

Written Answers.

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

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

Departmental Reviews

11. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development further to Parliamentary Question No. 15 of 11 July 2019, when he plans to publish the findings of the review of the charitable status of Pobal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43831/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Pobal is a not for profit company which was originally established by Government in 1992 as Area Development Management (ADM) Ltd. Charitable status was granted to the company by the Revenue Commissioners on the 20th November 1996. In 2005 ADM was re-named Pobal. In accordance with Section 40 of the Charities Act, 2009, Pobal was entered onto the Register of Charitable Organisations on 16 October 2014.

The basis for Pobal having charitable status is tied to the objects of the Company, which are specified in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. I am satisfied that Pobal is fully compliant with the relevant legislative requirements including those of the Charities Act, 2009.

On its own initiative, Pobal undertook a review of its charitable status and in that regard sought independent legal advice on the matter. The Board of Pobal met in May 2019 to finalise their discussions relating to the review. I understand that it was decided by the Board that it was appropriate for the company to retain its charitable status. An update on the review was provided to my officials at an Oversight Meeting in June. I am satisfied that the Board of Pobal have considered the matter thoroughly and have acted appropriately. The report provided to the Board in relation to the review can be found on Pobal's website.

CLÁR Programme

12. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the approved projects for CLÁR funding for the north Cork region in 2018 and 2019; and the number of approved projects that have received funding to date in the region. [43808/19]

15. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of CLÁR funding for the north Cork region. [43807/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 12 and 15 together.

The CLÁR programme provides funding for small infrastructure projects in rural areas which have suffered high levels of population loss. The programme was closed for new applications in 2010. However, I re-launched CLÁR in 2016 and since then, almost €33 million has been allocated to over 1,400 projects under the programme.

Not all areas are eligible for CLÁR funding, as CLÁR areas are determined by the level of population loss using CSO data. The area within each county that is eligible for CLÁR varies greatly. For example, Leitrim is a relatively small county but all of Leitrim is designated as a CLÁR area. A number of counties do not have any CLÁR areas at all.

There was a huge level of interest in the CLÁR Programme this year, with almost 500 applications received. The level of funding sought in those applications far exceeded the available budget.

Nonetheless, almost €6 million has been allocated to 179 projects under the CLÁR programme this year. This includes funding for 8 projects in County Cork to the value of almost €300,000.

A total of €1.89 million has now been allocated to 74 projects in Cork county as a whole since 2016 under CLÁR. Details of all projects approved under the programme are available on the Gov.ie website.

The level of funding approved under Measures 1 and 2 of the CLÁR Programme (Schools and Play Areas) this year reflected the extent of the designated CLÁR areas in each county. Counties which have a larger percentage of their geographic area in CLÁR had more projects approved than counties that have a smaller percentage in CLÁR.

I think that the approach taken is fair, given the targeted nature of the programme. Other counties perform well in relation to other rural and community development programmes delivered by my Department.

LEADER Programmes Data

13. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount approved for projects to date under the current LEADER programme by LAG; the amount paid out to date by LAG; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43832/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme with a budget of €250 million over the period 2014-2020. €225 million of this budget is allocated to Local Action Groups, or LAGs, who deliver the programme and approve projects at local level. This allocation includes €5 million in additional funding which I have allocated to the top 10 performing LAGs this week.

The balance of €25 million is provided for thematic projects which are approved at national level.

Total expenditure on the LEADER programme since it commenced, effectively in 2016, is almost €70 million. This includes expenditure on projects and the operating costs of the LAGs. €36.1 million has been paid out in respect of projects.

The level of project approvals under the LEADER programme has increased significantly over the last year. Over 2,400 projects have now been approved for funding of over €91.8 mil-

lion since the programme commenced. A further 310 project applications, requesting in excess of €26.4 million, are at various stages in the approval process.

The table which I am supplying to the Deputy provides a breakdown of the projects approved by each Local Action Group, together with details of the project payments made to date. The figures do not include expenditure or approvals under national-level thematic schemes, such as the LEADER Food Initiative and Co-operation Projects, as they are not funded from the LAGs' core project allocations.

Table 1: Total LEADER Project approvals and payments by LAG as at 21 October 2019

| Local Action Group | Project Allocation | Projects Approved | Projects Approved | Project Payments made |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Name | Value | No | Value | Value |
| Carlow | €4,797,602 | 37 | €2,518,546 | €1,428,860 |
| Cavan | €6,391,715 | 72 | €3,723,016 | €1,887,027 |
| Clare | €6,645,000 | 152 | €4,339,003 | €1,300,552 |
| Cork North | €3,810,543 | 67 | €2,576,917 | €913,364 |
| Cork South | €2,803,477 | 28 | €1,084,290 | €484,996 |
| Cork West | €3,691,755 | 32 | €1,603,015 | €354,470 |
| Donegal | €9,631,407 | 134 | €5,864,195 | €3,397,671 |
| Dublin Rural | €4,777,829 | 55 | €1,734,719 | €617,746 |
| Galway East | €5,741,888 | 58 | €2,050,477 | €685,595 |
| Galway West | €3,425,425 | 45 | €1,477,922 | €353,357 |
| Kerry | €7,650,904 | 275 | €5,939,501 | €2,437,013 |
| Kildare | €3,946,200 | 27 | €1,526,855 | €427,333 |
| Kilkenny | €5,798,949 | 85 | €2,080,447 | €876,213 |
| Laois | €5,325,000 | 73 | €1,790,818 | €905,725 |
| Leitrim | €4,490,000 | 93 | €3,077,552 | €1,010,199 |
| Limerick | €6,946,151 | 92 | €5,288,318 | €1,940,475 |
| Longford | €5,698,500 | 66 | €1,918,801 | €739,482 |
| Louth | €4,576,397 | 82 | €2,234,980 | €825,988 |
| Mayo | €8,260,822 | 145 | €5,787,706 | €2,341,988 |
| Meath | €5,137,345 | 66 | €3,017,733 | €504,807 |
| Monaghan | €5,694,500 | 49 | €2,690,040 | €1,209,444 |
| Offaly | €6,000,000 | 133 | €3,519,624 | €1,897,070 |
| Roscommon | €6,581,283 | 63 | €4,711,459 | €1,053,989 |
| Sligo | €5,720,737 | 98 | €3,382,525 | €1,308,879 |
| Tipperary | €7,562,584 | 143 | €5,200,098 | €2,015,985 |
| Waterford | €5,525,346 | 60 | €4,033,762 | €2,190,951 |
| Westmeath | €5,563,495 | 70 | €2,591,255 | €423,892 |
| Wexford | €7,580,104 | 103 | €3,901,122 | €1,897,259 |
| Wicklow | €4,728,231 | 59 | €2,151,610 | €684,878 |
| Grand Total | €164,503,189 | 2,462 | €91,816,305 | €36,115,208 |

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

14. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the town and village renewal scheme; the role the scheme has in rural areas of County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43814/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Renewal Scheme forms an important part of the Action Plan for Rural Development and the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Programme for Rural Regeneration.

I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. The closing date for receipt of applications from Local Authorities under the Scheme was 28th June.

Over 300 applications for funding were received from the Local Authorities. My officials have now completed their assessment of the applications received and the successful applicants will be announced very shortly.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme has become a central part of the Government's drive to enhance our rural towns and villages and to make them attractive places in which to live and work.

Since the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016, almost €53 million has been approved for more than 670 projects across the country, including funding of just over €2 million for 27 projects in Co Carlow.

The scheme has supported public realm improvements, local tourism initiatives, and community and enterprise hubs, including through approvals for towns such as Myshall, Clonmore and Tullow in Co. Carlow in 2018.

Question No. 15 answered with Question No. 12.

Broadband Service Provision

16. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of discussions he has had with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment with regard to broadband provision in rural areas; the progress of the provision of a map of black spots in mobile coverage undertaken by the mobile telephone and broadband task force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43786/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): In my role as Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development I work across both the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

I also chair the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce which was established in 2016 to identify and overcome obstacles to mobile phone and broadband services ahead of the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan. The Taskforce is a cross-Government initiative comprising senior officials from a number of Departments and State bodies. The Secretariat is jointly provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

In my role, I work very closely with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton T.D., and have regular discussions with him regarding broadband provision in rural areas.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overall policy responsibility for the National Broadband Plan. However, the Department of Rural and Community Development works closely with that Department and with Local Authorities to help prepare rural communities for the roll out of high-speed broadband.

With regard to the mobile phone blackspot map, ComReg has made an online map of outdoor mobile coverage available on its website, www.comreg.ie. This resource provides consumers with information on the quality of mobile services, by operator, across the country. The map was a deliverable of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce.

ComReg also provide information on their website on handset performance, allowing people to make informed decisions on which operator and which phone is best suited to their particular needs.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund Eligibility

17. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if counties Laois and Offaly will receive a fair share of funding in the next round of rural regeneration and development funding. [43660/19]

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 second call for Category 1 applications for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund closed on 6 August 2019. Category 1 projects are projects which have all necessary planning and other consents in place and are ready to proceed. There was an excellent response from across the country and my Department received 69 applications for funding.

I understand that three of the applications submitted were located in County Offaly and two in County Laois.

It should be noted that calls for applications to the Fund are competitive in nature, once all requirements are met, and that no project or county is prioritised for funding.

My Department is currently finalising the assessment process in relation to the applications, carried out in conjunction with the Project Advisory Board for the Fund, which is comprised of representatives from key Government Departments and independent experts.

My Department will prepare a report detailing the outcome of that process and my role as Minister will be to consider that report and make final decisions in relation to the allocation of funding. In that regard, I expect to be in a position to announce the successful Category 1 projects from the second call shortly.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

18. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the processing of applications from County Kildare under the 2019 town and village renewal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43826/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Scheme has become a hugely significant funding stream for the regeneration of small towns and villages throughout Ireland. Since the scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016, almost €53 million has been approved for more than 670 projects across the country.

This includes funding of just over €1.3 million for 19 projects in Co Kildare. The scheme allocated funding for public realm improvements and Town Health checks in towns such as Kilcullen, Rathangan and Straffan in 2018.

Over 300 applications for funding were received under the 2019 Town and Village Scheme. This includes 11 applications from Kildare County Council.

My officials have completed their assessment of all of the applications received and the successful applicants will be announced very shortly. A list of all of the approved projects will be published on the Gov.ie website along with the announcement.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund Data

19. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications by county received under the second call for category one applications to the rural regeneration and development fund; when a decision will be made in respect of the applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43828/19]

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.

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My Department will prepare a report detailing the outcome of that process and my role as Minister will be to consider that report and make final decisions in relation to the allocation of funding. In that regard, I expect to be in a position to announce the successful Category 1 projects from the second call shortly.

Number of Applications by County

| County | Number of Applications |
|---------|------------------------|
| Carlow | 2 |
| Cavan | 4 |
| Clare | 5 |
| Cork | 4 |
| Donegal | 3 |
| Galway | 4 |

| County | Number of Applications |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Kerry | 6 |
| 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 |
| Kildare, Laois | 1 |
| Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim | 1 |
| Grand Total | 69 |

Local and Community Development Programme

20. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the person or body responsible for overseeing and ensuring the delivery of the recommendations of the review of local community development committees; the steps taken to date following the publication of the report in July 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43830/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Local Community Development Committees were established in mid-2014 to bring about a more joined-up and integrated approach to local service planning and delivery. I recently approved a comprehensive review of the LCDCs which was underpinned by extensive consultation and highlighted the significant progress made since LCDCs were established. The review also recognised a number of challenges to be addressed to secure the longer-term effectiveness of the structures. It makes a series of recommendations including securing greater cross-government buy-in; improved development and support programmes for LCDCs and their members; and strengthening and streamlining administrative supports.

