down. Kerry County Council has been in touch with my Department to seek further funding, and this request will be considered under the forthcoming review.

*Question No. 1969 answered with Question No. 1959.*

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding**

1970. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an application has been received under the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021 in respect of a water scheme (details supplied) to replace pipelines, protective fencing and two separate extensions; when he expects to have the approval for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35775/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 8 February this year, I announced details of the measures being funded through my Department

under the Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021. Local authorities were invited to submit their bids for the funding of schemes or projects in their functional areas and Donegal County Council included the scheme referred to in its application to my Department under the new Programme.

My Department is currently considering local authorities' bids for funding allocations. An Expert Panel has been put in place to support the evaluation process. In addition to providing an expert perspective, the Panel brings independence, openness and transparency to the bids evaluation process which is done on a national prioritised basis. The Expert Panel's membership includes Departmental, stakeholder and independent representation.

The Expert Panel has made recommendations to my Department on the suitability of schemes and projects for funding based on objective criteria which are set out in the framework document issued to local authorities when requesting proposals. I expect to conclude consideration of the Panel's recommendations and to make an announcement of the allocations shortly.

### Local Authority Housing Data

1971. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the breakdown of each of the social housing lists held by each local authority; the overall increase or decrease on the numbers on the list in each of the past five years in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35832/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each local authority area are set out in the statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA). The SSHA has been conducted on an annual basis since 2016, prior to which it was carried out once every three years with the previous Summary having taken place in 2013.

The SSHA report includes breakdowns by each local authority across a range of categories. It should be noted that the SSHA is a point in time exercise and does not necessarily reflect the dynamic nature of entry to and exit from the list.

The most recent summary for which results are available, which was carried out in 2018, details the number of households on all local authority waiting lists as at 11 June 2018 and shows that 71,858 households were assessed as qualified and being in need of social housing support. This represents a decrease of 13,941 households or 16.2% on the assessment in June 2017. Indeed, since the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan was launched in 2016, the numbers have decreased from 91,600 to 71,858, a reduction of 22%, as set out in the table below.

Year	Total	Increase/Decrease
2016	91,600	
2017	85,799	-5,801 (-6.3%)
2018	71,858	-13,941 (-16.2%)

The SSHAs for 2018, 2017 and 2016 are available on my Department's website at the following links.

#### Report 2018

[www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary\\_of\\_social\\_housing\\_assessments\\_2018\\_-\\_key\\_findings.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2018_-_key_findings.pdf)

## Report 2017

[www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/sha\\_summary\\_2017.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/sha_summary_2017.pdf)

## Report 2016

[www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary\\_of\\_social\\_housing\\_assessments\\_2016.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2016.pdf)

I expect the results of the 2019 SSHA to be available early in the final quarter of this year.

## Home Loan Scheme

1972. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when funding is expected to be released to local authorities in order that Rebuilding Ireland home loan applications can be assessed and awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35856/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** When the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) scheme was initially being developed, it was estimated that the drawdown of loans would be approximately €200 million over three years. However, the RIHL proved to be more successful than initially anticipated. My officials began engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in October 2018 when higher lending and drawdown volumes were beginning to materialise. I informed the Dáil on 29 January 2019 of the scheme's success and of the need for additional funding and indicated that my Department was in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance with regard to the allocation for 2019.

Following positive engagement with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, my Department wrote to all 31 local authorities on 15 August 2019, sanctioning an additional €363 million in funding for the RIHL, bringing total funding to €563 million for 2018 and 2019 combined.

*Question No. 1973 answered with Question No. 1929.*

*Question No. 1974 answered with Question No. 1959.*

## Planning Investigations

1975. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a report (details supplied) will be published regarding alleged serious planning irregularities in County Donegal; the reason for the delay in publishing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35993/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Review Into Certain Planning Matters In Respect Of Donegal County Council, by Mr. Rory Mulcahy S.C., was received by my Department in June 2017.

Following initial analysis and assessment of the report's findings and recommendations, including interaction with the Department's own legal advisers and the Attorney General's Office, a comprehensive set of queries and a request for advice in relation to certain matters, including potential dissemination or publication of the report, was submitted to the Attorney General's

Office.

Following the receipt of the Attorney's advice, officials in my Department have considered the matter further and prepared a submission for my consideration in respect of, inter alia, the issue of publication or dissemination of the report. Once I have concluded my deliberations, I will be in a position to make a further statement.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Applications**

1976. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an application for permanent housing will be expedited for a person (details supplied) in view of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36061/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The allocation of social housing support is a matter for the relevant local authority in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated regulations. Section 22 of the Act requires all local authorities, as a reserved function, to make an allocation scheme determining the order of priority to be accorded in the allocation of dwellings to households qualified for social housing support and to households approved for a transfer, the allocation of which would, in the opinion of the authority, meet the accommodation needs and requirements of the households.

Decisions on the qualification of specific persons, including those with disabilities, for social housing support and the allocation of that support are matters solely for the local authority concerned. As Minister, I am precluded by law from becoming involved in individual cases.

The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability, which has been extended to 2020 under *Rebuilding Ireland*, identifies a number of Actions to ensure that the housing needs of people with disabilities are met. One of the key initiatives under the Strategy has been the establishment of Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs) in all housing authority areas, to achieve a coordinated and integrated approach to meeting the housing needs of people with a disability at local level. These are chaired by Directors of Housing in each authority and include HSE and disability representative organisations.

Each HDSG has prepared a local Strategic Plan for its own City/County area, to develop specific local strategies to meet identified and emerging need over the next five years. These Plans, the majority of which are now available on the relevant local authority websites, along with the annual Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA), will allow local authorities to plan more strategically for the housing needs of people with a disability and will support the delivery of accommodation using all appropriate housing supply mechanisms.

*Question No. 1977 answered with Question No. 1947.*

### **Legislative Reviews**

1978. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to update the Licensing of Indoor Events Act 2003; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36114/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** A review of public safety in Ireland is currently underway in my Department, including the licensing of both indoor and outdoor events, the planning for and management of crowd events and

safety at funfairs. The Review is examining the current regime in Ireland for planning, licensing and managing such events and benchmarking against international best practice. The Review will be concluded in Q4 2019 and legislative amendments will be considered in that context.

### Local Authority Staff

1979. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of engineer position staffing requests under each engineer grade received from either Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council in 2018 and to date in 2019; the number received that were approved, pending or refused, respectively in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36131/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, the Chief Executive of each local authority is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authority. Under current sanctioning arrangements Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council may fill engineering grade vacancies that arise, up to Senior Executive Engineer grade, within the numbers agreed through workforce planning, without recourse to my Department. An application must be made to my Department for sanction approval for additional staff outside of these agreed parameters.

Since 1 January 2018, my Department has received 15 staff sanction requests for engineering related grades from Dublin City Council, all of which have been approved, and 5 from Fingal County Council, all of which have also been approved. Details of these requests are set out in the table below.

#### FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

TITLE OF POST	NUMBER OF POSTS(S)	STATUS
2018		
Senior Engineer	1	Approved
Senior Executive Engineer	4	Approved
2019		
	Nil	

#### DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL

TITLE OF POST	NUMBER OF POSTS(S)	STATUS
2018		
Senior Engineer	2	Approved
Senior Executive Engineer	6	Approved
Executive Engineer	1	Approved
Assistant Engineer	1	Approved
2019		
Senior Engineer	1	Approved
Senior Executive Engineer	2	Approved
Assistant Engineer	2	Approved

1980. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for An Bord Pleanála in each of the years 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36132/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 116 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act), provides for the payment to the Board in each financial year of a grant of such amount as the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government may fix, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The grant goes towards financing the administration and general expenses of the Board.

While the grant-aid funding provides for the majority of the Board's annual income, the Board also generates income from fees charged. Section 144 of the Act provides for the determination of fees payable to the Board, subject to my approval. In the main, these fees are payable to the Board by parties in respect of Strategic Infrastructure Development applications, planning appeals, referrals, oral hearing requests and certain other matters which are submitted for determination under Planning and Development, Water Pollution, and Building Control legislation.

The following table sets out the operating budget for the Board for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019. The 2019 grant-aid figure represents the amount provided in the 2019 Revised Estimates for the Public Service.

Year	Grant Aid	Miscellaneous Income (incl. income from fees)	Total Operating Budget
	€m	€m	€m
2017	17.100	3.453	20.553
2018	17.488	4.595	22.083
2019	18.624	5.413	24.037

I am satisfied that the Board has the necessary resources to deliver effectively and efficiently on its important statutory mandate and functions. I and my Department will continue to engage with the Board in that regard in the years ahead.

### Planning Issues

1981. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when amending regulations for solar panel exemptions on rooftops will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36138/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, all development, unless specifically exempted under the Act or associated Regulations, requires planning permission. Section 4 of the Act and Schedule 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, set out various exemptions from the requirement to obtain planning permission. Any such exemptions are subject to compliance with any general restrictions on exemptions set out in the Act or the Regulations and to the specific conditions set out in each class of exempted development in Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

With regard to exemptions for solar panels, Class 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for "the installation or erection of a solar panel on, or within the

curtilage of a house or any buildings within the curtilage of a house”, subject to certain siting and size conditions.

Class 56 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on a business premises or light industrial building, or any ancillary buildings within the curtilage of such premises or building, of solar panels (thermal collector or photo-voltaic), subject to certain siting and size conditions.

Furthermore, Class 18 of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Regulations provides an exemption for “the installation or erection on an agricultural structure, or within the curtilage of an agricultural holding, of solar panels (thermal collector or photo-voltaic)”, again subject to a number of conditions.

My Department is currently undertaking a review of the solar panel exemptions, in consultation with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and other key stakeholders, with a view to bringing forward amending Regulations, as may be required, - for example, to reflect technical developments in the sector - before the end of 2019. As required under planning legislation, any such proposed exempted development regulations must be laid in draft form before the Houses of the Oireachtas and receive a positive resolution from both Houses before they can be made.

### **Departmental Internships**

1982. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of unpaid internships issued and or granted to persons to work in his Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if his Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36151/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department has taken on 3 unpaid interns to facilitate their educational requirements during the period referred to, each for a duration of approximately 3 months. There is no ongoing arrangement in place for unpaid internships; however, they will be considered on a case by case basis having regard to specific circumstances.

### **Quarrying Sector**

1983. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the procedure in relation to the granting of permission for large-scale rocket blasting of rock; the purposes for which the practice is authorised; the person or body that authorises same; and the way in which it is managed and overseen with particular reference to the relevant legislation and or regulations governing same. [36162/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála, as appropriate, may grant planning permission for a development, which involves rock blasting, such as a quarry. A person is not entitled solely by reasons of a planning permission to carry out development. The issuing of a permit for the use of explosives in the extractive industry, or for other purposes, is a matter for An Garda Síochána, which falls within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, whose Department has issued the Guide to Explosives Legislation in Ireland.

When making a decision on a planning application for a quarry, a planning authority or the Board, as appropriate, is required to have regard to the particular local circumstances of the proposed development and may attach appropriate conditions to the permission on a case by case basis.

My Department issued statutory Guidelines to Planning Authorities on Quarrying and Ancillary Activities in April 2004, to which planning authorities and the Board must have regard when considering a planning application for a quarry. The Guidelines include planning guidance on the attachment of appropriate conditions to quarry-related permissions.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, published guidelines in 2006 on Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry, which complement the 2004 Quarry Guidelines issued by my Department and include advice on the management of environmental issues associated with blasting in quarries, such as pollution, noise and vibration.