Implementation of the LCDC review recommendations is included as an action in the recently published Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities; A five year strategy for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2017-2024. My Department is identified as the body with lead responsibility for its implementation, with Local Government, other Government Departments and the Community & Voluntary sector all having a part to play.

My Department has begun the implementation of the review recommendations, recently initiating a process of engagement with other Government Departments to promote more cross government commitment to the LCDCs. In addition, the first national networking event for LCDCs will take place on 9 November and will look at leadership including in the context of

Climate Action.

Additional funding will be provided in 2020 to support LCDCs in line with the recommendations of the review.

Departmental Schemes

21. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the 2019 CLÁR programme and the 2019 outdoor recreational infrastructural scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43811/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The CLÁR programme provides funding for small scale infrastructure projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. I launched the 2019 programme on 28 February last, with a closing date of 25 April for applications.

Almost 500 CLÁR applications were received by my Department this year and I have allocated funding of €5.9 million for 179 projects under all of the measures. Details of the projects approved are on the Gov.ie website. Over 1,400 projects to a value of €32 million have been approved under CLÁR since 2016.

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding to develop new outdoor recreational infrastructure and to maintain, enhance and promote existing infrastructure. Almost 600 projects have been approved for funding of €42 million under the scheme since 2016.

I launched the 2019 ORIS on 29 March last and applications were invited under three separate measures, for small, medium and large projects. Over 280 applications were received and my officials are currently in the process of assessing all of these applications.

CLÁR and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme are just two of a wide range of programmes delivered by my Department to help build vibrant and sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. These programmes are helping to build the resilience of communities in light of the many external challenges which they face, including the potential impacts of Brexit.

Voluntary Sector Funding

22. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he expects to be in position to offer grant assistance to appropriately qualified groups throughout County Kildare in 2019 with particular reference to the community and voluntary sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43824/19]

296. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the degree to which he can assist voluntary community groups throughout County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44130/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 22 and 296 together.

My Department funds a range of programmes and schemes that provide financial assistance and other supports to eligible community groups and organisations in urban and rural areas

throughout the country, including in Kildare. These schemes provide much needed funding, support and assistance to communities at local level.

These include the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the LEADER programme; the Community Enhancement Programme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme; the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP); the Town and Village Renewal Scheme; and the Community Services Programme.

My Department has been provided with a gross budget of €291 million for 2019 and I intend to ensure that this money is fully allocated through these and other schemes under my Department's remit to the community and voluntary sectors.

I can confirm that, to date, more than €216 million of this budget has been allocated nationally, with €5.9 million allocated to projects and organisations in Co Kildare.

I am also happy to be able to continue and in many cases enhance the provision of these supports next year having secured an increase in my Department's budgetary allocation for 2020 of €17 million, or 5.8%.

My Department's Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community organisations and in 2019 provided funding of some €440,000 to County Kildare.

Requests for assistance under particular programmes can be made at the appropriate time in respect of the application period for each programme, and these details, along with eligibility criteria and other information, can be found on the Government's website, gov.ie.

Decisions on any applications pending will be determined following their assessment under the various schemes, later in 2019.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

23. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to approve further funding for spending on LIS schemes in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43663/19]

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 which are not under the normal maintenance of the Local Authorities. The scheme is funded by my Department and is administered through the Local Authorities.

I reintroduced the LIS in 2017, after a number of years when no dedicated funding was available for the scheme. Since then, almost 1,700 roads have benefit from investment of €48 million from my Department.

The LIS is clearly a very popular scheme and is greatly appreciated by the people who use these roads on a daily basis. On 7th February last I launched the 2019 LIS and allocated a sum of €10 million to Local Authorities.

I currently have no plans to provide additional funding for LIS this year. However, I have secured funding for the scheme again in 2020 and a new round of LIS will be announced next year.

I also want to review the scheme to ensure that it operates as effectively as possible for the people who use the roads and for the taxpayers who are funding the scheme.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

24. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the position of the sub-group between his Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment which is examining the feasibility of using State and publicly owned assets for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43816/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): In 2018, a Working Group of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established to explore the feasibility of developing a standardised policy for accessing and utilising State assets for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure.

The Taskforce noted in its original 2016 Report that the State is the largest owner of land and property assets in the country. The opportunity was recognised to use these assets to house telecommunications infrastructure and improve services.

The Working Group met on a number of occasions in 2018 and formed the view that a Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Facilitating Telecommunications Access to State and Publicly Owned Assets would be an important step to underpin the proposal to make better use of State assets for telecoms infrastructure.

Among the factors taken into account by the Working Group during the course of its considerations are developments at EU level to make State and publicly owned assets available for such purposes.

Work is ongoing in relation to development of the draft Policy Statement, which is expected to be formally approved and published over the coming months.

Community Development Initiatives

25. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will report on the Dublin community initiatives he has visited; if he has liaised with his colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality on the need for increased resources for community development in areas of Dublin 13 and 17; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43047/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department was established in 2017 to promote development in both rural and urban communities. This is achieved through both targeted funding supports for communities and policies to support them in their important work.

In August this year at the Fatima Resource Centre in Dublin I launched “Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland”.

This Government Strategy was developed by my Department with those in the community and voluntary sector. It details actions which will support communities and their representative organisations to deliver positive outcomes within their local areas. These actions include my Department working with other government colleagues and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to scope and develop a sustainable funding model for the community and voluntary sector.

24 October 2019

I have seen first-hand the wide-ranging excellent work which is being undertaken in local communities to make lives better for those who live there. I am delighted to have had many opportunities to visit community initiatives in Dublin that have received supports from the Department.

In July I was pleased to launch Ireland's first National Policy on Social Enterprise at Speedpak in Coolock in Dublin 17. Speedpak, which received €30,000 Dormant Accounts funding from my Department in 2017 and over €290,000 under my Department's Community Services Programme during 2018 and 2019, has employed and trained over 1,150 people since it was founded in the 1990s, with significant positive impacts for individuals and families in the community.

In October 2018, I visited the Lourdes Day Care Facility in Seán Mac Dermott Street to view some of the important programmes being funded by my Department through the Dublin North East Inner City Initiative (NEIC).

I have also visited a number of libraries in Dublin city, including Charleville Mall, Kevin Street and Pearse Street Libraries, all of which have benefited from the Libraries Capital Investment Programme and which are great community resources.

I look forward to continuing to support these valuable community initiatives in Dublin and across the country and will continue to advocate for supports for communities across government, including through discussing these issues with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

26. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when a final decision will be made on applications under the 2019 town and village renewal scheme in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43787/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Town and Village Renewal Scheme forms an important part of the Action Plan for Rural Development and the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Programme for Rural Regeneration.

I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. The closing date for receipt of applications from the Local Authorities under the Scheme was 28th June.

Over 300 applications for funding were received from the Local Authorities. My officials have now completed their assessment of these applications and the successful applicants will be announced very shortly.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme has become a central part of the Government's drive to enhance our rural towns and villages and to make them attractive places in which to live and work.

Since the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was introduced in the second half of 2016, almost €53 million has been approved for more than 670 projects across the country. The scheme has supported public realm improvements, local tourism initiatives, and community and enterprise hubs throughout rural Ireland.

Climate Change Policy

27. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he has been briefed on the recommendations in the cross-party report on climate change specifically relating to a just transition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43657/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The cross-party report on climate action was published by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in March 2019.

My Department actively engaged with the work of the committee and also in the preparation of the all-of-Government action plan published by my colleague Minister Bruton and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in June. I have been briefed on a number of occasions on the recommendations.

I am particularly concerned with ensuring that transition to a low-carbon future is done in a just and fair manner, recognising the potential for measures to be felt differently in different parts of the country.

The Government has consistently stressed the importance of ensuring a people-centred transition which recognises vulnerability within certain communities and takes action accordingly.

The creation of a Just Transition Task Force, as suggested by the Committee, is very welcome. My Department is represented on the Task Force and intends to be a strong advocate for community outreach and involvement in the transition measures.

The report highlighted the potential of local community structures such as Local Community Development Committees and Public Participation Networks to play a role at local level in engaging with communities. My Department will continue to work with these structures and has committed to measures in the Climate Action Plan to help increase their awareness and capacity to address climate change issues within their communities.

My Department is also providing supports to assist communities and those in rural Ireland with climate change initiatives to enhance their resilience, and will continue to do so. In developing the next phase of rural development policy climate adaptation, sustainability and resilience are likely to be guiding features.

Question No. 28 answered with Question No. 9.

Dog Breeding Industry

29. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development further to Parliamentary Question No. 88 of 3 April 2019, the timeframe for such a review; if his Department has completed its review for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43048/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): Following a public consultation process, my Department published new Guidelines for Dog Breeding Establishments in 2018. These were put in place under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010, and came into effect on 1 January of this year.

Having published the new Guidelines, my Department is now identifying any necessary legislative changes that may be required to further improve standards. This review is currently underway and involves an examination of relevant legislation to ensure that existing laws and

international best practice, as well as the views of stakeholders, are taken into account. Any amendments to the Act will be dependent on the outcome of this review. This work is ongoing and I expect that a first draft of Heads of a Bill will be prepared by my Department before year end.

Examples of matters that are being considered include whether the definition of a dog breeding establishment should be changed to reference three rather than six breeding bitches, whether there should be more offences introduced, and whether there should be an overall cap on the number of dogs in an establishment. These and other points need to be carefully considered to ensure an appropriate approach is taken.

Brexit Supports

30. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget 2020 supports for the community and voluntary sector to deal with all Brexit scenarios. [43788/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Preparations for all the various Brexit scenarios are being led at Government level by my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Simon Coveney, T.D.

My Department and its agencies have fed into these preparations and will continue to engage across Government and with our stakeholders in the rural and community development sectors.

My Department's focus continues to be on maintaining maximum flexibility in our programme of funding initiatives, to enable us to continue to support all communities and to target available funding to those economic sectors and geographic areas most in need.

In total, my Department has an allocation of €148 million in 2019 for its community development programmes.

Using this funding my Department provides a wide range of supports to the community and voluntary sector, through major Government programmes such as the Community Services Programme (CSP) and Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), and other schemes such as the PEACE Programme, Community Enhancement Programme, Seniors Alert Scheme, the Scheme and Supports for National Organisations, and supports for volunteering.

Supporting this sector will remain a priority post-Brexit, and my focus continues to be supporting the development of sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities across the country.

Budget 2020 provided for an increase in my Department's budget of €17 million which I intend to use for targeted measures across the rural and community development areas.

The exact breakdown of budget allocations will fall to be considered in the context of the Revised Estimates 2020 to be published in December by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and should reprioritisation of funding be required post-Brexit, this can be considered as part of that process.

However, at this stage, I expect these allocations to include the following increased supports for the community development area:

- an increase in funding to the PEACE programme of €2million, to €7million. This programme is particularly important given current uncertainty surrounding Brexit. It is designed to promote positive relations and social cohesion in the cross border region. The total value of the programme is approximately €270 million (85% funded by the EU).

- a €3 million package of targeted supports for the community and voluntary sector, and organisations and individuals in disadvantaged communities

- an additional €1.5 million across the SICAP and CSP (€43.2 million and €46.2 million respectively in 2019) to fund some new organisations and to provide targeted supports for disadvantaged communities.

- €1.2 million to support the implementation of measures in the new Strategy for Community and Voluntary Sector development in Ireland and a further €300,000 to support delivery of the recently published National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland.

CLÁR Programme

31. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the CLÁR programme; the impact of the programme in rural areas such as County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43813/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation. The programme was originally launched in October 2001 but was closed for applications in 2010. I re-opened the programme in 2016 and, since then, over 1,400 projects have been approved for CLÁR funding of almost €33 million, including more than €1.5 million for 61 projects in County Clare.

I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28th February for projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Community Wellbeing Support

3a First Response Support

3b Mobility and Cancer Care Transport

3c Sensory Gardens.

Over 490 applications were received and I have announced 179 successful projects across the 3 Measures, to the value of €5.9 million this year.

The CLÁR programme makes a significant contribution to the rural communities it serves. A modest investment under the CLÁR programme, such as for the provision of a play area or specialist sensory garden, can have a significant impact on a community, by providing a safe location for children, including those with special needs, to play and for their parents to meet.

The programme is also helping to make rural schools safer for our children and their parents by funding footpaths and traffic calming measures in the vicinity of those schools.

The CLÁR programme has also supported voluntary first-response organisations who provide an excellent and vital service in many rural areas, often under very difficult circumstances. It has funded vehicles for organisations who provide transport for service users in rural areas under the Mobility and Cancer Care Measure. This is a vital resource for all those who avail of it.

Overall, I am very pleased with the impact which CLÁR funding is having in rural areas. I regularly see the good projects for which the funding has been used in my engagement with communities around the country.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

32. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress on the pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages as committed to under the Action Plan for Rural Development. [43789/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development included a commitment to develop a pilot scheme to encourage increased residential occupancy in rural towns and villages. I launched this initiative last October and announced that six towns had been invited to participate in the initial pilot. The towns in question are:

1. Boyle, Co Roscommon
2. Callan, Co Kilkenny
3. Ballinrobe, Co Mayo
4. Banagher, Co Offaly
5. Castleblayney, Co Monaghan
6. Cappoquin, Co Waterford

Funding of up to €100,000 each is being made available to these towns to develop proposals to encourage town centre living. To date, €75,000 has been drawn down by each Local Authority involved. This funding is being used by the Local Authorities to engage with communities and local businesses to identify practical solutions to increase the number of people living in their town centres.

Representatives from each of the participating towns meet collectively on a regular basis to discuss the issues that are emerging from their work on the pilot initiative.

It is envisaged that the lessons learned through this pilot can help to inform the approach to supporting and investing in rural towns and villages in the future, and lead to the development of more substantive proposals for funding from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

I received an interim progress report from each of the Local Authorities involved in the pilot scheme earlier in the year. A further, more comprehensive, report on the issues identified and suggested courses of action, will be produced for the Department by the end of the year.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Funding

33. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding he will make available for SICAP in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43802/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): In 2019, funding of €38.027m was allocated under SICAP for provision to the Local Development Companies that deliver the programme.

Allocations in respect of 2020 will be finalised in the context of the Revised Estimates 2020 to be published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in December.

However, in the recent budget I secured some additional funding for use across the Community Development Programme. I expect therefore that the 2020 SICAP funding may include a slight increase relative to 2019, the details of which are currently under discussion within my Department.

Men's Sheds

34. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to allocate funding in 2019 to an initiative (details supplied); the funding provided to such projects in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43812/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department is providing a range of supports in 2019 which Men's Sheds can avail of.

Earlier this year, I announced a special ring-fenced fund under the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) for Men's and Women's Sheds. This provided €0.5 million for Sheds to carry out minor capital works or to purchase equipment. The amount allocated to County Clare under this ring-fenced fund was €11,780 which supported 10 sheds.

In addition, depending on the project being completed, the Sheds were eligible to apply for other grant programmes funded by my Department, including the main Community Enhancement Programme under which €139,257 was allocated to County Clare.

List of Sheds in County Clare funded under ring-fenced fund, under CEP 2019

| Group | Area | DRCD Funding |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Parteen St - Nicholas Men's Shed | Parteen | € 1,200 |
| Sixmilebridge/Kilmurry Men's Shed | Sixmilebridge/Kilmurry | € 1,299 |
| Doonbeg Men's Shed | Doonbeg | € 1,007 |
| Clarecastle Men's Shed | Clarecastle | € 1,299 |
| Ennistymon Men's Shed | Ennistymon | € 1,178 |
| Mountshannon Men's Shed | Mountshannon | € 1,178 |
| Ennis West Men's Shed | Ennis | € 1,284 |
| Shannon Men's Shed | Shannon | € 1,200 |
| Cora Caitlin Men's Shed | Newmarket on Fergus | € 838 |
| Ennis Men's Shed | Ennis | € 1,299 |

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

35. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the local improvement scheme to local authorities nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43043/19]

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 predominantly rural areas. The scheme is funded by my Department and administered through the Local Authorities.

I announced funding of €10 million for Local Authorities across the country under the LIS in 2019. The list of projects which each of the Councils has selected for improvement works under the scheme are available on my Department's website at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d309ea-local-improvement-scheme/>.

Over 1,700 roads have benefited from improvement works since I re-launched the LIS in 2017. This is having a hugely positive impact for residents and landowners along those roads in terms of access to their premises and properties.

There is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ireland and I intend to launch that a new round of LIS funding in 2020. I also want to review the scheme to ensure that it operates as effectively as possible for the people who live along the roads and for the taxpayers who are funding the scheme.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

36. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the rural regeneration and development fund; the role the fund is having in rural regeneration in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43810/19]

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.

Following the conclusion of the first call under the Fund in February 2019, a total of 84 successful projects had been announced, with funding of €86m provided from the Fund to support projects worth a total of €117m.

Arising from the first call, I allocated €7,757,392 in funding to projects in County Limerick. Some of the successful projects included:

- The expansion of the Great Southern Greenway which received €2.7 million in funding;
- The construction of a multi-purpose community building in Murrow which received €3.8 million in funding; and
- The development of the West Limerick Tourism Gateway which received €330,000 in funding.

The second call for Category 1 applications for the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund closed on 6 August 2019. Category 1 projects are projects which have all necessary planning and other consents in place and are ready to proceed. I expect to be in a position to announce the successful Category 1 projects from the second call shortly.

It is planned that the second call for Category 2 applications, which relate to projects which need further development to be ready for Category 1 status, will open later in the year.

In conclusion, it is important to note that this is a 10 year Fund and those who are considering applications can plan with the knowledge that the Fund will be there when their proposals are ready. I am asking that all local authorities, State agencies, LEADER Local Action Groups and other potential lead parties work with rural communities to identify and develop ambitious projects which will deliver significant regeneration and development to their areas. My Department will work with you to ensure the greatest possible impacts are realised by the support provided by the Fund in the years ahead.

LEADER Programmes Expenditure

37. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on LEADER and its underspend; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43661/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme which has a total budget of €250 million over the period to 2020.

Total expenditure on LEADER since the programme commenced - effectively in 2016 when the majority of Funding Agreements were signed - amounts to €69.5 million. This comprises:

- €1.5 million in initial costs incurred by the LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs) to develop their Local Development Strategies.

- €31.9 million in administration costs of the LAGs and the cost of their engagement with communities to generate projects.

- €36.1 million on project expenditure.

The level of project activity under the LEADER programme has increased significantly over the last year. Over 2,400 projects have now been approved for funding of over €91.8 million. A further 310 applications, requesting an additional €26.4 million, are at an earlier stage in the approvals process. Project expenditure will increase significantly as these projects are implemented and payments are drawn down.

In addition, over 100 Food and Co-operation projects have been approved at national level, outside of the core budget available to the LAGs.

A sum of €30 million was provided for LEADER in my Department's Vote this year. This level of expenditure has already been reached and I am re-allocating €10 million from savings elsewhere in my Vote to meet the anticipated spend on LEADER this year. There is, therefore, no underspend on the programme this year and I am confident that all of the funding available under LEADER will be utilised over the remainder of the programming period.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund Applications

38. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of applications from County Kildare for funding under the rural regeneration development fund, including for the Barrow blueway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43825/19]

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 6 August and there was an excellent response from all across the country. My Department received 69 applications for funding under the call, one of which related to the Barrow Blueway project.

My Department is currently finalising the assessment process in relation to the applications, carried out in conjunction with the Project Advisory Board for the Fund, which is comprised of representatives from key Government Departments and independent experts.

My Department will prepare a report detailing the outcome of that process and my role as Minister will be to consider that report and make final decisions in relation to the allocation of funding. In that regard, I expect to be in a position to announce the successful Category 1 projects from the second call shortly.

Departmental Funding

39. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to allocate funding in 2019 for the various agricultural shows; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43815/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Agricultural shows are a great celebration of all that is good about rural Ireland and they are an integral part of our culture. The shows provide a welcome boost for local economies and attract visitors to enjoy our rural towns and villages at their best.

Over the last two years, I have allocated funding of €1.4 million to support many of Ireland's the Agricultural Shows, through the Irish Shows Association.

I am delighted to announce today that I am allocating further funding of €600,000 to the Irish Shows Association to support shows due to take place in 2020. Each qualifying show will receive a payment of approximately €5,000 to support their event.

This funding will be a huge boost for more than 100 shows which will take place next year and is a fitting recognition of the valuable contribution they make to the economies and communities of rural Ireland.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

40. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the timeline for the completion of the new action plan for rural development; and if he made a request seeking the transfer of further responsibilities for rural development to his Department. [43785/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017 as a three-year plan to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. The Action Plan runs to the end of 2019, and my Department is currently developing the next phase of rural policy, from 2020 onwards.

The new policy will build on the Action Plan for Rural Development. It will be forward-looking, and will seek to strengthen and build resilience in our rural economies and communities.

The process of developing the policy has involved a wide range of consultation events with key stakeholders, including Government Departments, State agencies, rural stakeholder groups, young people, and the wider public.

The public was also invited to contribute to informing the next phase of rural policy through an online survey which allowed respondents to prioritise what they consider to be the main challenges and opportunities in relation to rural Ireland. There has been a very significant response to the online survey, with 1,733 responses. These inputs received are now being considered by my Department.

As is the case with the current Action Plan, the new policy will reflect a whole-of-Government commitment to rural Ireland. In that context an Inter-Departmental Working Group has been established to support the development of the policy and to ensure synergies with key policies across Government. The Group will continue to meet over the coming months until the new policy has been fully developed.

Since my Department was established in July 2017, we have delivered a wide range of programmes and policies to support both rural and community development. I am always open to the possibility of considering additional responsibilities that are consistent with my Department's mission of supporting vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland.