Furthermore, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is responsible for the enforcement of health and safety in the workplace, including specific requirements in relation to the use of explosives in the extractive industry under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Quarries) Regulations 2008 and its associated guidance. The HSA is under the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

### **Cyber Security Protocols**

1984. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff in relation to cybersecurity protocols under the remit of his Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if his Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36231/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Cyber security specialists are of critical importance in ensuring the confidentiality, integrity and availability of an organisation's systems, files and data. My Department employs dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff and staffing levels are kept under ongoing review. The Department co-operates fully with the National Cyber Security Centre and implements its recommendations. A new Departmental Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2021 is currently being finalised.

For security reasons, my Department does not comment on details of its ongoing cyber security management, but regular reviews and monitoring of risk are part of the management process.

### **Departmental Operations**

1985. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36247/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department has ICT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity plans which would be invoked

in the event of any incident that impacts service delivery. My Department also has Disaster Recovery sites. ICT applications will fail over to designated sites on occasions where the main site is not operational. The Department keeps such matters under ongoing review.

*Question No. 1986 answered with Question No. 1959.*

### Housing Issues

1987. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding provided to Mayo County Council for the provision of housing in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36340/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The funding provided by my Department to Mayo County Council, in respect of the delivery of housing programmes, in each year from 2011 to 2018, and for the first eight months of this year, is set out in the following table.

Year	Total Expenditure € million
2011	11.47
2012	10.53
2013	12.25
2014	11.25
2015	11.45
2016	14.70
2017	15.10
2018	17.97
2019 (to end August)	17.71
Total	122.43

### Housing Data

1988. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses added to the stock of Mayo County Council in each of the years 2011 to 2018 and to date in 2019 by as acquired, leased or built and the type of house for each year including the cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36341/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The provision of social housing is, in the first instance, a matter for individual local authorities.

My Department collates statistical information on a quarterly basis from Local Authorities in relation to delivery outputs across all social housing delivery streams. Details on the number of social housing properties constructed or acquired by local authorities, to the end of Quarter 1 2019, are published on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision). These statistics are updated on a quarterly basis, with similar details for the remaining quarters for 2019 to be published as the year progresses.

Leasing data for Mayo for the years 2011 to 2013, on a cumulative basis, and from 2016

to end Quarter 1 2019 are also available at the above weblink. The number of social housing homes delivered through leasing in Mayo in 2015 was 45 and 31, respectively.

Given the number and type of houses involved, information on the individual costs per property are not readily available but may be available directly from the local authority.

### **Planning Guidelines**

1989. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the new rural housing guidelines will be published following the Flemish decree case; the reason for the delay with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36352/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Following engagement between the European Commission and my Department regarding the European Court of Justice ruling in the “Flemish Decree” case, a working group was established to review and, where necessary, recommend changes to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The working group comprises senior officials from the Planning Division of my Department and senior officials from the Planning Divisions of local authorities, nominated by the local government sector.

Taking account of the engagement with the European Commission regarding revisions to the 2005 Rural Housing Guidelines and subject to the completion of the ongoing deliberations by the working group, I will be in a position to finalise and issue to planning authorities revisions to the 2005 Guidelines that take account of the relevant European Court of Justice judgment.

### **Departmental Correspondence**

1990. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has received emails or letters of concern from staff or former staff of an organisation (details supplied) recently in relation to concerns of allegations of bullying, absenteeism, inappropriate use of funds, lack of governance and other issues; if the concerns were investigated; if so, the actions taken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36358/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, housing authorities may provide assistance to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the provision and management of housing accommodation. As Minister, I am empowered to grant approved status to housing bodies for this purpose.

AHBs are, by definition, non-profit, independent legal entities with independent governance structures. Each AHB must have a properly functioning governing body, or board of directors/trustees, which is directly responsible for the commissioning of housing projects and services, the ownership, management and maintenance of dwellings and compliance with all statutory regulations.

The oversight of AHBs is currently conducted through the Voluntary Regulation Code - *Building for the Future, A Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland*. The Code is overseen by the Interim Regulation Committee (IRC), supported by the Regulation Office, based in the Housing Agency. The organisation referred to has signed up for voluntary

regulation since it was first introduced in September 2013.

My Department has recently received correspondence purporting to be from unnamed staff and former staff members of the organisation concerned and this has been referred to the Regulation Office. Subsequently, a response issued from my office to the email address provided. The Regulation Office is currently in engagement with the organisation concerned as part of the assessment process for AHBs. My Department has also written to the organisation concerned emphasising the need for full cooperation with the Regulation Office.

I recently published the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019, which had already completed Oireachtas pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill provides for the introduction of a new system of statutory regulation of AHBs for the purposes of supporting stronger governance and the financial viability of the sector, with a particular focus on safeguarding the significant public investment being made in the delivery of social housing by AHBs. Similarly, the Bill will provide assurance to tenants, the public and potential investors that the sector is well regulated. Subject to Oireachtas scheduling, it is my intention to progress this important legislation as a matter of priority with a view to enactment by the end of the year.

### **Environmental Legislation**

1991. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the target date he is working to for the passing of the marine planning and development management Bill. [36368/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The target timeframe for the publication of the Marine Planning and Development Management Bill, as set out in the Climate Action Plan to tackle Climate Breakdown, is Q4 2019. Once the legislation is published, it will be a matter for the Oireachtas to consider the timing of its consideration so I cannot be specific on a timeframe in that regard. If the Bill is enacted in due course, it will require further enabling measures post enactment to bring the new regime into operation including the necessary regulations, statutory guidelines and transitional arrangements.

### **Departmental Funding**

1992. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the conditions put in place in respect of funding allocated in recent months to Cork County Council for design and works in respect of a project (details supplied); if a timeframe has been put in place as one of the conditions; and if so, the timeframe. [36434/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The funding of the maintenance and repair of weirs is not a matter that has fallen within the remit of my Department and it has no specific funding line for such projects. However, I understand that this is a very important project for Cork County Council and the community of Fermoy, in particular.

Given the priority attaching to the project, the matter was considered by the Oireachtas Committee on Public Petitions, on 3rd July last. My Department was represented at the hearing as were the Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment; the Office of Public Works; Cork County Council; Inland Fisheries Ireland; and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I understand that there was broad consensus at the hearing that given the cross-cutting nature of the project a co-ordinated approach involving all stakeholders would be the best way to ensure the optimum outcome. To this end, my Department is engaging with other stakeholders in an effort to agree a common approach to funding the project.

For my part, in view of the strategic importance of this project from an economic, social and environmental perspective, and in order to ensure that the project is not delayed any further, I am prepared to make a once off exceptional payment to Cork County Council, from the Local Government Fund, towards the costs of consultancy to bring the project through statutory approval and detailed design. However the appropriate bodies will have to provide funding, in due course, for the costs of any substantive works.

*Question No. 1993 answered with Question No. 1929.*

### **Local Authority Housing Maintenance**

1994. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if additional funding will be provided in 2019 to local authorities in respect of the maintenance of council housing and the upgrading of vacant council houses to enable them to be refurbished and allocated to tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36437/19]

1995. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if additional funding will be provided in 2019 to Cavan County Council in respect of the maintenance of council housing; if additional funding will be provided to enable the refurbishment of vacant council houses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36438/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1994 and 1995 together.

Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock is a matter for each individual local authority. This includes the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs.

The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The purpose of the Voids Programme is to ensure that vacant units are actively targeted, with a view to minimising the turnaround and re-let time of these units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

Earlier this year, local authorities submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this programme in 2019. These proposals were evaluated and approval was given to proceed with works to 1,466 void properties with a remediation cost of some €27.3 million.

Cavan County Council sought approval for inclusion of 5 dwellings in the Voids programme for 2019. Approval was given to proceed with works to these 5 properties subject to the provision of a pre BER assessment and post works BER certificate. Given the availability of funding, the completion of the works is now a matter for the Council.

A group representing a number of local authorities is working to identify best practice in relation to housing stock maintenance and repairs, within the structure of the City and County Management Association (CCMA). My Department is engaging with the sub-group in relation to the development of a sustainable funding approach to housing stock maintenance and repairs

and this will continue according as the sub-group's work evolves further.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

1996. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of new funding for the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme that will be made available to Kildare County Council; if the additional funding will be sufficient for both the drawdown of loans on approvals already issued (details supplied) and for the projected loan demand for the remainder of 2019; when Kildare County Council will receive the new funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36470/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** When the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) scheme was initially being developed, it was estimated that the drawdown of loans would be approximately €200 million over three years. However, the RIHL proved to be more successful than initially anticipated. My officials began engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in October 2018 when higher lending and drawdown volumes were beginning to materialise. I informed the Dáil on 29 January 2019 of the scheme's success and of the need for additional funding and indicated that my Department was in discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Finance with regard to the allocation for 2019.

Following positive engagement with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, my Department wrote to all 31 local authorities on 15 August 2019 sanctioning an additional €363 million in funding for the RIHL. This brings total funding for the RIHL to €563 million for 2018 and 2019 combined.

Kildare County Council's total RIHL allocation, for the period 1 February 2018 to 31 December 2019, has been increased to some €20.9 million. This overall allocation incorporates loans already issued since the inception of the scheme, loans which will be drawn down on foot of approvals already issued and projected loan demand for the rest of 2019.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

1997. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the decision on a new requirement for homeowners will be reversed (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36475/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In relation to the requirement for applicants who are seeking a mortgage to produce a tax clearance certificate, mortgage lending by banks and other Central Bank regulated mortgage lenders is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) is the only mortgage product for which my Department has responsibility. The RIHL, which was introduced from 1 February 2018, enables credit worthy first time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties. The low rate of fixed interest associated with the RIHL provides first time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not otherwise have been able to afford at a higher interest rate.

As part of the eligibility criteria for a Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan applicants must:

- be in continuous employment for a minimum of two years, as the primary earner or be in

continuous employment for a minimum of one year, as a secondary earner;

- have an annual gross income of not more than €50,000 as a single applicant or not more than €75,000 combined as joint applicants; and

- submit two years certified accounts if self-employed.

In terms of self-employed applicants, income details provided by the applicants must be supported by the following:

- Minimum of two years accounts with an Accountant's or Auditor's Report (a qualified report is not acceptable) from a suitably qualified practitioner (ACCA/FCA/CPA/IPA) along with an up to date tax balancing statement for the company/business;

- Minimum of 12 months most recent personal current account bank statements and a minimum of 12 months most recent business current account statements verifying net income, and 12 months most recent statements verifying savings; and

- A Tax Clearance Certificate is required to confirm that a self-employed applicant's tax affairs are in order with the Revenue Commissioners.

Decisions on individual loan applications are a matter for each local authority's Credit Committee.

### **Local Authority Housing**

1998. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when a design build contractor framework to deliver residential developments through the use of volumetric construction methods will be available to all local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36564/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is supportive of the design build contractor framework which has been established by Dublin City Council to deliver larger scale residential developments through the use of volumetric construction methods. This framework is now available to all local authorities and will open up additional opportunities to deliver volumetric/rapid delivery apartments and housing for social housing use.

It is envisaged that over 1,000 fast-track apartments/houses will be built using this framework, and while the majority of these homes will be advanced across the Dublin area, my Department is working with all local authorities to advance any scheme/project suitable for volumetric construction.