Social Enterprise Sector

41. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the membership of the implementation group overseeing the delivery of the national social enterprise policy; the number of times the group has met; the terms of reference of the group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43827/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): On 19 July this year, I published Ireland's first ever National Social Enterprise Policy which aims to create an enabling environment for social enterprise to grow and contribute to Ireland's social and economic progress.

The Policy sets out 26 Measures for delivery, including a commitment to establish a National Social Enterprise Policy Implementation Group. The Group will be chaired by my Department, with representation from other relevant Government Departments, public bodies, and social enterprise stakeholders. The Implementation Group will be a key vehicle to oversee the delivery of the Policy.

I am determined to ensure that the voice and experience of social enterprise is strongly represented on the Implementation Group and the composition of the Group reflects a balance of public bodies and social enterprise stakeholders.

Apart from seeking nominations to the Group from specific social enterprise and community representative organisations, two of the seats have been reserved for an open call for expressions of interest from practitioners or persons involved in supporting social enterprise or social entrepreneurship. Expressions of interest have also been sought for a seat reserved for a Higher Education Institution active in the area of social enterprise.

The closing date for expressions of interest is 30 October 2019 and I expect that the Group will hold its first meeting by the middle of November.

The full composition and draft Terms of Reference for the Implementation Group are available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/37020/95ef0b636275490288ea1116da61bdd5.pdf>.

Broadband Service Provision

42. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of discussions he has had with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment with regard to broadband provision in rural communities, including the role of his Department in the national broadband plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43658/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development (Deputy Seán Canney): As Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Natural Resources and Digital Development, I work across both the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

In my role, I work very closely with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton T.D., and have regular discussions with him regarding broadband provision in rural areas.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has overall policy responsibility for the National Broadband Plan. However, the Department of Rural and Community Development works closely with that Department and with Local Authorities to help prepare rural communities for the roll out of high-speed broadband.

The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce, which I chair and which is co-ordinated by officials of the two Departments, has successfully addressed a number of complex issues over the last three years which will facilitate the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan when the contract for the State Intervention Area is signed. Quarterly Progress Reports on the work of the Taskforce are published on the websites of both Departments, and on the Gov.ie portal.

The Department of Rural and Community Development also supports preparations for the roll out of the National Broadband Plan through the network of Broadband Officers located in each Local Authority. The Broadband Officers are co-funded by the Department and provide a vital point of contact for industry and the public regarding telecoms issues.

The Broadband Officers are also leading on the development of Digital Strategies for each Local Authority. These Digital Strategies will enable communities to make full use of digital technology in their daily lives, and will be particularly beneficial when the Broadband Plan is rolled out.

Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation

43. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of jobs created under the Action Plan for Rural Development in north-west County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43817/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development was published in January 2017 as a whole-of-Government initia-

tive to support the economic and social progress of rural Ireland. The coordinated approach of the Action Plan is achieving benefits in terms of increased employment in the regions and increased investment in projects and communities across the country.

Specific figures for job creation are not available from at the level requested by the Deputy. However, overall employment in the regions continues to grow, with an increase of over 146,000 people employed outside of Dublin between 2015 and 2018. This surpasses the target in the Action Plan of increasing employment by 135,000 by 2020.

More than 60% of the 18,846 new jobs created by Enterprise Ireland's client companies in 2018 were outside of the Dublin region, while over 132,000 jobs in IDA client companies are now based outside of Dublin, representing 58% of client companies' employment.

The Regional Enterprise Action Plans, which are overseen by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, play a particularly important role in supporting job creation in the regions. My own Department also contributes directly to job creation in rural areas through programmes such the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and LEADER.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, which will provide investment of €1 billion into rural areas over the next ten years, will also make a significant contribution to job opportunities for people who live in rural Ireland. To date, €86 million has been allocated from the Fund to 84 projects which will have a transformational effect on towns, villages and rural areas across Ireland. I announced a further call for proposals last April and applications received by the deadline of 6 August are currently being assessed.

Departmental Expenditure

44. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the level of underspend for each rural scheme administered by his Department as of the end of September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43833/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Gross expenditure of €291 million has been provided to my Department under the Further Revised Estimates for 2019. €132 million of this is allocated to the rural development programme area, with 93% of this being capital funding. At the end of September, current expenditure within the programme area is broadly on target, and capital expenditure is running slightly ahead of the profile estimated at the start of the year.

By the end of September over €63 million in capital funding has been invested in a range of rural development schemes including LEADER; the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF); Town and Village Renewal; Regional Economic Development; Local Improvement Scheme; and the National Rural Development Schemes (CLÁR and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)).

Expenditure on LEADER is running ahead of target as project approval ramp up and claims are made. While expenditure on the RRDF is behind profile, the rate of expenditure will accelerate to year end as approved projects complete the procurement stages into construction, and recoupment is sought by local authorities and other bodies in respect of works undertaken.

I have set out in the following table a breakdown by capital spend by subhead on rural development schemes to the end of September. It details spend to end September, the full year allocation, as well as expenditure against the profile estimated at the start of the year.

| A - RURAL DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL AFFAIRS | Spend - (to end of September) | Full year allocation | Profile to end Sept | % spend to Profile |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| | €'000's | €'000's | €'000's | % |
| A.4 - NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES | 8,147 | 15,000 | 7,149 | 114% |
| A.5 - LEADER - RURAL ECONOMY SUB PROGRAMME | 31,600 | 30,000 | 16,440 | 192% |
| A.7 - TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION | 9,342 | 15,000 | 10,768 | 87% |
| A.8 - REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | 4 | 700 | 450 | 1% |
| A.9 - LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEME | 4,302 | 10,000 | 4,208 | 102% |
| A.10 - RURAL REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT FUND | 9,780 | 52,000 | 20,750 | 47% |
| Total | 63,175 | 122,700 | 59,873 | 106% |

Community Enhancement Programme Funding

45. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if additional funds will be provided for the community enhancement programme in 2019 in view of the fact that in 2018 the fund was €13 million and in 2019 it was €4.5 million and in further view of his previous comments that if savings in his Department were identified he would consider additional funding for the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43801/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Enhancement Programme helps community groups to improve facilities in their area. It supports a range of investment in all areas of communities, such as childcare facilities, playgrounds, recreational facilities, sports grounds, landscaping projects, and supports for the elderly.

In 2018, I launched the programme with initial funding of €4.5m. There was a huge level

of interest in the programme so I was delighted to be in a position to allocate additional once-off funding to the programme later in the year and the final amount allocated was €13 million. This included €0.5 million that was ring-fenced for Men's Sheds. Over 3,000 projects across the country were funded, all of them targeted at enhancing facilities in disadvantaged communities.

In 2019, I launched the programme with initial funding of €4.5m. I subsequently allocated an additional €0.5m under the Community Enhancement Programme for a ring-fenced fund for Men's and Women's Sheds. This has brought the total funding this year to €5m.

Expenditure across all of my Department's programmes has been on profile so far in 2019, and this looks set to continue until the end of the year. However, if savings are identified, I will consider allocating additional funding to the Community Enhancement Programme.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund Data

46. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of each project allocated funds under the rural regeneration and development fund; if he is satisfied that each financial allocation will be drawn down by year end 2019; if not, the status of the funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43829/19]

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.

Following the conclusion of the first call under the Fund in February 2019, a total of 84 successful projects had been announced, with funding of €86m provided from the Fund to support projects worth a total of €117m.

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, €16 million has been drawn down from the Fund by 29 separate projects. I expect that payments from the Fund will continue to accelerate over the coming weeks and months as further milestones are achieved across the other projects.

CLÁR Programme

47. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the CLÁR scheme nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43044/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation. The programme was originally launched in October 2001 but was closed for applications in 2010. I re-opened the programme in 2016 and, since then, over 1,400 projects have been approved for CLÁR funding of almost €33 million.

I launched the 2019 CLÁR programme on 28th February last for projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas

Measure 3: Community Wellbeing Support

3a First Response Support

3b Mobility and Cancer Care Transport

3c Sensory Gardens.

The programme was over-subscribed, with almost 500 applications received. Nonetheless, I have announced 179 successful projects across the 3 Measures, to the value of €5.9 million this year.

Details of successful projects under each Measure on a county basis can be found on the Gov.ie website at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/f9051a-clar-funding-2019/>

Defence Forces Equipment

48. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the contract to supply new motorcycles for the Defence Forces escort of honour has been put to tender; and when he expects the new motorcycles to come into the fleet. [43869/19]

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

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

The Defence Forces fleet of vehicles is subject to regular review to ensure that it meets operational requirements both at home and overseas. In this regard a requirement for the replacement of Defence Forces Escort of Honour Motorcycles was identified due to the current fleet reaching end of life.

A tender was published on OJEU through eTenders on 14 June 2019, and following completion of the tender evaluation process a contract was awarded to Honda Distributors Ireland on the 27 September 2019. The contract value is for €380,000 ex VAT for the delivery of 48 motorcycles. The Defence Forces expect to take delivery of the vehicles in Q4 2019.

Defence Forces Veterans

49. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the veterans organisations he has engaged with and met in a formal and informal capacity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43978/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department formally recognises two veterans' organisations that represent all former personnel, namely, the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) and Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (O.N.E, the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel).

My officials meet on a quarterly basis with representatives of both organisations and the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO) to discuss issues of concern to Defence Forces Veterans. In December I meet the three Veterans Associations formally at separate meetings.

I meet and engage with our Veterans through my attendance at the O.N.E. Fuchsia fundraising campaign, and at O.N.E., IUNVA and ARCO Remembrance Day ceremonies subject to my availability.

My Department and the Defence Forces work with O.N.E. to bring to fruition their plans to establish additional Veteran Support Centres around the country. I officially opened the Veterans Support Centre in Athlone last October and I will attend, subject to my availability, at further such events.

Each year I attend the Veterans' Day in which members of IUNVA, O.N.E., ARCO and many other retired members of the Defence Forces from various other veterans organisations participate. After the formal proceedings have been completed, I meet many veterans on an informal basis.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

50. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if all members of the Defence Forces who are being discharged are receiving their LA89 prior to formal discharge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43979/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have been informed by the relevant Military Authorities, that the circumstances and manner in which a Certificate of Service LA89 is issued to a member of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) on discharge, is governed by Defence Forces Regulation, A10. This Regulation sets out the Officer or prescribed military authority to direct the discharge.

In so far as is possible, all efforts are made by the military authorities to ensure that the LA89 is issued in accordance with the Regulation.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

51. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44059/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The information sought by the Deputy could not be compiled within the timeframe available to answer the ques-

tion. I will revert to the Deputy on this matter in due course.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

52. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44063/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The details requested by the Deputy on the financial settlements reached on behalf of my Department and confidentiality clauses associated with these settlements are set out in the following table.

| Year | Number of settlements | Number of confidentiality clauses |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2014 | 2 | |
| 2015 | 5 | 1 |
| 2016 | 1 | |
| 2017 | 2 | 1 |
| 2018 | 7 | 3 |
| 2019 | 4 | 2 |

There are no statutory bodies under the remit of my Department.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

53. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the allocation to overseas development aid in 2020; the expected percentage this will be in respect of the ODA-GNI target; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44163/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Ireland's development cooperation programme is an integral part of our foreign policy and an important statement of our global citizenship. For 2020, the Government has allocated almost €838 million for Official Development Assistance (ODA) - an increase of just under €21 million on the 2019 budget allocations.