### **Local Authority Housing Data**

1999. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding drawn down by local authorities for the serviced sites fund to date; the number of affordable homes that have been provided under the scheme; the qualifying criteria to be eligible for an affordable home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36565/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In

order to support the delivery of affordable homes to buy or rent, the Government has committed €310 million under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF), from 2019 to 2021 to provide infrastructure support for the delivery of over 6,000 affordable homes. The first call for proposals under the SSF issued in June 2018 and was specifically targeted at 11 local authorities, where the greatest affordability pressures exists. In December 2018, approval in principle was announced for funding for 10 infrastructure projects, in Dublin and Cork, with an allocated budget of €43 million. This will support the delivery of approximately 1,400 affordable homes. The overall cost and the timing of delivery for these projects is contingent upon the completion of design, planning and procurement in the first instance, and local authorities are working to achieve delivery as quickly as possible. Details of these projects are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <https://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-approves-10-local-authority-sites-affordable-housing-serviced-sites-fund/>

Following the first call under the SSF, and in order to target affordable interventions, local authorities were asked to complete financial/economic assessments of each of their sites to assess whether the provision of affordable homes is economically viable. Local authorities were also asked to assess the broader housing affordability within their area. A second call for proposals under the SSF was issued on 9 April 2019 to 19 local authorities, based on the aforementioned economic assessments submitted.

31 submissions were received from 15 local authorities under this second call. On 6 August 2019, I announced approval in principle for 25 of these projects across 13 local authorities, with a significant funding commitment of €84 million for infrastructure that will support the delivery of over 1,770 affordable homes. Details of the particular projects involved are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <https://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-approves-funding-of-e84m-to-support-delivery-of-1770-affordable-homes-under-the-ssf/>.

To date, funding of €127 million in support has been allocated for infrastructure works that will support the delivery of almost 3,200 affordable homes under the scheme.

While one Serviced Site Fund project, which is supporting the development of 55 Cost Rental Units at Enniskerry Road, Dublin, has just gone on site, it should be noted that all other projects are currently at the stages of design and planning and, accordingly, local authorities are not yet drawing down allocated funds. Indeed, I anticipate that the bulk of expenditure will only arise as projects reach the construction phase. My Department will continue to engage pro-actively with local authorities to help progress SSF projects and to achieve a full drawdown of the available funding.

With regard to the qualifying criteria for the purchase of an affordable home, the Affordable Dwelling Purchase Scheme is primarily aimed at low to middle income households who are first time buyers. The scheme is underpinned by the relevant provisions of Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which I commenced in June 2018.

On 12 March 2019, I signed the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 (Part 5) Regulations 2019 (S.I. No 81 of 2019), which deals the preparation of a ‘Scheme of Priority’ by each local authority. The purpose of a Scheme of Priority is to set out the affordable purchase arrangements at local authority level. This includes the methodology that will be applied to determine the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households in instances where the demand for such affordable dwellings exceeds the number that are available.

Further regulations will be made in respect of Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 later this year, specifically in relation to the assessment of eligibility for affordable homes and the setting of income limits. These will be in place before affordable homes

become available.

### **Home Loan Scheme**

2000. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a requirement for persons who are approved for a Rebuilding Ireland home loan to sign up for a specific mortgage protection insurance policy; if they can opt for a policy from a company other than the one advised by the council approving the loan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36610/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The local authority mortgage protection insurance (MPI) scheme has applied to all house purchase loans approved by local authorities after 1 July 1986, including the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan introduced on 1 February 2018.

The Consumer Credit Act 1995 applied conditions on lenders which applied to local authorities as well as commercial lenders. Under section 126 of the Act, the lender is legally required to ensure that a prospective borrower has mortgage protection insurance in place before drawing down a mortgage. Where a lender offers a particular policy, sub-section 2(d) of section 126 of the Act provides that the borrower can source an alternative policy to suit their needs. However, sub-section 2(d) does not apply to local authorities.

One of the conditions of the MPI scheme, which is a group policy, is that it is obligatory for all local authority borrowers who meet the eligibility criteria to join the scheme. Altering this condition would have a negative impact on the scheme and increase the cost for all existing borrowers. A local authority housing loan applicant who is not eligible for the local authority MPI scheme must source a suitable comparable individual MPI policy from the market.

The scheme is subject to periodic review and competitive tendering in accordance with the terms of EU Directives relating to the award of public service contracts. This is to ensure that the most appropriate cover at the best value for money is secured for local authority borrowers over the entire life of their mortgages.

The most recent public procurement competition for the provision and administration of this MPI scheme was conducted by the Office of Government Procurement. The contract resulting from this open tender competition came into effect from 1 January 2017 and is due to expire on 31 December 2020.

### **Wind Energy Guidelines**

2001. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the updated guidelines for windfarms will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36612/19]

2007. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the publication of the updated wind energy guidelines; and if the public consultation period has commenced as stated in July 2019. [36870/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 2001 and 2007 together.

My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Devel-

opment Guidelines in line with the “preferred draft approach” which was announced in June 2017 by the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, in conjunction with the then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. The review is addressing a number of key aspects including sound or noise, visual amenity setback distances, shadow flicker, community obligation, community dividend and grid connections.

As part of the overall review process, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process.

While the revised draft guidelines had been expected to be published in Quarter 1 2019, some delays to the planned schedule arose, due to the publication of updated World Health Organisation (WHO) noise standards and the need to focus on certain Brexit-related planning issues.

As part of the SEA process, there will shortly be an eight-week public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report. Finalised Guidelines will be prepared following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions received during the consultation phase, and the conclusion of the SEA process. My Department is aiming to commence the public consultation by the end of this month.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála, must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

*Question No. 2002 answered with Question No. 1929.*

## **Irish Water**

2003. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the implementation of the national taking in charge initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36614/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Findings and recommendations from the National Taking in Charge Initiative (NTICI) were included in a report on the initiative that was published by my Department in December 2018. The report is available on my Department’s website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/national\\_taking\\_in\\_charge\\_initiative\\_report\\_dec2018.pdf](http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/national_taking_in_charge_initiative_report_dec2018.pdf).

The publication of the NTICI report is of value to local authorities and other stakeholders in applying the lessons from the pilot authorities, in a more general roll-out of a streamlined approach to taking-in-charge, which is currently in progress, including through coordination with capital works by Irish Water. In this regard, my Department is liaising with Irish Water in relation to the report.

My Department issued Circular Letter PL 02-2019 earlier this year which sets out procedures relating to new arrangements that came into force in April 2019 concerning securities

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for the satisfactory completion of developments, including bonds, and the application of Irish Water's Connection Charging Policy as regards such matters. The circular is available on my Department's website at the following link:

*[www.housing.gov.ie/planning/guidelines/circular-pl-022019-planning-securities-irish-water-connection-agreements](http://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/guidelines/circular-pl-022019-planning-securities-irish-water-connection-agreements)*.

In addition, in 2018, my Department published draft Water Services Guidelines for Planning Authorities for consultation under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which address the issues of bonds and cash securities applied to permissions granted before April 2019. I intend to issue final guidelines shortly.

The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and financial institutions, in conjunction with my Department, are currently considering an approach to the wording and process of future planning security arrangements.

The National Development Plan, published last year, includes a provision for €31 million for the period 2018-2021 for developer-provided infrastructure, commencing with a provision of €6 million in 2019. The multi-annual programme will be initiated through the invitation of project bids from local authorities followed by their evaluation by an Expert Panel, set up by my Department, to independently evaluate the bid projects to be approved for funding.

My Department announced the programme for funding for residential estates with developer provided water services infrastructure on 23 July 2019 and has issued an invitation for project bids to be submitted by local authorities before 18 September, with approval of projects for this first cycle of the multi-annual programme to take place after proposals submitted have been assessed.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Data**

2004. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of funding provided to each local authority in each of the past three years under the housing adaptation and improvements grants schemes. [36668/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department provides funding under the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability, in respect of private houses. There are three separate grant schemes available, including the Housing Aid for Older People Grant, the Mobility Aids Grant and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability. Funding of €71.25 million has been allocated for the three schemes in 2019, with responsibility for the apportionment between the individual schemes being a matter for each local authority.

Information on these grant schemes in each of the last three years, including the numbers of grants funded per annum and the funding provided to each local authority, is available on my Department's website at the following link: *[www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordble/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordble/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics)*.

Over the course of each year, my Department works closely with all local authorities, to monitor spend and to achieve a full drawdown of the available funding. As the year progresses, any underspend is redistributed to those local authorities with high levels of grant activity who sought additional funding.

## Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure

2005. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the respective expenditure on the housing assistance payment and the rental accommodation scheme in each of the past five years; the number of recipients in each of the years; and the projected figures for 2019. [36669/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a flexible and immediate housing support that is available to all eligible households throughout the State, progressively replacing Rent Supplement for those with a long term social housing need. At the end of Quarter 2 2019, there were over 48,200 households having their housing needs met through HAP.

HAP is funded through a combination of Exchequer funding and tenant differential rents. Budget 2019 increased the Exchequer funding for the HAP scheme to €422 million. This allows for the continued support of existing HAP households, and to also enable the additional 16,760 households targeted under Rebuilding Ireland to be supported by HAP in 2019, as well as supporting the roll-out of the Homeless HAP Place Finder Support Service across the country.

Details on the number of tenancy setups and Exchequer funding for HAP from 2014 to 2018, which reflect the fact that HAP was rolled out on a phased basis across local authorities between 2014 and 2017, are set out in the table below:

Year	Tenancies Set Up Each Year	Outturn €m
2014	485	€0.39m
2015	5,680	€15.64m
2016	12,075	€57.69m
2017	17,916	€152.69m
2018	17,926	€276.6m

A breakdown of the number of households supported by HAP in each local authority area is available on my Department's website at the following link: [www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision).

Data for the years 2014 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: [www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision](http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision). The most recent RAS data reflects the number of tenancies in place at end March 2019, when there were a total of 18,697 tenancies supported under the scheme.

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. 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.

HAP and RAS continue to be key vehicles in meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programme set out in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

## Social and Affordable Housing Data

2006. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of units acquired under the buy and renew scheme by county; the expenditure by county per annum; the number of applications per annum since its inception by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36769/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments for social housing use, including delivery through the Buy and Renew Scheme.

Since the Buy & Renew Scheme was introduced, local authorities have delivered over 430 new social homes under the scheme. Activity in this regard is largely delegated to local authorities so they can respond flexibly to all opportunities to provide new social housing. The following table sets out details of the number of homes acquired, and the associated costs, broken down by local authority.

Local Authority	2016/2017 Homes	Cost*	2018 Homes	Cost*	2019 Homes	Cost*
Carlow	1	€116,500	15	€1,875,607	3	€533,007
Cavan	0	€0	1	€178,038	0	€0
Clare	4	€666,468	16	€2,949,093	7	€1,317,977
Cork City	0	€0	27	€6,842,639	8	€1,925,471
Cork County	0	€0	3	€497,528	1	€217,163
DLR	12	€4,100,000	0	€0	1	€300,000
Dublin City	6	€2,004,752	20	€4,646,957	6	€1,318,533
Fingal	11	€2,433,561	19	€7,442,617	0	€0
Kerry	12	€1,782,501	21	€3,356,216	3	€492,889
Kildare	2	€697,678	1	€403,702	2	€453,343
Kilkenny	1	€251,971	0	€0	0	€0
Laois	3	€343,820	0	€0	1	€160,845
Leitrim	0	€0	5	€635,030	0	€0
Limerick	15	€3,109,126	31	€6,351,437	4	€1,011,758
Louth	0	€0	51	€7,616,000	0	€0
Meath	11	€2,244,499	17	€3,740,531	6	€1,250,674
Monaghan	0	€0	17	€2,456,700	2	€308,051
Offaly	4	€510,598	0	€0	0	€0
Roscommon	0	€0	0	€0	1	€123,830
Sligo	0	€0	1	€155,486	0	€0
Tipperary	1	€123,250	9	€1,258,015	0	€0
Waterford	29	€1,998,258	4	€622,316	6	€423,896
Westmeath	0	€0	2	€229,538	0	€0
Wexford	0	€0	6	€643,296	3	€371,573

\*Costs include costs of refurbishment (estimated in certain cases pending receipt of final claims from local authorities)

*Question No. 2007 answered with Question No. 2001.*

### **Solar Energy Guidelines**

2008. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the publication of guidelines to govern the construction of large-scale solar energy farms. [36871/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As is the case with the large majority of development types, there are currently no specific planning guidelines in place in respect of solar farms. Proposals for individual solar farm developments are subject to the statutory requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in the same manner as other proposed developments, with planning applications made to the relevant local planning authority and with a right of appeal to An Bord Pleanála. Within the wider national and local planning context, including the planning authority's Development Plan, planning authorities must make their decisions, based on the specific merits or otherwise of individual planning applications.

While I am satisfied that the planning code is sufficiently robust to facilitate the assessment of individual planning applications for solar farm developments, the matter is being kept under review, in consultation with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, who leads on renewable energy policy. Our two Departments are presently exploring the potential for enhancing national planning guidance on solar energy, taking account of solar energy projects being assessed by planning authorities and the scope for future development of the sector in the context of the ongoing development of renewable energy policy.

On foot of this on-going engagement between the two Departments, where the need for specific planning guidance for solar farms is identified, my Department will develop such guidance as appropriate.

### **Septic Tank Grants**

2009. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the proposed expanded septic tank grant scheme will be launched in 2019; the proposed maximum grant aid available; and if the means test requirements will be removed. [36893/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The new funding scheme for on-site wastewater treatment systems (more commonly known as septic tanks) will replace the current grant which was brought into operation by the Domestic Waste Water Treatment System (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013. Under certain conditions households can receive a grant to assist them in carrying out remediation, repair or upgrading works to, or replacement of their individual domestic wastewater treatment system (septic tank).

To avail of the grant the treatment system must have been inspected under the EPA's National Inspection Plan and an Advisory Notice must have been issued by the local authority under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012. Also, the treatment system requiring attention must have been registered by the owner of the premises connected to it by 1 February 2013.

In order to ensure greater uniformity with other measures in the Multi-Annual Rural Water

Programme the means test that previously applied to this grant scheme is being removed and the level of grant support is being increased to 85% of the eligible costs of installation/upgrade or €5,000 (up from €2,500/€4,000) whichever is the lesser. This represents an increase of 25% and 100% respectively, relative to the current maximum grant levels.

Work is at an advanced stage of development of the new scheme. I expect that the process will be substantially completed over the coming month when the necessary regulations dealing with the financial assistance arrangements and related administrative matters are put in place. This will enable a circular letter, terms and conditions, guidance and the application form to issue to local authorities shortly thereafter.

### **Property Registration Authority Administration**

2010. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the waiting times to have matters dealt with by the Land Registry; his views on whether there are resource shortages within the system which are resulting in unnecessary delays in dealing with queries; and the resources he will put in place to resolve this matter (details supplied). [36935/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Property Registration Authority (PRA) is the State organisation responsible for the registration of property transactions in Ireland. The PRA manages and controls the Land Registry and the Registry of Deeds registering what State guaranteed titles of land.

The PRA expects to complete over 250,000 Land Registry transactions in 2019, an increase of 49,000 over 2018. Applications submitted to the PRA, that are fully in order for registration and which do not require the raising of queries, are dealt with in a very timely and efficient manner. In 2018, 82% of cases in order for registration were completed within 10 days, an increase of 20% compared to 2017.

Applications received by the PRA that are not in order for registration must be returned to the lodging party. During 2019 to date, the PRA experienced a rejection rate of 14%. At end August 2019, there were 100,724 legal transactions on hand with 24% of applications for registration on hand subject to query. Given the legal and financial nature of the transactions, and the State guaranteed nature of title, such cases cannot proceed until all queries have been satisfactorily dealt with.

Certain applications, such as First Registration Rights-of-Way and applications for registration based on long or adverse possession, are legally complex requiring lengthy interaction over queries with the lodging party. In addition, notice must be served on all interested parties and appropriate time allowed for objections. The PRA must be fully satisfied that a case is fully grounded, the nature of the title proven and that all interested parties' concerns are fully considered before registering a State guaranteed title.

Of the cases on hand, some 17% relate to First Registration applications. This is reflective of a large intake of such cases since the extension of compulsory first registration across Ireland in 2011. The PRA is specifically targeting First Registrations through a two-pronged approach involving: certification by a Solicitor, meaning a full examination of title is not necessary; and, targeted recruitment of dedicated specialist staff to deal with the First Registration cases.

In addition to the measures specific to First Registration outlined above, the PRA has put in place a number of initiatives to enhance its engagement with solicitors and improve the quality of the documentation submitted with applications for registration. For example, the PRA has

developed a series of guides and videos which are available on its website.

The PRA has a current staff complement of 525 FTE. Strategic workforce planning has been embedded in the Authority for some time. Staffing resources are managed at a sustainable level and effective succession planning, talent management and learning and development strategies are used in tandem with planned recruitment. Business process improvement training has been provided for staff in key areas to help design and embed the most efficient case handling processes.

The day to day operation of the PRA is a matter for the Authority itself, which is independent in its operations. Agencies under my Department's remit have put arrangements in place for information to be provided directly to Oireachtas members. Insofar as the PRA is concerned, this service can be contacted at [reps@prai.ie](mailto:reps@prai.ie).

### Home Loan Scheme

2011. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications received, approved and refused under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme by Galway city and county; the average processing time of applications; the average value of loans approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [36937/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Agency provides a central support service which assesses applications for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan on behalf of local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities to approve or refuse applications.

I have asked the Agency to compile figures on the numbers of applications that it has assessed, recommended to approve and recommended to decline since the scheme began for both Galway City and Galway County Council. The most recent figures, as at the end of August 2019, are set out in the following table -

Local Authority	Applications Assessed	Recommended to Approve	Recommended to Decline
Galway City Council	102	55	47
Galway County Council	168	60	108

For Quarter 1 2019, the average values of loans approved by Galway City Council and Galway County Council were €184,840 and €152,421, respectively.

Processing of a complete and valid application takes approximately six to eight weeks. Each local authority must have in place a credit committee and it is a matter for the committee to make the decision on applications for loans, in accordance with the regulations, having regard to the recommendations made by the Housing Agency.

### Public Parks Access

2012. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will address a matter regarding a footpath at a location (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34746/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The location referred to by the Deputy consists of stately home and its curtilage which are protected under the Kerry County Council Development Plan (Ref 74-2) and any alteration to the structure of the house or any material change affecting the curtilage would require planning permission. The current small gravel courtyard to which the Deputy refers is in keeping with the design and historical accuracy of the building.

Visitor access to the House is not provided at the location in question and universal access is provided for visitors through the main visitor access point. The tour of the house is accessible to both wheelchair users as well as those with pushchairs etc. For those wishing to see the views that the Deputy mentions, from the front of the house, outside, a metaled path allows both wheelchair and buggy access to the area directly in front of the drawing room that affords all visitors, including those referenced, equal opportunity to enjoy the vista.

### **Rural Development Programme Funding**

2013. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will address a matter regarding a proposal by an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35530/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has met frequently with the organisation referred to, along with other such organisations, and I am fully aware of their proposals. The matter is receiving close attention and will be discussed in the normal Estimates process and considered in the context of existing commitments, the overall resources available to the Government and the demands on those resources.

### **Údarás na Gaeltachta**

2014. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 426 of 10 July 2019, the companies in which Údarás na Gaeltachta holds shares or membership; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34716/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** The information sought by the Deputy is published by Údarás na Gaeltachta in its Annual Report and Accounts which are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas each year. The body's 2017 Annual Report and Accounts have already been laid before the Houses and the Report and Accounts those in respect of 2018 will be laid in due course.

A copy of Schedule 1 from the 2017 Annual Report and Accounts is attached for the Deputy's convenience. A full copy of the Report and Accounts can be found on the Údarás na Gaeltachta website: [udaras.ie](http://udaras.ie).

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-09-06\_pq-2014-6-9-19\_en.pdf">Schedule</a>]

### **Ministerial Advisers Data**

2015. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the name of each person employed as an adviser or special adviser to her and the Minister

of State in her Department; the salary of each in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34842/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Since my appointment as Minister on the 30 November 2017, and as provided for by the Public Service Management Act 1997, I have appointed two special advisers. The details requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table.

Special Adviser	Salary
John Keogh	€98,082 - 4th point - Principal Officer Standard scale
Cian Connaughton	€94,487- 3rd point - Principal Officer Standard scale

All special advisers are paid at the relevant Principal Officer (Standard scale) rate in accordance with the standard arrangements put in place by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

In addition, all of the above appointments are made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's *Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil*, which is available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website.

### Calafóirt agus Céanna

2016. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil cinneadh déanta nach rachfar ar aghaidh le céim a dó agus a trí de thógáil ché an Chalaidh Mhóir in Inis Meáin go dtí go mbeidh cé Inis Oírr tógtha; an bhfuil aon bhunús leis an gcinneadh sin ó tharla go bhfuil práinn ann chun brú ar aghaidh leis an dá ché chomh sciobtha agus is féidir; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [34900/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Ba mhaith liom a dhearbhú don Teachta, arís, nach bhfuil an dá fhorbairt luaite, ag braith ar a chéile agus go mbeidh mo Roinn ag brú ar aghaidh leis an dá thionscadal. Mar is eol don Teachta tá forbairt ar na céanna Caladh Mór, Inis Meáin agus Inis Oírr luaite i Tionscadail Éireann 2040. Tá roghanna éagsúla maidir le forbairt Ché an Chaladh Mhóir á mheas; faoi théarmaí an Chóid Caiteachais Poiblí, beidh Cás Gnó ina thaobh á chur faoi bhráid na Roinne ag Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe.

Cuirfidh sé seo i bhfos don Roinn na chéad céimeanna eile a bheidh le tógáil i dtaobh an tionscadal. Maidir le Cé Inis Oírr, tá dul chun cinn suntasach déanta agus táthar ag súil go dtosóidh an obair thógála air in 2020.

### Capital Expenditure Programme

2017. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capital expenditure of her Department at the end of August 2019 by subhead as compared with the Estimate for the full year; the reason for the slow spend to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34901/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The

2019 capital allocation for my Department is €73.8 million. In addition, a sum of €0.7 million is available by means of capital carryover from 2018.

Details of provisional capital expenditure as of 31 August 2019 are detailed by subhead in the following table and show that total capital expenditure for my Department up to that date amounts to €35.9 million, representing 85% of profile and 49% of the overall 2019 allocation. In addition, the full sum of €0.7 million has been spent in respect of capital carryover. These figures are provisional as all expenditure within my Department's Vote is subject to an ongoing internal verification and monitoring process to ensure the best use of available financial resources. Adjustments may fall to be made between subheads as part of this process and all figures are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The nature of the work of the Department means that a greater percentage of capital expenditure occurs in the second half of the year. The under-spend relates largely to timing issues which it is anticipated will resolve before year end.