Based on the Department of Finance Budget Day forecast for GNI 2020, we expect the ODA/GNI % to be in the region of 0.31%.

Budget 2020 was prepared in exceptional circumstances and on the basis of Government assessments of the implications of a possible no deal Brexit. In that context, the 2020 target of €838 million is a significant budgetary commitment by the Government to international development. The additional resources provided continue the upward trajectory in allocations to ODA over the past six years, and provide the basis to begin to grow Ireland's development cooperation programme and to deliver on some of the initiatives and commitments in A Better World, Ireland's policy for international development.

As outlined in the Global Ireland 2025 Strategy and in A Better World, the Government remains committed to sustained, substantial and carefully managed increments in ODA in order to deliver 0.7% by 2030.

Emigrant Support Services

54. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expected budget for the emigrant support programme in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44164/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): On Budget Day, 8 October 2019, the gross expenditure allocation for the Department and the allocations by high-level expenditure programmes were published. The detailed breakdown by subhead and by individual programme are yet to be finalised and will be published in the Revised Estimates Volume 2020 due to be published in mid-December 2019.

The Government remains committed to supporting our most vulnerable citizens abroad through the Emigrant Support Programme. It is also the principal means through which we maintain and celebrate the deep ties of culture and heritage that connect us to our diaspora communities around the world.

Overseas Development Aid

55. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the contribution of Ireland to the trust fund for Africa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44165/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa is an element of a comprehensive package of EU initiatives to support stability across North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel/Lake Chad region. The aim of the Trust Fund is to contribute to tackling the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration.

This Trust Fund was launched at the 2015 EU-Africa Summit on migration in Valletta, Malta for the 2016-2020 period. Over €4.6 billion has been pledged for the Trust Fund by the EU and EU Member States.

At the time of its launch, Ireland made a commitment to provide €3 million to the Trust Fund. At the European Council meetings in October 2017 and June 2018, the Taoiseach announced further increases in Ireland's contribution, following calls for additional funding from EU Member States in light of the pressing needs identified. This brought Ireland's total commitment to €15 million.

To date, Ireland has provided €10.95 million of this total commitment to the Trust Fund, with the balance of €4.05 million to be disbursed before the end of 2020.

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

56. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expected expenditure in 2020 on the peace and reconciliation fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44166/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Reconciliation Fund, which is administered by my Department, was established in 1982 to sup-

port civil society organisations in creating better understanding between the people and traditions of the island of Ireland, and also between Ireland and Britain. Over €54 million has been allocated to more than 2,000 projects during this time.

As part of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, the Government committed to the continued allocation of €2.7 million annually to the Reconciliation Fund.

The annual budget for the Fund was €2.7 million in 2018. In May 2018, on the 20th Anniversary of the referendums on the Good Friday Agreement, I announced that it would be increased to €3.7 million from 2019 onwards, reflecting the Government's unwavering commitment to the Agreement and to supporting the vital work of reconciliation being carried out by civil society and groups in Northern Ireland and across this island. It is my intention that the budget for the Reconciliation Fund will be retained at this significantly increased level for 2020.

More information on the Reconciliation Fund is available on my Department's website at: <https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/funding/reconciliation-fund/>

Legislative Programme

57. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the status of the Central Bank (Amendment) Bill; when he expects the heads of Bill to be completed; when pre-legislative scrutiny will take place on the Bill; when he expects the Bill to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43856/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As I have stated recently in this House, the need to rebuild trust in the Banking sector is a priority for this Government. The Central Bank (Amendment) Bill will increase individual accountability in the financial sector. The proposed legislation will drive positive changes in terms of wider banking culture and enhanced accountability, while simplifying the taking of sanctions against individuals who fail in their financial sector roles.

The Bill will primarily address the recommendations put forward by the Central Bank of Ireland in relation to individual accountability in its Section 6A Report on the Behaviour and Culture of the Irish Retail Banks.

As the Deputy will be aware I received the agreement of my Government colleagues on 18th June last to begin the process of drafting heads of this Bill. This follows extensive preparatory work by my officials, in consultation with the Central Bank, which has continued in recent months. This included consideration of the lessons to be learned from the UK's Senior Managers Regime and Conduct Standards, given the close relationship between the two financial sectors and the similar common law legal system.

The legal considerations of the Bill are complex as the issues it addresses go to the core of individuals' rights to an adequate means of a livelihood, and the Bill's provisions are required to be constitutionally sound in the event of legal challenge. Officials from my Department have engaged with the Attorney General's Office for guidance on the approach to be taken. The Department and the Central Bank have been engaging on an ongoing basis in order to progress the policy matters to put forward sound principles in order to achieve the positive aims of the legislation.

It is my intention to bring forward draft heads of Bill to Government for approval later this year and to then progress the Bill for debate in the Houses including pre-legislative scrutiny. However, this timetable remains very much subject to Brexit developments and other compet-

ing legislative priorities.

Legislative Programme

58. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the scope of the Central Bank (Amendment) Bill; if it will incorporate non-bank financial service providers; if it will incorporate credit union managers and boards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43857/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The purpose of the Central Bank (Amendment) Bill is to increase individual accountability in the financial sector. The proposed legislation will drive positive changes in terms of wider banking culture, greater delegation of responsibilities, and enhanced accountability while simplifying the taking of sanctions against individuals who fail in their financial sector roles.

My officials have done extensive preparatory work on this legislation, in consultation with the Central Bank and the Office of the Attorney General, and this work is ongoing. There remain a number of outstanding policy decisions to be taken, including in relation to the precise scope of the Senior Executive Accountability Regime (SEAR) and the Conduct Standards. The SEAR will ensure that senior executives are held responsible for their actions and/or inactions. The Conduct Standards will set out the standards of honesty, competence, and professionalism expected in the financial services industry in Ireland.

The legal considerations of the Central Bank (Amendment) Bill are complex and touch on individuals' constitutional rights, including the right to an adequate means of a livelihood. I can assure the Deputy that I will be giving careful consideration to the outstanding policy decisions, which will be reflected in the Heads of Bill which are in preparation.

Insurance Costs

59. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if advice will be provided on a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43920/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am aware of the issues facing some businesses when it comes to the affordability and availability of insurance, and I have a lot of sympathy with regard to the business in the details supplied, which I agree provides an important service in its particular field.

I understand that the issue related to in the details supplied has been exacerbated by the announcement of a UK-based insurer, over the summer, that they were withdrawing from the Irish market. 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. It is understood however that certain parts of the company's leisure book were not profitable due to the cost of claims 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.

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.

Nonetheless, insurance reform remains a priority for the Government. The Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG), which was established in July 2016, has produced two reports, and 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. The most recent Update Report, the ninth, was published in July and shows that the vast majority of the CIWG recommendations have been implemented. A key conclusion of the CIWG was that there was no single policy or legislative “silver bullet” to immediately address the problem of rapidly rising insurance premiums. Instead, a broad series of initiatives are required to address this problem.

Consequently, the Government has brought forward a number of pieces of legislation, arising from recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group. These include the following:

- The Judicial Council Act 2019, which was enacted in July. This is a key piece of legislation in the context of insurance reform. It provides for the establishment of a Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee, which will introduce new guidelines to replace the Book of Quantum, following the formal establishment of the Judicial Council. It is now matter for the Judiciary to put in place the Judicial Council and to operationalise the Personal Injuries Guidelines Committee;

- The Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018, which has established the National Claims Information Database in the Central Bank. This will 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;

- The Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Act 2019, which makes important reforms to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board, by strengthening its powers around compliance with its procedures; and,

- 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. These were introduced through the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018.

In relation to the enquiry into having an Irish public body provide insurance for the business in question, even on a temporary basis, I do not believe that this would provide a solution to those businesses impacted. Indeed, such an approach could actually decrease competition in the Irish insurance market, with insurers potentially deciding to cease insuring certain types of risks if there is a view that the State will insure these risks instead, particularly for lines of business which are considered to be unprofitable. This could in turn lead to a lack of choice for those seeking cover which could ultimately mean that the cost of insurance becomes even more expensive than it is now. Also, there is no reason to believe that the State would be any better at managing risks than private insurance companies, and as a result there potentially would be a large financial exposure to the State if significant losses were incurred. Finally, any State insurance scheme would be required to comply with the same prudential rules as private companies, thereby meaning that the cost of any insurance would still have to reflect the risk involved. In view of these factors, I am not convinced that a State-backed insurance scheme would be a

panacea with regard to the cost or availability of insurance, either for small businesses or other categories of consumers.

I believe that this makes it more important that the levels of personal injury damages awarded in this country are brought more in line with those awarded in other jurisdictions. The establishment of the Judicial Council in the coming months is very important in this regard. This is why I allocated €1 million in Budget 2020 to allow for this. While the Government cannot interfere in the judiciary's deliberations, I would expect that they will recognise the importance of this issue and prioritise its establishment accordingly and take account of the Personal Injuries Commission's findings.

VAT Rate Application

60. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Finance his plans to change the VAT rate on food supplements as previously reported; the engagement he has had with business and civil society on such an increase in view of the potentially negative impacts on small businesses, persons with disabilities and other groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43922/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, food supplement products are currently subject to VAT at the standard rate of VAT (23%). 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.

Revenue has acknowledged that the scope of its concessionary approach 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 its scope to include products that should be standard rated, including products claiming to enhance male fertility, promote hair growth, boost tanning, avoid a hangover and reduce stress.

Following complaints from the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA), 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 the 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 Bill 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. The removal of the concession will only apply on a prospective basis and will not be applied retrospectively by Revenue.

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. This allowed time for my Department to carry out a public consultation on the taxation of food supplement products.

The public consultation ran from 18 April to 24 May 2019 and sought input from a wide range of interested parties, including from health and nutrition experts, the Minister for Health and the Health Products Regulatory Authority ('HPRA'). In total, 121 submissions were received. This included submissions from individuals, businesses, lobby groups and a political party. My officials also met with representatives from industry on several occasions in 2018 and 2019. The results of the public consultation in 2019 were included in the Tax Strategy Group paper on VAT published on my Department's website. The options set out in the TSG paper included maintaining the standard rate of VAT or introducing a reduced rate of VAT.

I have decided to apply the reduced rate of VAT to all food supplement products. This means that from 1 January 2020, food supplement products which are currently liable at the standard rate of VAT of 23% would become liable to the reduced rate of VAT of 13.5%, while those currently concessionally zero rated will also become liable to the reduced rate rather than the standard rate.

It is important to clarify that foods for specific groups such as infant follow-on formulae and infant foods, foods for special medical purposes and specially formulated foods (e.g. total diet replacement for weight control) will continue to be zero rated as they are well established and defined categories of food that are essential for vulnerable groups of the population. Fortified foods, such as yoghurts and cereals fortified with vitamins and minerals, will also continue to be zero rated as they are food.

Folic acid, vitamin and mineral human oral products which are licenced or authorised as medicines by the Health Products Regulatory Authority ('HPRA') will continue to be zero rated under a different VAT provision for human oral medicines.