Subhead		Capital allocation 2019	Capital expenditure to 31/08/19	Comparison with Allocation
(v)	OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND EXTERNAL IT SERVICES	645	341	53%
A.4	NATIONAL ARCHIVES - GENERAL EXPENSES	351	0	0%
A.5	GENERAL EXPENSES OF IMMA, CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY, NCH & CRAWFORD	917	644	70%
A.7	CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT	12,150	3,715	31%
A.9	AN CHOMHAIRLE EALAÍON	1,045	495	47%
A.10	GENERAL EXPENSES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND	1,108	528	48%

Questions - Written Answers

Subhead		Capital allocation 2019	Capital expenditure to 31/08/19	Comparison with Allocation
A.11	GENERAL EXPENSES OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND	478	359	75%
A.12	FÍS EIREANN	16,200	11,000	68%
A.13	NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND	858	644	75%
A.14	EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE	6,000	2,396	40%
A.16	CORK EVENT CENTRE	1,000	0	0%
B.3	HERITAGE COUNCIL	2,688	774	29%
B.4	BUILT HERITAGE	2,349	41	2%
B.5	NATURAL HERITAGE (NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE)	4,333	1,912	44%
B.6	IRISH HERITAGE TRUST	200	0	0%
B.7	BUILT HERITAGE INVESTMENT SCHEME	2,500	0	0%
B.8	PEATLANDS RESTORATION, CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT	3,000	2,626	88%
C.3	GAELTACHT SUPPORT SCHEMES	2,322	477	21%
C.4	IRISH LANGUAGE SUPPORT SCHEMES	632	58	9%

Subhead		Capital allocation 2019	Capital expenditure to 31/08/19	Comparison with Allocation
C.8	ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA - GRANTS FOR PROJECTS AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON PREMISES	9,000	5,800	64%
C.9	ISLANDS	1,644	56	3%
D.4	WATERWAYS IRELAND	4,380	4,068	93%

### Calafóirt agus Céanna

2018. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh ar an bplean gnó atá réitithe ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe i leith ché Inis Oírr; cén uair a fuarthas an plean gnó sin ón gcomhairle contae; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [34902/19]

2027. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh ar an gcás gnó atá curtha faoi bhráid na Roinne ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe maidir le síneadh a chur le cé Inis Oírr agus tonnchosc a thógáil ann; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [35385/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 2018 agus 2027 le chéile.

Mar is eol don Teachta tá forbairt Ché Inis Oírr san áireamh sa liosta tograí atá clúdaithe ag Tionscadail Éireann 2040.

Tá mo Roinn agus Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe ag obair i dteo leagan críochniúil den chás gnó a fhorbairt faoi réir théarmaí an gCód Caiteachais Poiblí faoi láthair. Beidh gach chéim d'fhorbairt na céibhe le meas i gcomhthéacs an tsoláthair airgid a bheidh ar fáil do mo Roinn ag an am sin agus faoi réir na bhforálacha atá san áireamh i gCód Caiteachais Phoiblí an Rialtais.

### Forbairt na nOileán

2019. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aici airgead a cheadú i mbliana d'oibreacha beaga ar na hoileáin, go mór mór d'oibreacha bóthair; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [34913/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tá an cheist maidir le Clár Mionoibreacha 2019 do na hOileáin á scrúdú ag oifig mo Roinne faoi láthair i gcomhthéacs an tsoláthair airgid atá ar fáil le caitheamh ar thograí oileánda i mbliana agus na n-éileamh éagsúla ar an soláthar sin.

### Seirbhísí Aeir Fóirdheonaithe

2020. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta le ceannach Aerfort Chonamara; cén uair atá i gceist conradh nua a fhógairt don tseirbhís aeir chuig na hOileáin Árann; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [34937/19]

2025. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir le hAerfort Chonamara a cheannach; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [35383/19]

2026. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén uair a fhógrófar próiseas tairisceana nua le haersheirbhís a chur ar fáil go dtí Oileáin Árann; cé na socruithe a bheidh i bhfeidhm lena chinntiú go leanfaidh aersheirbhís ar aghaidh go dtí go gcuirfear conradh nua buan ar bun; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [35384/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 2020, 2025 agus 2026 le chéile.

Tá an próiseas maidir le ceannach an aerfoirt ag leanúint ar aghaidh. Tá luach aontaithe idir na páirtithe. Fostaíodh comhlacht le saineolas san earnáil eitlíochta chun an cás gnó a ullmhú i ndáil le riachtanais an Chóid Chaiteachais Poiblí. Tá dréacht den chás gnó á mheas faoi láthair.

Maidir leis an t-seirbhís aeir tá conradh eatramhach le GASL a sheasfaidh go dtí 30 Meán Fómhair 2019. Tá an Roinn ag gníomhú chun a chinntiú nach mbeadh briseadh sa tseirbhís agus go mbeidh conradh eile socraithe go luath.

### **Built Heritage Investment Scheme**

2021. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a building (details supplied) can be retained in public ownership due to its historical significance; if she will discuss this matter with the HSE; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35049/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In the interests of the preservation, conservation, management and presentation of the built and archaeological heritage, my Department occasionally seeks to acquire certain heritage properties and monuments as resources and opportunities permit. From time to time such properties may come onto the open market, may be bequeathed to the State or may be offered to it free of cost. In addition, lands surrounding or in proximity to heritage properties or national monuments in State care (i.e. incorporating the setting of the structure) often reside in private ownership. In certain cases, improved protection of the property or monument, or access to same, would be possible if the State was to acquire such additional lands. In all cases my Department would need to examine the potential acquisition carefully, taking into account the conservation needs of the property and Value for Money principles.

My Department, in cooperation with the Office of Public Works, is, however, only in a position to acquire, maintain, conserve and present to the public a very limited number of properties and monuments such as that mentioned by the Deputy. While I am supportive of efforts to identify suitable future uses to safeguard historic buildings, crucial to their future is the identification of a viable use or uses with sufficient income to ensure their survival.

The national monuments in State care already number some one thousand sites at over 760 locations right across the country and these command considerable resource commitments in terms of both funding and personnel allocation. In addition, there are more than 45,000 protect-

ed structures spread across all 31 local authority areas in the country and in excess of 120,000 monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places that are not maintained by the State.

My Department does not comment on ongoing property sales processes, as it would be inappropriate to intervene publicly in individual cases.

### Departmental Expenditure

2022. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount expended on the renewal of licences (details supplied) by her Department since 2009 to date in 2019; the amount projected to be spent on the renewal of such licences by her Department over the next five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35337/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has provided the requested figures in the following table. The Deputy should note that pending the outcome of an upcoming ICT/business needs analysis exercise which will result in a new ICT strategy, the estimates going forward may change.

#### Expenditure

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total licensing renewal €	439,967	632,532	370,529	577,151	379,426	489,730	519,246

#### Estimated Expenditure

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000	460,000

### State Properties

2023. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a request was received by her Department from the OPW or the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on behalf of the Irish Coast Guard for the transfer of a site at the airstrip in Cluain Leacht an Abba, An Cloigeann, Contae na Gallimhe to it for the purposes of providing a base there for the west Connemara coastguard; if so, the date on which it was received; the reason for the delay in making this decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35349/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department received correspondence in relation to the potential transfer of a site at the airstrip in Clifden, County Galway in May of this year from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

I have asked my officials to meet with representatives from that Department with a view to progressing matters in this case.

### Animal Welfare

2024. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

her views on an operator of a zoo (details supplied) not supplying the National Parks and Wildlife Service with animal census information; if she will revise legislation to make this a requirement for zoo operators; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35374/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department is responsible for the implementation of the European Communities (Licensing and Inspection of Zoos) Regulations 2003 which transpose Directive 1999/22/EC of 29 March 2019 of the Council of the European Union relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos. These Regulations provide for a zoo inspection regime on foot of which licences may be issued to particular zoos and are supplemented by the Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice, produced by my Department in 2015. All zoos are inspected annually by my Department's zoo inspectorate.

In accordance with Regulation 4(2)(g), zoos are required to keep up to date records of their collections and under 14(1)(f) of the Regulations, zoo inspectors may require a person to produce any records that are required to be kept under the Regulations.

In practical terms, zoos keep these animal census records in the form of a Zoo Inventory Management (ZIM) system which is examined by the zoo inspectors during the inspection. Any issues relating to the inventory or mortality patterns must be noted by the inspector in their report.

If there are issues that require further examination, the inspector may request that a copy of the ZIM report be provided and retained by the inspectorate. However, in the event that the ZIM report does not highlight any cause for concern, the inspector may choose not to retain a copy. A copy may be requested by the zoo inspectorate at any time if required.

In recent years, some zoos have chosen to make the inventory available directly to the public via their annual reports or websites and members of the public can seek to obtain details from the zoos directly. In cases where members of the public have concerns around the operation of a particular zoo, they may contact the Zoo Licensing Unit of the NPWS at [zoos@chg.gov.ie](mailto:zoos@chg.gov.ie) to discuss the matter in more detail.

The zoo inspection process is regularly reviewed by officials in my Department and the issue of retaining copies of the animal inventory as a matter of course will be given consideration by the zoo inspectorate in the lead up to the next round of inspections in 2020.

Finally, my Department takes the concerns of the public in relation to animal welfare issues, as well as public safety issues, at zoos very seriously and examines carefully any complaints that are received. The establishment to which the Deputy refers was inspected recently and animal census information was provided to the inspectorate on the day of the inspection. The zoo inspectors noted that the inventory and mortality patterns were well within the normal range for the species in the zoo population.

*Questions Nos. 2025 and 2026 answered with Question No. 2020.*

*Question No. 2027 answered with Question No. 2018.*

### **Consultancy Contracts Data**

2028. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the names of external consultancies that delivered and continue to deliver advice and training on all aspects of GDPR in the context of preparedness and ongoing upskilling of staff regarding the regulation; the cost expended on the external advice and training of same to date

in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35572/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** As the Deputy is aware, my Department was already subject to existing Data Protection regulatory provisions prior to the coming into effect of the GDPR in May 2018. A Data Protection Officer (DPO) was appointed in 2018, in line with the requirements of Article 37 of the GDPR. Included in this role was responsibility for the oversight of arrangements for transition to the new regulatory regime, including the promotion of awareness of the requirements of the GDPR among staff and the identification of training needs across the Department. No external consultants were contracted to deliver advice and training.

Details of training provision to staff, including the roll-out of an online e-training for all staff, are set out in the following table while staff in key areas within the Department have also been facilitated in attending external GDPR training and seminars. Further training requirements will be continue to be identified and addressed as part of the Department's ongoing Learning and Development programme.