Tax Credits

61. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of increasing the home carer's tax credit by €100, €200, €300, €400, €500 and €600, respectively. [43931/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the cost of increasing the Home Carer Tax Credit by the amounts requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table. I announced in my Budget speech that the Home Carer Tax Credit will be increased to €1,600 per year from 2020.

| Home Carer Tax Credit Increase € | Home Carer Tax Credit Value € | First Year Cost €m | Full Year Cost €m |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 100 | 1,700 | 6.6 | 7.6 |
| 200 | 1,800 | 13.2 | 15.2 |
| 300 | 1,900 | 19.8 | 22.8 |
| 400 | 2,000 | 26.4 | 30.4 |
| 500 | 2,100 | 33.0 | 38.0 |
| 600 | 2,200 | 39.6 | 45.6 |

The above estimates have been generated by reference to 2020 incomes, calculated on the basis of actual data for the year 2017, which is the latest year for which tax returns are available. The estimates are provisional and may be revised. These estimates assume no behavioural response by taxpayers as a result of this change.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that a review of the Home Carer Tax Credit was carried out this year by my Department and Revenue following the methodology outlined in

the Tax Expenditure Guidelines. It was published on Budget Day and is available on the Budget website at the link: <http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2020/Documents/Budget/Report%20on%20Tax%20Expenditures%20Incorporating%20the%20Outcomes%20of%20Certain%20Tax%20Expenditure%20and%20Tax%20Related%20Reviews%20completed%20since%20c.pdf#page=74>

The review was carried out to inform future policy making in relation to the Home Carer Tax Credit and forms part of the Department of Finance's ongoing commitment to reviewing tax expenditures on a regular basis. It also fulfils commitments made in the 'First 5 Strategy: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families' and the 2019 Future Jobs Action Plan.

Budget 2020

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the €300 million net tax measures in his budget 2020 statement; the breakdown of the €2.9 billion net budget package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43984/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The various tax measures introduced in Budget 2020 are listed in 'Budget 2020 Tax Policy Changes' published at Budget time. Excluding the Carbon tax — the proceeds of which will be ring-fenced for climate-related investment and to safeguard against any potential impacts for those most at risk — the net impact of these measures in 2020 is an increase in taxes of c. €340 million. If the Carbon tax measure is included, net tax increases amount to c. €430 million.

On the expenditure side, core gross voted current expenditure will increase by €2.6 billion from €59.3 billion to €61.9 billion, an increase of 4.3%. Core gross voted capital expenditure will increase by €0.8 billion from €7.3 billion to €8.1 billion, an increase of 10.8%. A breakdown of these increases is provided in 'Budget 2020 Expenditure Report' published at Budget time.

Taking the increase in core voted current and capital expenditure together, the increase in voted expenditure is €3.37 billion. The €2.9 billion Budget 2020 package is comprised of the increase in core spending (€3.37 billion) less the net tax package (€430m).

Rainy Day Fund

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the €500 million intended for the rainy day fund in 2019 will be available in 2019 and 2020; if it makes up part of the €1.2 billion Brexit package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43988/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In my Budget 2020 speech, I set out that a disorderly Brexit is now the baseline scenario for budget planning purposes, and therefore a budget deficit is in prospect. On that basis, I decided that there will be no transfer of €500 million from the Exchequer this year to the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund (the Rainy Day Fund). However, as set out in my Budget speech, I will be transferring the previously earmarked €1.5 billion from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) as this is not money that will have to be borrowed as it is currently in the ISIF.

I also set out that the funds transferred to the Rainy Day Fund can be deployed in the event that the economic impact of a disorderly Brexit is larger than assumed. The €500 million of

Exchequer funding not being transferred to the Rainy Day Fund this year will remain as Exchequer cash balances and therefore will be used to meet the Exchequer funding requirement, such as for public spending priorities including Brexit related spending.

Rainy Day Fund

64. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if a decision has been made on the €500 million intended for the rainy day fund in 2020; if he still plans to invest €500 million in the rainy day fund in 2020; if not, if the €500 million forms part of the €1.2 billion Brexit package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43989/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have decided that there will be no transfer of €500 million from the Exchequer in 2020 to the National Surplus (Exceptional Contingencies) Reserve Fund (the Rainy Day Fund). The €500 million of Exchequer funding not being transferred to the Rainy Day Fund will remain as Exchequer cash balances and therefore will be used to meet the Exchequer funding requirement, such as for public spending priorities including any Brexit related spending.

For information, I should set out that this year I will be transferring the previously earmarked €1.5 billion from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to the Rainy Day Fund.

Rainy Day Fund

65. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if investment in the rainy day fund does not impact the general Government balance but does impact the Exchequer balance; if the indicative nominal budgetary package outlined in table 6 is after the funds for the rainy day fund have been invested; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43990/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy is correct that annual transfers to the Rainy Day Fund will not impact on the General Government Balance, as they are considered a within government transaction and not counted as general government expenditure. However, such transfers will represent expenditure from the Exchequer account and will, hence, impact the Exchequer balance.

As I outlined on Budget day, a one-off transfer of €1.5 billion from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) will be made to the Rainy Day Fund. As with the transfers from the Exchequer, the transfer from ISIF does not impact the General Government Balance. However, given that Budget 2020 was designed around the assumption of a no-deal Brexit, it was decided not to transfer €500 million to the fund from the Exchequer in 2019 or 2020. This was the prudent course of action considering the uncertainty which we face, as it ensures resources are available to put in place the supports to protect our economy from the impacts of Brexit.

As outlined in Table 9 of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook, a Brexit contingency of some €1.2 billion has been included in the budgetary arithmetic for 2020 and this is reflected in the projected Exchequer deficit of €1.6 billion for that year. Were the €500 million transfer to the Rainy Day Fund to be made, this would increase the Exchequer deficit by this amount, though there would be no impact on the General Government Balance.

Excise Duties

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full-year yield of imposing excise duty of 5 cent, 10 cent, 15 cent and 20 cent per millilitre, respectively, on liquid containing nicotine used for vaping and e-cigarettes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43991/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been advised by Revenue that there are no tax returns or other information on the volumes of vaping products or e-cigarettes in Ireland. Therefore there is no basis available on which to estimate a figure of the yield which would be returned if an excise duty was imposed on the liquid containing nicotine used for vaping and e-cigarettes.

Universal Social Charge Application

67. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of removing USC up to €80,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43993/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the estimated first and full year cost to the Exchequer of increasing the current USC threshold from €13,000 to €80,000 is €1,673m and €1,922m, respectively.

The result of this change is that individuals with income of less than €80,000 will be exempt from USC, and that the current rates would continue to apply for individuals earning more than €80,000.

This estimate has been generated by reference to 2020 incomes, 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.

The estimates are provisional and may be revised.

Tax Data

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of increasing the group A CAT threshold of €335,000 by €3,000, €10,000, €32,000, €100,000 and €200,000, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43994/19]

69. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of reducing the CAT rate from 33% to 32%, 30%, 28% and 23%, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43995/19]

70. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated first and full year cost of reducing the CAT rate from 33% to 32%, 30%, 28% and 23%, respectively, in tabular form while simultaneously increasing the group A CAT threshold of €335,000 by €3,000, €10,000, €32,000, €100,000 and €200,000, respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43996/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 to 70, inclusive, together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated full year costs of increas-

ing the CAT Category A threshold to the proposed amounts, and the costs of increasing the Category A threshold while simultaneously reducing the CAT rates as proposed, is as set out in the following table.

Category A - Full Year Cost (€m)

| | Current Threshold | | | | | Proposed Thresholds |
|------------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| CAT Rate % | 335,000 | 338,000 | 345,000 | 367,000 | 435,000 | 535,000 |
| 33 | * | 2 | 8 | 22 | 54 | 83 |
| 32 | 6 | 8 | 13 | 27 | 58 | 87 |
| 30 | 17 | 20 | 24 | 37 | 66 | 93 |
| 28 | 29 | 31 | 36 | 48 | 75 | 100 |
| 23 | 58 | 60 | 63 | 73 | 95 | 116 |

*Current rate and threshold.

The first-year cost of changes depends on the date of introduction but would be in the region of 85% of the amounts shown, if the changes were implemented from Budget day.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

71. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44062/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department has made 4 financial settlements from 1 January 2015 to date. A breakdown of these is contained in the following table.

| Year | Number of Financial Settlements | Number of which included Confidentiality Clauses |
|------|---------------------------------|--|
| 2015 | 1 | 0 |
| 2016 | 0 | 0 |
| 2017 | 1 | 0 |
| 2018 | 1 | 1 |
| 2019 | 1 | 1 |

There are 17 bodies under the aegis of my Department, 11 of which have not reached any financial settlements within the past five years. These are the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Credit Review Office, Credit Union Advisory Committee, Credit Union Restructuring Board, Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman, Investor Compensation Company DAC, Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal, Irish Fiscal Advisory Council, Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland and Tax Appeals Commission.

The National Asset Management Agency has reached 2 financial settlements in the past 5 years, in 2018 and 2019 respectively. The terms of both settlements are confidential.

It was not possible for 3 bodies, the Central Bank of Ireland, the National Treasury Management Agency and Home Building Finance Ireland to respond to this information request in

the time available and therefore I will make arrangements to provide a response in line with Standing Orders.

In respect of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (IBRC), it is not possible to provide the requested information as I am advised that a manual exercise would need to be undertaken, at considerable expense to the liquidation of IBRC, in order to collate this information. While IBRC records the claims it is involved in and the status of each of those cases, IBRC does not have summary data readily identifying which claims were the subject of a financial settlement (including those with confidentiality clauses) in each of the last 5 years.

The Office of the Revenue Commissioners has provided the following details in relation to financial settlements reached in the past 5 years:

| | Total No. of Financial Settlements reached in the past 5 years | No. which included confidentiality clauses |
|---|--|---|
| Tax appeals settled and resulting in financial payment by taxpayer (There were no cases where Revenue made a financial payment to a taxpayer) | 2015 - 382016 - 72017 - 42018 - 112019 - 24 | 2015 - n/a 2016 - n/a2017 - n/a2018 - n/a2019 - n/a |
| Court litigation settled and resulting in Financial Payment by either party | 2015 - 7 2016 - 62017 - 92018 - 82019 - 1 | 2015 - 02016 - 02017 - 02018 - 12019 - 0 |

Financial Services Regulation

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [44110/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. As such, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on or intervene in an individual case such as that referred to in the details supplied by the Deputy.

I would note however that a consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) in relation to any dealings with a financial services or insurance provider during which they feel they have been unfairly treated. The FSPO can be contacted via email (info@fspoi.ie) or phone (01 567 7000) after the complaints handling process with a financial services or insurance provider has been exhausted.

Brexit Issues

73. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the level of checks that will be required between Ireland and Great Britain if the current Brexit deal were to be ratified; the number of extra customs officials that will be required to deal with the number of checks; the contingencies at ports here with regard to the increased level of checks required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44155/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): On 17 October, the EU Taskforce and

UK Government agreed a revised text of a Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration, which was subsequently endorsed by the European Council.

Subject to ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement by both the UK Parliament and the European Parliament, the UK will enter a transition period until the end of 2020, with the possibility of an extension for a further 1 or 2 years. During this transition period, Union law shall be applicable to and in the United Kingdom. This means that, from a customs standpoint, there will be no checks during this period.

It is only after the UK has left the EU that formal negotiations can commence on the future EU-UK economic relationship, based on the broad terms outlined in the Political Declaration. The Political Declaration contains the shared ambition to have a Future Trade Agreement with zero tariffs and quotas between the EU and the UK. Given that these negotiations have yet to commence, it would not be appropriate to comment on the nature of future checks that may be required. It is important to note however, that it is still the case that the UK is leaving the EU and this will bring change. It is important that Ireland is ready for that change, both for our citizens and our business, and our work to prepare for all scenarios surrounding the UK's exit continues.

In planning for Brexit, Revenue had determined that in an orderly withdrawal of the UK from the EU, to include a transition period and the implementation of a Free Trade Agreement between the EU and UK, an additional 600 Revenue staff would be required. This was based on the introduction of customs formalities for East-West trade between Ireland and the UK. This recruitment was accelerated in preparation for a potential No Deal exit on 31 October. This requirement for an additional 600 staff remains Revenue's best estimate of the resources that will be required in the context of the current proposed Brexit deal to facilitate and support legitimate trade.

In a Brexit context, the efficient flow of trade through our ports and airports is a key priority for the Government and various government departments and agencies have undertaken and continue to undertake significant preparations to facilitate this post-Brexit. During 2018, Revenue chaired an Inter-Departmental group which was established to consider the adequacy of port and airport infrastructure and facilities, post-Brexit. The group included representatives from Revenue; the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM); the Department of Health; the HSE's Environmental Health Service (EHS); the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS); the OPW; the Department of Justice; and An Garda Síochána.

I am advised that the group considered the physical infrastructure requirements for both the 'Central Case' and the 'no-deal' scenarios to facilitate and support the movement of legitimate trade. This included the requirements of Revenue; DAFM; and the HSE's EHS; to carry out any necessary customs interventions and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) checks at ports and airports as a result of Brexit. The group identified that infrastructure was required at Dublin Port, Rosslare Europort and Dublin Airport and agreed proposals on the nature and scale of new or extended facilities that would be required. The Office of Public Works (OPW) are responsible for the delivery of the necessary infrastructure. Temporary facilities are in place for 31 October 2019 in the event of a no-deal Brexit. OPW are currently working to ensure that these temporary facilities will be replaced by permanent facilities by 1 January 2021 which will accommodate the full requirements of the different agencies from that date.

Brexit Preparations

74. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his Department is under-

taking an economic impact analysis of the current Brexit deal; if he will publish updated fiscal and macroeconomic forecasts based on the current Brexit deal; when he expects such a study to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44156/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Budget 2020, including the macroeconomic outlook which underpins it, was based on the prudent assumption that the UK would leave the EU on 31 October without an agreement. The macroeconomic outlook is set out in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook published with Budget 2020. This included, at Box 4, an assessment of the macroeconomic outlook that would apply in the event of an agreed exit by the UK at end October.

The Withdrawal Agreement endorsed by the European Council, will now require ratification by the European Parliament and the British Parliament. Pending ratification of the deal, it is not possible to say if the outlook will be different to that set out in Budget 2020.

If the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified, the UK will enter a transition period until at least the end of 2020. In this situation the outlook would be broadly similar to that set out in Table 4 (Box 4) in the Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This shows that, in the event of an agreed exit, GDP growth is forecast to be 3.1 per cent in 2020, with employment growth projected at 1.7 per cent next year and the unemployment rate expected to be 5.1 per cent.

Until there is greater clarity on the post-transition relationship there is likely to be continued uncertainty, particularly with respect to private sector investment. There are a range of possible future relationships, ranging from a free trade agreement (of which there could be many forms), or a trading relationship under World Trade Organisation (WTO) frameworks. The impact of these have been modelled and estimated earlier this year in joint research by the Department of Finance and ESRI. Over the medium-term (i.e. 5 years) the level of GDP would be of the order of between 1.9 and 3.3 per cent lower, compared to a situation where the UK remains in the EU.

My Department will continue to monitor developments with respect to the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement, and the future relationship with the UK, and will update the macroeconomic and fiscal projections to take account of any developments in the Spring.

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

75. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank has officially commenced an investigation into whether dual pricing by the insurance industry complies with the consumer protection code and the law; when he expects this investigation to conclude; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44157/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Mr. Michael D'Arcy, TD, has raised the issue of dual pricing with the Central Bank at a recent meeting and sought their views.

In response, the Central Bank has confirmed that they will undertake a review of price optimisation, which includes the practice of dual pricing, as this has been identified as a potential consumer risk by the Central Bank in its sectoral risk assessment of the insurance sector. I understand that the first step of this review will be a comprehensive data gathering and analysis exercise to determine the scale and prevalence of price optimisation across the insurance sector and its precise effects on consumer groups. I also understand that the Central Bank intends to engage with key stakeholders, most notably the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, on the terms of reference of this review and on the nature and scope of any potential remedies. It is the Central Bank's intention that the data gathering exercise will inform its views

on any legal, supervisory and policy measures that may be required – but any such interventions will need to be carefully considered and may not be a matter for the Central Bank alone.

I would agree with the Central Bank's assessment of the complexity of this issue and that we will need to carefully consider any potential remedies, as to do so may improve matters for certain consumers while at the same time impact negatively on other consumers. I do not think we are at the point of making conclusions on this issue and I will await the views of the Bank in this regard. Given the need for extensive and meaningful consultation, scoping, data gathering and analysis by the Bank, it is not possible for me or the Central Bank to say when this review will conclude at this stage. I would note the comments recently by insurers that they will engage constructively with the Central Bank and I welcome this, as it will be an important factor in how long the review takes.

Finally, by way of information to the Deputy, I think it is important to also reference new measures being introduced by the Central Bank arising from recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group from 1 November. These are designed to increase consumer engagement and pricing transparency, and are as follows:

- For private motor insurance renewals, insurers will be required to provide the amount of the insurance premium paid in the previous year or, where any mid-term adjustments were made to the policy during the year, an annualised premium figure;

- Insurers will be required to provide the total premium for each policy option available for the customer in the renewal notices/quotations (i.e., comprehensive; third party, fire and theft cover; third party only, if offered by the insurer); and

- The renewal notification period will be extended from 15 working days to 20 working days for all non-life insurance policies.

I believe that each of these measures should assist consumers in making decisions at renewal time, including encouraging them to shop around and, if favourable to them, switch insurance provider.

Mortgage Lending

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank is in the process of reviewing the macroprudential mortgage rules; if he anticipates changes to the rules particularly with regard to first-time buyers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44158/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank of Ireland has an overall and independent responsibility to promote and protect financial stability and the mortgage lending measures, which were introduced in 2015, are an important tool available to the Bank for that purpose.

The Central Bank has committed itself to keeping the particular leading measures under review and the Bank is conducting its annual review of the measures to ensure that their overall calibration and operation remain appropriate given the stated objectives of the policy to:

- (1) enhance bank and borrower resilience to negative financial and economic shocks and

- (2) dampen pro-cyclicality and limiting the probability of a damaging credit-house price spiral emerging.

The Central Bank has informed me that it will publish the details and outcome of the annual review in December.

Brexit Preparations

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the economic and fiscal projections outlined in budget 2020 documents are applicable to the current Brexit deal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44159/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Budget 2020 was presented on the basis of a disorderly exit by the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU). Given uncertainty around the manner and timing of the UK's departure this was the correct approach to take.

Should the UK leave the EU on an orderly basis, through implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement recently agreed between the UK and EU, Ireland's fiscal position will, inter alia, improve via increased revenues and lower expenditure than forecast at Budget 2020.

The Summer Economic Statement (SES), published in June 2019, was based on an orderly scenario and is instructive in this regard.

Tax Compliance

78. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the budgeted yield from tax compliance measures in budgets since budget 2012 and the actual yield taken by the Revenue Commissioners from compliance measures in each year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44160/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the following table sets out the compliance measures introduced since Budget 2012. The table includes the projected yields and the actual yields achieved. Links to various relevant analysis and reviews published by Revenue are also included for the Deputy's information.

The total yields are determined using a conservative approach as other actions and interventions by Revenue may have stimulated partial uplift.

TAX COMPLIANCE MEASURES

| YEAR | Measure | Projected Yield | Actual Yield |
|------|---|-----------------|--------------|
| 2012 | Increased data sharing with government bodies | +€55m | €65m |
| 2013 | No Compliance Measures presented in Budget 2013 | | |
| 2014 | A continued focus on the shadow economy in the mineral oil and alcohol products sectors | +€20m | €200m1 |

| YEAR | Measure | Projected Yield | Actual Yield |
|------|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2015 | No Compliance Measures presented in Budget 2015 | | |
| 2016 | Addressing non-compliance in the oil market Addressing non-compliance in the construction sector Deploy enhanced debt analysis tool to reduce tax arrears Increase resource to confront non-compliance | +€10m+€20m+€20m+€25m | €35m€29m€56m€25m |
| | Total | €75m | €145m ² |
| 2017 | Section 110 and Funds Changes Tackling offshore tax evasion Increase resource to confront non-compliance | +€50m+€30m+€50m | €63m€88m€62m |
| | Total | €130m | €213m ³ |
| 2018 | Employer PAYE Compliance Project eCommerce/Online Business Compliance Project-Tax Avoidance and Base Erosion Capacity | +€50m+€30m+€20m | €77m€26m€20m |
| | Total | €100m | €123m ⁴ |

1 Analysis of additional taxes and duties collected on oil published at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/oil-market-analysis.pdf>.

2 Analysis published at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2016-compliance-measures.pdf>.

3 Analysis published at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2017-compliance-measures.pdf>.

4 Analysis published at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/budget-2018-compliance-measures.pdf>.

Tax Code

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the concerns raised by an association (details supplied) over issues faced by the industry in terms of the high capital gains tax rates here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44161/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Officials from my Department met with the association referred to by the Deputy as part of the normal pre-Budgetary consultation process in September, 2019. I have noted the issues raised and proposals made in respect of Capital Gains Tax (CGT) by the organisation in its pre-Budget submission and in particular around possible changes to the revised Capital Gains Tax Entrepreneur Relief.

The Deputy will be aware that an external evaluation of the relief was published on Budget day. I indicated in my Budget speech that I did not intend to propose any changes to the relief at this time. My decision making process was influenced by the information provided in and the conclusions of the evaluation. I have asked my Department to consider the outcome of the evaluation to determine possible changes that could be made to the relief to better support entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial activity. My Department and I are open to engagement on this specific matter.

Financial Services Regulation

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of financial service providers that have not got the relevant authorisation from the Central Bank in the event the UK leaves the European Union by type of financial services provider in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44162/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has received more than 100 Brexit-related applications for authorisation. These include applications both to establish new legal entities and from existing entities seeking to extend their current authorisation. I am advised that the Central Bank does not comment on individual applications for authorisation.

The Central Bank is working to ensure that firms that have applied, and meet the Bank's requirements, are authorised prior to Brexit. The Central Bank has a gatekeeper role to ensure only firms that meet its standards (including transitional requirements) are authorised. In this regard, it should be noted that the Single Supervisory Mechanism is the competent authority for banking authorisations.