Year	Training Provider	Type of Training	Cost
2016	CMG Events	Attendance at Conference Implementing new EU Data Protection Regulations	€424
	Public Affairs Ireland	Data Protection Officer training	€895
2017	Happening Conferences	Data Summit Conference	€231
	Public Affairs Ireland	Certificate Level 1 GDPR Essentials training course	€ 4,375
	Law Society of Ireland / Kings' Inns	Certificate in Data Protection Practice	€ 1,650
	Public Affairs Ireland	Certificate in Data Protection Level 1	€ 1,650
2018	Law Society of Ireland / Kings' Inns	Advanced Diploma in Data Protection Practice	€2,350
	Crowley Solicitors	GDPR training for HR staff	€3,968
	PDP Training	Practitioner Certificate in Data Protection	€2,895
2019	Irish Academy of Computer Training (IACT)	Online data protection course for all staff	€13,000
	IACT	Data Protection Officer training	€1,666
Total			€ 33,104

### Departmental Customer Charters

2029. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of complaints her Department received under the customer service charter in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; if her attention has been drawn to issues and or problems in having complaints registered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35640/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** As I advised the House in response to Parliamentary Question number 1435 of 26th March last, my Department received two complaints in relation to the Department's operations during 2017 while a further three such complaints were received during 2018. I am advised that in each case, the matters raised were addressed and brought to a conclusion.

My Department has received four complaints to date in 2019, one of which was subsequently referred to the Office of the Ombudsman with another referred to the Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga. In all four cases, the matters raised have now been addressed and brought to a conclusion.

My Department remains committed to advancing the principles of Quality Customer Service and achieving ongoing improvement in the delivery of its services.

### **Insurance Industry**

2030. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the difficulties facing owners of thatched houses in County Wexford in securing home insurance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35867/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am aware that insurance of thatched buildings has been an issue for some time and appreciate the heritage value of such properties.

My Department has no role, however, in relation to such insurance. The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is ultimately a commercial matter for insurance companies based on their assessment of the risks the underwriter wishes to accept and adequate provisioning to meet these risks. However, it may be useful for owners of thatched properties to approach brokers who specialise in historic buildings, as they are more likely to be aware of the particular requirements of what the sector considers non-standard buildings.

Owners may also wish to engage a building conservation professional to liaise with the broker's thatch insurance representative to see what (if any) remedial works would be acceptable to the broker's underwriter to reduce the risk to a level that would result in an acceptable quotation. They may also wish to consult the owners of other thatched premises to ascertain their approach. The publication *Thatch, a Guide to the Repair of Thatched Roofs* (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2015), which contains guidance on fire prevention measures, may be useful in this regard. This publication is also available on my Department's website at [www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/Thatch-A-Guide-to-the-Repair-of-Thatched-Roofs-2015.pdf](http://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/Thatch-A-Guide-to-the-Repair-of-Thatched-Roofs-2015.pdf).

Where individuals are experiencing difficulty in obtaining insurance, they can contact Insurance Ireland which operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to insurance. If they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the provider's complaints process, they have the right to take the matter up with the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman.

As you may be aware, my Department oversees a number of schemes to assist in the conservation of protected structures such as thatched cottages. These schemes are the Built Heritage

Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund. They are administered through the local authorities and details are available on my Department's website at [www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/financial-assistance-for-architectural-heritage/](http://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/financial-assistance-for-architectural-heritage/) and on Wexford County Council's website at [www.wexfordcoco.ie/planning/built-heritage/grants-for-protected-structures](http://www.wexfordcoco.ie/planning/built-heritage/grants-for-protected-structures).

### Commemorative Events

2031. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of St. Colmcille in December 2020; and if her officials will co-operate with Donegal County Council to ensure that the local celebrations in County Donegal and the north west be built on to ensure that the legacy of St. Colmcille and contribution to Christendom here and internationally are appropriately reflected. [35946/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am aware of the 1,500th anniversary of the birth of St. Colmcille in December 2020. My officials have had some initial discussions with Foras na Gaeilge regarding how the anniversary might be marked.

As yet, I have not received an approach from Donegal County Council on the matter, but I would of course be open to a discussion between my Department and the Council to help ensure that this anniversary will be marked appropriately.

Earlier this year, the heritage of Colmcille was celebrated at a special event in the Music Room in Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday 8 June, the eve of the Feast of Colmcille. The event was part of partnership programme between Foras na Gaeilge and Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which promotes the use of Irish and Scottish Gaelic in Ireland and in Scotland and between the two countries.

### Wildlife Conservation

2032. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the report by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that found agricultural practices are impacting negatively on 70% of internationally important habitats here; if her Department has identified the most harmful agricultural practices that affect such habitats; her plans to assist farmers reduce the negative effect of agricultural practices on the habitats; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36035/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department submitted Ireland's 3rd assessment on the status of EU-protected habitats and species to the European Commission in April 2019. A summary report has just been published which provides an overview of the assessment methodologies and the main findings of the assessments (see [www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS\\_2019\\_Vol1\\_Summary\\_Article17.pdf](http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf)). These very thorough assessments were undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of this Department, Inland Fisheries Ireland and external experts.

The main aim of the EU Habitats Directive is to achieve the conservation of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and species listed on the Directive at a favourable conservation status. The habitats and species have been listed because they are considered vulnerable at a European level. Ireland has 59 habitats and 68 species listed on the Directive.

The conclusion of the report that most Irish habitats listed on the Habitats Directive are in Unfavourable status and almost half are demonstrating ongoing declines. The majority of species listed on the Habitats Directive are, however, in Favourable status in Ireland, and stable, although a small number are considered to be in Bad status and continue to require concerted efforts to protect and restore them.

The habitats were listed on the Directive because they are threatened; but the ongoing declines are of particular concern, particularly in our peatland, grassland, woodland and marine habitats, and concerted action is required.

The most frequent pressures recorded in habitats relate to the agriculture category. Over 70% of habitats were impacted by pressures relating to agricultural practices, and the pressure was ranked as High importance in more than 50% of habitats. The most prevalent sub-category of agricultural pressures was “Intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock”, which was recorded in 55% of habitats in which agricultural impacts were noted (39% of habitats overall), the next most frequent agricultural pressure being “Extensive grazing or undergrazing”, which was noted at 21% of habitats impacted by agriculture (15% of habitats overall). Inappropriate grazing (either too much or too little) was recorded in 62% of all habitats where agricultural impacts were reported, and in 44% of habitats overall. “Abandonment of grassland management (e.g. cessation of grazing or mowing)” and “Agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters” were the next most frequent agricultural impacts, each affecting 19% of habitats where agricultural impacts were noted, or 14% of habitats overall. All eight of the habitats affected by diffuse pollution were either lake or groundwater-dependent habitats. Analysis of the proportion of habitat exceeding Nitrogen deposition thresholds arising from “Agricultural activities generating air pollution” has highlighted Blanket bog, Alpine heath and Wet heath, Juniper and Limestone pavement as particularly vulnerable to this type of pollution. The impacts of “Agricultural activities generating marine pollution” are reported at High importance in three of the marine habitats.

My Department is engaging proactively with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to assess the potential for interventions under the CAP post 2020 and to inform their SWOT analysis and needs assessment. My Department is working on a Prioritised Action Framework for the Special Areas of Conservation and we are working to improve our capacity to put measures in place to achieve improvements in the status of habitats.

It should be noted that there are many positive actions are ongoing across Ireland, for example:

- There are 23 European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs) on-going, many of which are focussed on ‘restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity’; these have the potential to positively impact on habitats and species listed on the Habitats Directive.

- A catchment approach has been adopted under the EU Water Framework Directive to ensure consideration of both water and flooding issues within land use planning and a total of 726 waterbodies have been identified within 190 Priority Areas for Action. This will ensure improved targeting of measures for freshwater and transitional waters including lagoons, for example through advice to farmers and through financial support for urban wastewater treatment and for improved domestic treatment systems.

- There are EU LIFE and other projects (e.g. the Burren Programme) that focus specifically and proactively on the interface between farming and biodiversity.

- There is an increasing awareness through initiatives such as Farming for Nature that agriculture and biodiversity can be better integrated.

## Departmental Internships

2033. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of unpaid internships issued and-or granted to persons to work in her Department over the past five years to 28 August 2019; the number of persons that took up unpaid internship roles in that timeframe; if her Department continues to offer unpaid internships; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36144/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am informed that my Department does not currently facilitate unpaid internships. I am further informed that, following consultation with the Workplace Relations Commission earlier this year, my Department can no longer facilitate short term unpaid work experience placements of third level students. My Department facilitates a small number of second level transition year students every year on unpaid work experience for periods of one to two weeks.

For completeness; I am informed that in the past my Department has, on occasion, facilitated requests from colleges or individual students to provide unpaid work experience in an area related to the student's course of study. Department records show that seven students were placed in 2015, six in 2016 and in 2017, one in 2018 and three in 2019. I am informed that the three students placed in 2019 were to honour a prior commitment made in good faith to the students' college. These placements varied in length from four days to three months.

In recognition that there is a value to be gained from good quality internships related to an individual's chosen career path or area of study, my Department continues to keep this issue under review.

## Cyber Security Protocols

2034. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there are dedicated, professionally trained and certified cybersecurity staff to deal with cybersecurity protocols under the remit of her Department; if such specialists are being recruited; if her Department maintains a risk register of security breaches; if so, if there are staff that analyse, log and maintain such a register; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36224/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department's ICT unit has dedicated, professionally trained ICT security staff who are responsible for the management and oversight of ICT security systems which mitigate the risks of cybersecurity breaches. The Department maintains a security breach register where any breaches are analysed by the ICT security team and also escalated to supporting ICT security vendors where required.

## Departmental Operations

2035. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department has a disaster recovery plan, business continuity plan and or disaster recovery sites; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36240/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department takes data security and disaster recovery extremely seriously. As well as deploying leading enterprise solutions, my Department has disaster recovery and business continuity plans and disaster recovery sites in operation. These plans are regularly updated in line with

changes to infrastructure, file storage locations, etc.

### **Hare Coursing**

2036. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the licences issued to a club (details supplied) were rescinded; when the licences will be reissued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36326/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The Deputy may be aware that a disease fatal to rabbits and hares, but of no risk to humans, has been confirmed in the wild in Ireland for the first time. Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) was first reported in domestic (farmed) rabbits in China in 1984 killing millions of animals within one year of its discovery. By 1986 this viral disease had been found in continental Europe and has since spread globally leading to significant mortality in wild populations of rabbits

The disease which was first reported in Ireland in domestic rabbits in 2018 has now been confirmed in 6 rabbits from counties Clare, Cork, Leitrim and Wicklow and in two hares in Co Wexford with further animals still awaiting testing. While all locations continue to support apparently healthy wild populations, officials from the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department continue to monitor the situation.

The disease is highly contagious and can be spread directly between animals and in the faeces and urine of infected animals, as well as by insects and on human clothing. Under these circumstances the catching of hares in nets, their transportation in boxes and the collection and holding of hares in confined areas can all be considered to increase the risk of disease spread.

Accordingly, I made the decision last month to suspend the licences due to come into effect on 10 August issued to the coursing body in question on behalf of its affiliated clubs to capture and tag hares for the 2019/20 hare coursing season until a clearer understanding of the extent, spread and implications of the RHD2 virus emerges.

I am keeping matters under ongoing review.

### **Seirbhísí Oileán**

2037. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén leibhéal maoinithe atá ceadaithe do bhóithre ar oileáin Dhún na nGall don bhliain reatha; an bhfuil aon oileán eile á mheas do mhaoiniú laistigh den iarratas ó Chomhairle Contae Dhún na nGall chuig a Roinn; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36457/19]

2038. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an dtabharfaidh sí cuntas ar an méid maoinithe a ceadaíodh d'oileáin Dhún na nGall sa bhliain 2019; an dtabharfaidh sí cuntas maidir le pleananna maoinithe don todhchaí d'oileáin amach ó chósta Dhún na nGall don bhliain 2019; an ndéanfaidh sí comparáid idir maoiniú don bhliain 2019 agus blianta eile ó 2007 go 2018; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36458/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimh. 2037 agus 2038 le chéile.

Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil iarratas faoin Chlár Mionoibreacha do 2019 faighte ag mo Roinn ó Chomhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall. Clúdaíonn an t-iarratas oib-

reacha ar oileán Árann Mhór, Uaigh, Toraigh agus Gabhla. Tá an t-iarratas dhá scrúdú sa Roinn faoi láthair na huaire i gcomhthéacs an tsoláthair airgid atá ar fáil i mbliana agus na h-éilimh éagsúla ar an soláthar sin.

Léiríonn an tábla thíos an leibhéal maoinithe atá ceadaithe ag mo Roinn as soláthar caipiteal na n-oileán ar oileáin Dhún na nGall ó 2007 go dtí 2018:

Bliain	Maoiniú Ceadaithe
2007	€352,495
2008	€1,081,455
2009	€20,000
2010	€75,098
2011	€102,715
2012	€383,875
2013	€110,158
2014	€0
2015	€327,774
2016	€135,050
2017	€540,611
2018	€372,125

### Brexit Preparations

2039. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of occasions on which she has visited the Donegal Gaeltacht since taking office in November 2017; the number of occasions on which she has met with indigenous Gaeltacht industry and businesses in preparing for Brexit; her plans to meet with these sectors in preparing for Brexit particularly in the context of the Donegal Gaeltacht being a Border region; the state of preparatory and contingency planning which exists within her Department for all Brexit eventualities especially for the social economic impacts on the Gaeltacht area in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36463/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** As the Deputy will be aware the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade is overseeing the co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by his Department.

As Aire Stáit I am acutely aware of the challenges faced by indigenous industry and businesses in all Gaeltacht areas, including the Donegal Gaeltacht, in preparing for Brexit. I was in Donegal in July of this year for the Government meeting held in Gleann Cholm Cille on 25th July. On 24th July I also has a number of meetings with local groups and announced the approval of the South Donegal Language Plan under the language planning process.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is tasked with the Economic, Social and Cultural development of Ireland's Gaeltacht areas. Consequently, at the outset I wish to assure the Deputy that Údarás na Gaeltachta are working in cooperation with all other relevant organisations on a coordinated approach to Brexit. In that context, Údarás na Gaeltachta continue to work in tandem with Enterprise Ireland [EI] on an ongoing basis to ensure that their client-companies receive the same supports as those that are available to client-companies of EI.

It should be noted that, since 2012, both agencies operate under an mutually agreed memo-

randum of understanding [MOU] which ensures that client companies of Údarás na Gaeltachta have access to the same range of schemes being provided by Enterprise Ireland.

Specifically, in relation to the Donegal Gaeltacht I have been advised by Údarás na Gaeltachta that a number of initiatives/measures have been put in train in order to safeguard their exposed client companies from Brexit. These include:

- Meetings, courses and seminars on a regular basis for its clients in the Donegal Gaeltacht on the importance of preparing for Brexit and assisting companies in developing their businesses, diversify their markets and encouraging them to take practical steps to prepare the economic uncertainty that Brexit would cause.

- As part of a national response with other Government Departments and State Agencies, Údarás na Gaeltachta has encouraged and ensured that Gaeltacht companies have participated in Brexit Preparedness Seminars and awareness sessions held in Donegal by colleague organisations such as Enterprise Ireland.

- The introduction of the *Bí Réidh* scheme which is similar to the *Be Prepared* scheme being operated by Enterprise Ireland. This scheme provides support to companies to assess the potential impact of Brexit and to undertake market research to counteract its potential negative impact.

- In recognition of and in preparation for Brexit, Údarás na Gaeltachta agreed a Trade Office arrangement with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce at the end of 2018. The arrangement will act as a valuable resource for SMEs looking to expand their international Business to Business (B2B) partnerships.

In the interest of completeness I should also point out that earlier this year, in line with the recommendations of the Department of Enterprise, Business and Innovation, Údarás na Gaeltachta carried out a new sensitivity analysis on exposure to Brexit and re-engaged with companies who score highly on the sensitivity analysis and in particular companies whose primary market is the UK. On foot of this analysis Údarás na Gaeltachta targeted 25 companies throughout the Gaeltacht in most at risk to Brexit.

I understand that Údarás executives continue to engage with those at risk, supporting them in their current strategic reviews and applications for support in respect of innovation, efficiencies (Lean), market discovery and upskilling of employees. Companies are also being updated on the other state support in respect to the Brexit Loan Scheme by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland.

Finally, it is recognised that, as a county bordering Northern Ireland, Donegal could be significantly affected by the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and consequently that it could have a detrimental effect on businesses in the Donegal Gaeltacht. In that context I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that they made significant investment in the Donegal Gaeltacht over the past three years to Brexit proof existing companies, attract new businesses to locate in the Gaeltacht and to assist companies in diversifying and find new markets.

## Cultural Policy

2040. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to establish night mayors in towns and cities; her plans to grow the potential multibillion euro night-time economy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36629/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** On April 17th, I held a symposium to investigate the possibility of creative nightlife and cultural activity after hours as an alternative and complementary option to Ireland's existing rich night time experience.

My Department has been working with key partners to develop an approach to support a sustainable and forward looking infrastructure to facilitate the development of after hours cultural events.

Firstly, it is my intention to establish pilot projects to identify how a night time culture initiative might work in both urban and rural settings. To this end, my Department will approach a number of local authorities to establish a group comprising representatives from the relevant local authority, local creative nightlife sector, policing, transport and artists/ creative workers. The purpose of this group will be to consider and collate what supports and impediments are currently impacting on opportunities for creative and cultural activity at night, in different settings, and what would be required locally to develop, promote and encourage late night culture.

These groups will also consider the appropriateness of appointing local Night Time Commissioners.

Secondly, in parallel to the structured research initiative, I intend to establish a national forum comprising my Department, the National Transport Authority, the Arts Council and several other Departments with key roles in terms of developing night time infrastructure. This committee will consider matters arising from the operation of the pilot local groups which could require a national policy or legislative response, which would, in turn, be referred to the relevant Department or agency for consideration.

Thirdly, I also intend to engage with local authorities and arts groups with regard to a mapping exercise of existing venues and civic spaces which may be suitable for night time cultural events to identify both gaps and opportunities.

### **Performing Arts**

2041. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the number of theatre spaces in Dublin that have closed (details supplied) or are at risk of closing due to increased costs in commercial rents; her plans to ensure affordable spaces for actors and other artists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36630/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am acutely aware of the issue regarding the provision of affordable art spaces, particularly as a result of the changing property market.

Theatre has always been central to the arts in Ireland. Ireland is highly regarded for its theatre and has earned a reputation for excellence in theatre art as demonstrated through international awards for Irish companies, dramatists, directors, actors and other theatre practitioners. Irish theatre is made up of established and emerging production companies and artists, working in a vibrant and diverse sector.

Primary support for the arts including theatre is delivered through the Arts Council. The Council's funding increased in recent years and now stands at €75 million in 2019, an increase of €6.8m or 10% over 2018. Annual funding to the Arts Council has increased by over 15% in the past two years.

The Arts Council supports non-commercial, professional theatre production in Ireland. It seeks to fund artistic excellence both in the standard of practice and level of ambition. The Arts Council supports and develops theatre in Ireland through grant funding, project awards, support to individual artists, and support to venues, publications and resource organisations. The Arts Council, although funded by this Department, is statutorily independent in its day-to-day operations and specifically in its funding decisions.

Under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 funding of €10.214 million was awarded by my Department to a total of 134 arts organisations around the country. The list of all successful projects under this Scheme is available on my Department's website. These allocations included funding for a number of projects involving theatre.

I also hope to announce in the near future a new capital scheme. Details of the new scheme will be available on my Department's website.

### **Departmental Records**

2042. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will establish with the National Archives of Ireland the location of a file (details supplied) in view of the fact that the person requesting the file was informed that the office of the Taoiseach requested it in 2001 and that it had not been returned; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [36696/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Officials in my Department have informed me that the file in question will be considered for release this year as part of the annual release of files by the Department of the Taoiseach under the National Archives Act. Release of the file will be carefully considered by the Certifying Officer in the Department of the Taoiseach before the end of this year as part of the process of the annual transfer of files to the National Archives.

### **Aerfoirt Réigiúnacha**

2043. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta maidir le hAerfort na Mine i gCo. na Gaillimhe, cad é an staid reatha a bhaineann leis an bpróiseas ceannaigh; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36882/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tá an próiseas maidir le ceannach Aerfort na Mine ag leanúint ar aghaidh. Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil luach an aerfoirt aontaithe idir na páirtithe. Fostaíodh comhlacht le saineolas san earnáil eitlíochta chun an cás gnó a ullmhú i ndáil le riachtanais an Chóid Chaiteachais Poiblí. Tá an cás gnó á mheas faoi láthair agus tá súil na céad céimeanna eile sa phróiseas a thógáil go luath.

### **Reachtaíocht Teanga**

2044. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad é stádas Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú), 2017; cén dáta a fhoilseofar an Bille; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36883/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy**

**Seán Kyne):** Ba mhaith liom an deis seo a thapú chun coimriú a dhéanamh ar na spriocanna ardaidhmeannacha atá clúdaithe ag an mBille Teanga. Is iarracht í an Bhille seo, trí na ceannteidil éagsúla, an timpeallacht a chruthú ina mbeidh ról níos lárnaí ag an teanga in obair an Stáit, go mbeidh an teanga níos feiceálaí agus go mbeidh fáil níos leithne ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge.

Beidh sé mar ollchuspóir sa Bhille go mbeidh 20% de na daoine nua a earcaítear don tseirbhís phoiblí inniúil sa Ghaeilge, go mbeidh gach oifig phoiblí atá lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht ag feidhmiú trí Ghaeilge agus go mbeidh comhlachtaí poiblí in ann freastal ar an éileamh ón bpoibál ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge. Is í an earcaíocht croí-lár na ceiste agus táim dóchasach gur féidir tógáil, ar bhonn chéimiúil, ar líon na bhfostaithe le Gaeilge sa státchóras agus, ag eascairt as sin, go mbeifear in ann feabhas a chur ar sholáthar seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge, mar is cóir. Beidh tuilleadh deiseanna fostaíochta do dhaoine le Gaeilge san earnáil phoiblí amach anseo agus táim ag tnúth go mór leis an na seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge a bheith ar fáil don phobal i gcoitinne.

Mar is eol duit, tá oifigigh mo Roinne, chomh maith leis an dréachtóir pharlaiminte in Oifig an Ard-Aighne, tar éis dian obair a dhéanamh ar an ndrúacht den Bhille Teanga chun na spriocanna tábhachta seo a chur faoi bhráid an Oireachtais chomh luath agus is féidir agus iad a bheith achtaithe gan mhoill. Tá an Bille san áireamh i gClár Reachtaíochta an Rialtais le foilsíú roimh dheireadh an tseisiúin seo agus tá mé tiomanta chun é sin a dhéanamh.

### **Caiteachas Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta**

2045. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta céard iad na tosaíochtaí atá aici don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht don bhliain 2020; an mbeidh breis airgid ar fáil don réimse seo oibre i gcomhréir leis na gealltanais atá tugtha ag an rialtas seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36885/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** I gcomhréir leis na spriocanna sonracha atá leagtha síos i gclár an Rialtais Comhpháirtíochta agus i Ráiteas Straitéise na Roinne, is iad na príomh thosaíochtaí atá agam dom Ghaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht do 2020 ná:

- Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) a achtú.
- Forfheidhmiú na Straitéise 20-Bliain don Ghaeilge, agus an Plean Gníomhaíochta a chur chun cinn;
- An Próiseas Pleanála Teanga a bhrú ar aghaidh;
- Tacú le fostaíocht a chruthú agus a chur chun cinn sa Ghaeltacht trí Údarás na Gaeltachta;
- Tacú leis an Ghaeilge a chuir chun cinn ar fud oileán na hÉireann trí Fhoras na Gaeilge;
- Plean dhigiteach don teanga a fhorbairt agus a fhoilsíú;
- Coiste Idir-rannach maidir le Forbairt na nOileán a bhunú, agus polasaí oileánda a fhorbairt.

Ar ndóigh, tá an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge fite fuaite le gníomhaíochtaí mo Roinne thar na réimsí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta go léir, agus ta an plean gníomhaíochta 2018-2022 i bhfeidhm i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara. Tá dul chun cinn suntasach déanta le bliain anuas agus foilseofar an chéad tuarascáil ag tabhairt léiriú ar an obair atá déanta go gearr.

Maidir le cúrsaí buiséad, ní miste dom a mheabhrú don Teachta gur tríd an phróiseas Meast-

acháin agus Cáinainnéise a dhéantar leithdháileadh ar an soláthar airgid a chuirtear ar fáil ar bhonn bliantúil do mo Roinn agus, go deimhin, do na Ranna Rialtais go léir. Sa chomhthéacs sin, tuigfidh an Teachta go ndéanfar an soláthar airgid don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht ón Státchiste don bhliain 2020 a mheas i gcomhthéacs an phróisis sin níos déanaí i mbliana.

### Caiteachas Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta

2046. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad airgid bhreise atá curtha ar fáil don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht ó bunaíodh an rialtas seo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36886/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tugtar briseadh síos sa tábla thíos ar an méid airgid bhreise atá curtha ar fáil don Ghaeilge agus don Ghaeltacht ó bunaíodh an Rialtas seo:

2016	2017	2018	2019
€64.407m [1]	€60.602m	€62.595 [2]	€69.095

[1] San áireamh i bhfigiúr 2016, bhí allúntas aonuaire de €6m le h-íoc as forbairt chéanna farantóireachta ar na hoileáin. [2] Is é seo an figiúr a foilsíodh sna Meastacháin Athbhreithnithe i leith 2018. Cuirfear figiúr deimhnithe ar fáil sa Chuntas Leithreasaithe a bheidh iniúchta ag an C&AG.

Is ionann iomlán an mhaoinithe don Ghaeilge, don Ghaeltacht agus do na hOileáin don bhliain 2019 agus €55.772m. Nuair a chuirtear leithdháileadh an Fhorais Teanga san áireamh, is ionann an maoiniú iomlán agus €69.095m - méadú de €6.5m ar ar an allúntas don earnáil i Meastacháin Athbhreithnithe 2018. San áireamh i leithdháileadh 2019 tá:

- €0.6m sa bhreis chun tacú le cur i bhfeidhm an Phróisis Pleanála Teanga dá ndéantar foráil in Acht na Gaeltachta 2012;

- €2.7m breise d'Údarás na Gaeltachta chun infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcothabháil agus i gcruthú post i gceantair Ghaeltachta, rud a fhágann gurb é €9.7m an leithdháileadh iomlán caipitil don eagraíocht;

- Leithdháileadh breise de €1.18m do Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeltachta mo Roinne chun tacú tuilleadh le Próiseas Pleanála Teanga na Gaeltachta;

- Leithdháileadh breise de €0.75m do Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Teanga na Roinne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht chun scoláireachtaí Gaeltachta a chur ar fáil do dhaltaí ó scoileanna DEIS agus chun dul chun cinn a dhéanamh i ndáil le gréasán d'Ionaid Ghaeilge agus Cultúir a fhorbairt ar fud na tíre;

- Leithdháileadh breise de €1m chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar infreastruchtúr calafoirt a fhreastalaíonn ar na hOileáin Árainn agus ar Thoraigh; agus,

- Leithdháileadh breise de €0.433m chun seirbhísí riachtanacha iompair a sholáthar chuig na hoileáin.

Tá an infheistíocht mhéadaithe seo don Ghaeilge, don Ghaeltacht agus do na hOileáin ag dul i bhfeidhm go mór ar phobail Ghaeltachta, go háirithe, mar go bhfuil an chuid is mó den leithdháileadh á tabhairt do chruthú post, forbairt pobail agus pleanáil teanga sa Ghaeltacht, agus, chomh maith leis sin, d'fhorbairt na gcalafort agus na seirbhísí iompair a bhaineann leis na hoileáin.

Is fiú a nótaíl chomh maith go bhfuil maoiniú caipitil de €4.4m á chur ar fáil faoin gCiste um Athghiniúint agus Forbairt Tuaithe do thograí de chuid Údarás na Gaeltachta i nGaeltachtaí Dhún na nGall, Mhaigh Eo, Gaillimh, Chiarraí agus Chorcaigh. Tá an maoiniú ceadaithe do thograí rathúil de chuid Údarás na Gaeltachta mar seo a leanas:

- €1.5m ceadaithe chun an t-urlár bairr neamhfhorbartha de gteic @Gaoth Dobhair ar Pháirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair a fhorbairt agus 1,725 méadar cearnach de spás oibre/oifigí nua a chur ar fáil;

- €548,000 chun Ionad Nuálaíochta agus Mol Digiteach gteic @An Spidéal a fhorbairt i gConamara; agus,

- €795,000 chun 8 nIonad Nuálaíochta/Moil Dhigiteacha/Láthair Barrfeabhais a fhorbairt i nGaeltacht Mhaigh Eo ag áireamh Béal an Mhuirthead, An Eachléim, Ghaoth Sáile, Acaill agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh.

- €415,000 ceadaithe chun máistirphlean a réiteach d'athfhorbairt shean ospidéal an Daingin i nDaingean Uí Chúis, Co. Chiarraí mar Ionad Nuálaíochta, Ionad/Eispéireas Cuairteoirí, Spásanna Cruthaitheachta, foghlamtha agus foirgneamh a bheidh ina eiseamláir ó thaobh éifeachtacht fuinnimh.

- €292,500 chun tacú le dearadh do fhorbairt réimse áiseanna nua pobail, spóirt agus oideachais i mBaile an Fheirtéirigh i gCo. Chiarraí.

- €174,351 ceadaithe do fhorbairt tograí aitheanta i bPlean Gníomhaíochta Uíbh Ráthach i gCiarraí Theas a forbraíodh de réir gnímh sa bPlean Gnímh um Fhorbairt Tuaithe náisiúnta; Tacóidh an maoiniú le feidhmiú an phlean a mbeidh fostú Bainisteoir Tionscnaimh lárnach do fhorbairt tograí aitheanta.

- €180,000 ceadaithe chun máistirphlean a fhorbairt do Champas Choláiste Íosagáin i mBaile Bhuirne, Co. Chorcaí a leagfaidh amach an cás eacnamaíochta, planála agus timpeallachta don fhoirgnimh agus na tailte mórthimpeall.

Ní miste a rá gur soláthar breise é seo d'Údarás na Gaeltachta anuas ar an soláthar méadaithe de €9.7m atá curtha ar fáil ag mo Roinn don eagraíocht do 2019.

### Seirbhísí agus Tacaíochtaí Gaeilge

2047. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cad iad na céimeanna atá tógtha aici lena dhéanamh cinnte go bhfuil dóthain daoine ar fáil ina Roinn le seirbhísí a chur ar fáil dóibh siúd ar mian leo a ngnóthaí a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge leis an státseirbhís; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36887/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Tá sé curtha in iúl dom go bhfuil 71 ball den fhoireann i mo Roinn ábalta seirbhís chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge. Tá mo Roinn tiomanta seirbhís ar ardchaighdeán a chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge agus/nó go dátheangach do chustaiméirí na Roinne. Tacaíonn an Roinn le baill foirne atá ag iarraidh a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú beag beann ar a leibhéal líofachta - ó chúrsaí oiliúna do thosaitheoirí go dtí cúrsaí acadúla tríú leibhéal a dtacaítear leo faoi Scéim Aisíoc Táillí Acadúla na Roinne. Chomh maith leis sin cuirtear chun cinn go gníomhach an Teastas i nGaeilge Ghairmiúil, clár páirtaimseartha a chuireann Gaelchultúr ar fáil chun cuidiú le fostaithe san earnáil phoiblí leibhéal níos airde seirbhísí a chur ar fáil do chustaiméirí trí Ghaeilge. Tá suas le 20 ball foirne cláraithe ar chúrsaí Gaeilge go dtí seo i mbliana agus táthar ag súil go dtabhar-

faidh 19 eile faoi staidéar i dtéarma an Fhómhair.

### Pleanáil Teanga

2048. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé na ceantair sa Ghaeltacht a bhfuil airgead reatha pleanála teanga ceadaithe dóibh ag Údarás na Gaeltachta le pleananna teanga a chur i bhfeidhm iontu; cé mhéad airgid atá ceadaithe in aghaidh na bliana i ngach cás; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36888/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Chun freastal a dhéanamh ar fheidhmiú rathúil an phróisis pleanála teanga sa Ghaeltacht, ceadáíonn Údarás na Gaeltachta maoiniú do cheanneagraíochtaí pleanála teanga ar fiú idir €100,000 agus €150,000 sa bhliain é, ag brath ar chritéir cháilithe faoi leith.

Léiríonn an tábla a leanann, an dáileadh airgid atá i gceist i leith an 16 limistéar a bhfuil pleananna ceadaithe ina leith go dtí seo faoin bpróiseas:

Limistéar Pleanála Teanga	Maoiniú Ceadaithe in aghaidh na bliana (suas le)
Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire & Loch an Iúir	€150,000
Cloich Chionnaola, Gort an Choirce, An Fál Carrach agus Machaire Rabhartaigh	€100,000
Cois Fharraige	€150,000
Múscraí	€100,000
Na Déise	€100,000
Ciarraí Theas	€100,000
Dúiche Sheoigheach agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh	€100,000
An Cheathrú Rua	€100,000
Maigh Eo Thuaidh	€100,000
Árainn Mhór	€100,000
Ciarraí Thiar	€150,000
Conamara Láir	€150,000
Ráth Chairn & Baile Ghib	€100,000
Dún na nGall Theas	€100,000
Ceantar na nOileán	€100,000
Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall	€100,000*

\*Maidir leis an LPT: Tuaisceart Dhún na nGall, tá an plean teanga don LPT sin ceadaithe agus tuigtear go mbeidh doiciméad boird maidir le maoiniú an phlean sin ag dul os comhair Bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta ag a gcéad chruinniú eile ar an 25 Meán Fómhair 2019.

### Caiteachas Caipitiúil

2049. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Dara Calleary** den an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad airgid atá ceadaithe aici i mbliana do mhionoibreacha caipitiúla ar na hoileáin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [36889/19]

6 September 2019

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** Tá an cheist maidir le Clár Mionoibreacha 2019 do na hOileáin á scrúdú ag oifigigh mo Roinne faoi láthair i gcomhthéacs an tsoláthair airgid atá ar fáil le caitheamh ar thograí oileánda i mbliana agus na n-éileamh éagsúil ar an soláthar sin.