The Regulatory Service Standards Performance Report for H1 2019 is published on the Central Bank website. These service standards are designed to inform stakeholders with regard to the length of time certain regulatory processes will take. The report is available at: <https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/how-we-regulate/authorisation>

As set out in the Central Bank's Brexit FAQ - Financial Services Firms (<https://www.centralbank.ie/regulation/how-we-regulate/brexit-faq>), firms that meet the Bank's requirements will be authorised in a timely manner. There may be a delay for those firms that applied late or failed to plan, which may cause some disruption, as they may not conduct business during this time. All firms that have sought authorisation, and have been deemed unlikely to be authorised by 31 October have been advised of same.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, where a firm does not have an authorisation in place, the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2019 provides for a temporary run-off regime for insurance. UK/Gibraltar insurers and insurance intermediaries, that satisfy the conditions of the legislation, will be able to continue the administration of both life and non-life insurance policies written in Ireland after Brexit. This "run-off" regime applies for a maximum period of three years from the date of Brexit. It should be noted that, under this regime, insurers and insurance intermediaries cannot write any new

policies or renewals unless they receive authorisation in an EU/EEA Member State (including Ireland).

Brexit Supports

81. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the €200 million of the €1.2 billion Brexit package will be spent regardless of the Brexit outcome; if this €200 million is part of the €2.8 billion fiscal package announced in the summer economic statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43985/19]

82. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the €650 million of the €1.2 billion Brexit package will only be used if there is a no-deal Brexit outcome; if this is additional to the €2.8 billion fiscal package announced in the summer economic statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43986/19]

83. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the €365 million and the €45 million in social protection expenditure that forms part of the €1.2 billion Brexit package will only be made available if there is a no-deal Brexit outcome; if this is additional to the €2.8 billion fiscal package announced in the summer economic statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43987/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 81 to 83, inclusive, together.

Table 2 on page 38 of Expenditure Report 2020 sets out the elements that comprise the overall gross voted expenditure amount of €71.4 billion for 2020. As set out in this table, before taking account of certain Brexit related costs of €1.2 billion and timing related cash costs of €169 million, the overall increase in core voted expenditure on public services and infrastructure in 2020 is estimated at €3,371 million. After taking account of discretionary revenue measures of over €0.4 billion, this results in a net budgetary package of over €2.9 billion. This compares to the projected budgetary package of €2.8 billion set out in the Summer Economic Statement.

The Brexit related expenditure of €1.2 billion is made up of:

- €650 million to support the sectors identified as most affected by Brexit; Agriculture, Enterprise and Tourism, and to help stabilise the worst affected regions;

- €365 million in Social Protection expenditure on the Live Register and Related schemes;

- €45 million for Labour market activation supports; and

- a further amount of €160 million, relative to the Revised Estimates Volume 2019, to ensure that the staff, facilities and infrastructure are in place at Dublin Port, Rosslare Europort and Dublin Airport to allow for the necessary compliance checks to be carried out by the regulatory agencies.

As the risk of a disorderly Brexit increased, preparations for essential compliance checks by our regulatory agencies that would be required in the event of a disorderly Brexit were accelerated, with recruitment of additional staff and development of facilities and infrastructure. Consequently, as outlined in Table 1 on page 24 of Expenditure Report 2020, €51 million of the estimated costs, primarily related to staff required to carry out compliance checks at the ports and airport, are included in the departmental Budget Estimates for 2020. The allocation of the balance of funding in relation to facilities and infrastructure for compliance checks will be as-

sessed taking into account the up to date Brexit position, including the expected form of the UK's exit from the European Union and future relationship.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, the sectoral expenditure of €650 million will be released in multiple tranches. Adopting a multi-tranche approach to expenditure management of required Brexit policy is prudent as it helps to facilitate responses to a wide range of possible Brexit impacts, which may take time to fully materialise.

The additional funding for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection would also be made available in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

As part of normal budgetary processes the allocation of these additional funds would either be provided in the allocations set out in the Revised Estimates Volume; included as Further Revised Estimates; or allocated via Supplementary Estimates, as may be appropriate in each case.

Of course, mitigating the effects of Brexit has been a feature not just of Budget 2020, but over the last three years as well. This has included initiatives to increase competitiveness and embed greater resilience in our economy. For these ongoing initiatives, which are already in place, approximately €0.2 billion is included within the Departmental allocations published on Budget Day. This amount is additional to the €1.2 billion discussed above.

Flood Risk Management

84. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the specific projects planned for 2019 to increase the capacity of the River Shannon; the associated cost of the projects; the expected completion dates for the projects; the impact these projects will have on increasing capacity on the River Shannon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43982/19]

85. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the specific projects planned under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 to increase the capacity of the River Shannon; the dates in which they are planned to commence and finish; the funding dedicated under the plan for increasing capacity of the River Shannon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43983/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 84 and 85 together.

On 3rd May, 2018, I was delighted to launch 29 Flood Risk Management Plans and €1bn investment in flood risk over the coming decade. These Plans are the output from the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme - the largest ever flood risk study carried out in the State. The Plans set out the measures proposed to address the flood risk nationally, and include 19 new flood relief schemes to protect towns in the catchment of the Shannon River in particular, in addition to the scheme underway in Athlone due to be completed in 2021.

Flood Relief Works have already been completed in a number of areas in Limerick City, including Clancy's Stand and Harry's Mall (mid 2000's) and Howley's Quay (2012).

In King's Island (Limerick City), funding was provided by the Office of Public Works to Limerick City and County Council for preliminary flood defences involving the construction of sheet piling behind an embankment, completed in 2014, and for advance works flood defence works on Verdant Place, completed in 2017. Consultants were appointed in 2015 to develop the

permanent flood relief scheme for King's Island and it is estimated that the full scheme will protect approximately 450 residential and 23 commercial properties. Limerick City and County Council is scheduled to lodge a planning application with An Bord Pleanála later this year, with an anticipated construction completion date approximately two years thereafter.

In Athlone (Co. Westmeath), the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Westmeath County Council (WCC) are working together to advance flood relief works for the town with WCC as the Contracting Authority and OPW funding the costs of the works in addition to undertaking the construction works with its own workforce. Engineering consultants were appointed in April 2017, to identify appropriate flood risk alleviation measures for Athlone. The Option Appraisal Report identified eight discrete cells of flood defence works. These flood cells are each being progressed individually under Part 8 or Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations. It is anticipated that the construction works for the Athlone Flood Alleviation Scheme will be completed during 2021.

Consultants have also been commissioned by the OPW and/or the relevant Local Authority to undertake the design, development and planning of Flood Relief Schemes in Springfield (Co. Clare) and Castleconnell (Co. Limerick). Procurement is scheduled to commence in the coming months to appoint Engineering Consultants for the design, development and planning of Flood Relief Schemes in Limerick City & Environs, Leitrim Village and Carrick-on-Shannon (Co. Leitrim), and Killaloe/Ballina (Co. Clare/Tipperary). It is intended to progress the development of flood relief schemes in Dromod (Co. Leitrim) and Portumna (Co. Galway) within the lifetime of the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027.

The Government also established the Shannon Flood Risk State Agency Co-ordination Working Group in 2016 to support existing plans in place to address flooding on the Shannon and to enhance the ongoing co-operation of all State Agencies involved with the River Shannon. The Group has taken a number of significant decisions since its establishment, including targeted maintenance activities at a number of locations, trialling the lowering of the levels on Lough Allen, studies to explore managing flood risk at the Callows and a study on the cause, degree and rate of restriction downstream of Parteen Weir. The Group is also considering a feasible long term maintenance programme for the River Shannon.

Government Expenditure

86. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the overspend in the health Vote for 2016; when the extra €500 million in expenditure was granted for the health Vote; when it was allocated in the Further Revised Estimates Volume; the area this funding came from; the reason a Supplementary Estimate was not required for the health Vote in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43992/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The initial Revised Estimates for 2016 (published in December 2015) set out an allocation of €13.149 billion of current expenditure for the Health Vote. However, these Revised Estimates were not considered by Committee or agreed by the Dáil before the Dáil was dissolved on 3 February 2016. In June 2016, the Revised Estimates were amended, and a total of €13.695 billion was allocated to the Health Vote for current expenditure. Up until that point, all spending was based on Section 2 of the Central Fund (Permanent Provisions) Act 1965 which allows spending up to four-fifths of the amount appropriated in the previous year's Appropriation Act. Please note that this was not a Further Revised Estimate; the Revised Estimates were simply agreed at a later stage than usual due to the dissolution of the Dáil.

The additional funding was provided to the Department of Health to deal with spending pressures, including overspends in the acute sector and PCRS up until the point at which the Revised Estimates were agreed, and to ensure that service levels were maintained in relation to health and social care. A Supplementary Estimate was not required for the Health Vote in 2016, as total spending was maintained within the overall ceiling as set out in the Revised Estimates (€14.109 billion).

Coastal Erosion

87. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when a decision will be made on an application from Galway County Council to the OPW for funding for a study of coastal erosion problems in Tawin Island, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44008/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I visited this area in July this year and met the residents.

I am advised by my Department that it is a matter for Local Authorities, in the first instance, to assess and address problems of coastal erosion in their areas. Where necessary, Local Authorities may put forward proposals to relevant central Government Departments, including the OPW, for funding of appropriate measures depending on the infrastructure or assets under threat.

In this regard, the OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme provides funding to Local Authorities to undertake minor flood mitigation or coastal protection works or studies, costing less than €0.75 million each, to address localised flooding and coastal protection problems within their administrative areas. Funding for coastal erosion risk management studies may also be applied for under this scheme. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial. The OPW has published guidelines for coastal erosion risk management measures and funding applications under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, available on the OPW website.

I am advised that OPW has not received an application from the location referred to in the Deputy's question.

Budget 2020

88. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of promotional videos on budget 2020 which were produced; the cost of producing same; the cost of promoting same on social media and other channels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44028/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department did not produce any promotional videos on Budget 2020 or pay for any social media promotion.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

89. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the

number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44067/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): No financial settlements (as defined by the Deputy's office), were reached by my Department in the stated period.

The detail of financial settlements reached by bodies under the aegis of my Department, and any inclusion of a confidentiality clause, is set out in the following table.

I am advised that the Office of Public Works will respond directly to the Deputy.

| Bodies under the aegis | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| State Laboratory | - | - | - | - | 1* |
| National Shared Service Office | 1 | - | - | - | - |

*Confidentiality Clause included

National Children's Hospital Expenditure

90. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether the national children's hospital will cost in excess of the €1.43 billion already committed to the project; when his attention was drawn to the fact that the cost will exceed the €1.43 billion; if the cost will surpass the €200 million reserve set aside for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44180/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The roll out of the national children's hospital is a matter for the Minister for Health and it is his responsibility to manage this cost within his multi annual capital envelope. As the Deputy will be aware the capital allocation for Health increased by €80 million in the recently published Budget figures. The increase in the Health capital expenditure allocation for 2020 takes account of the additional funding required for the National Children's Hospital, as well as the re-profiling of other elements of capital expenditure both within the Health sector and within the overall NDP capital envelopes. As such to date, there was no substantial charge made in respect of the National Children's Hospital on the €200 million expenditure reserve announced in the Summer Economic Statement.

National Children's Hospital Administration

91. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the public procurement representative from his Department on the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board has been replaced following the resignation of the previous representative; if not, the way in which his Department is monitoring the national children's hospital project both in terms of procurement and public expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44182/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Appoint-

ments to the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Health and all matters relating to this Board should properly be addressed to him. The Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) served on the Board in a personal capacity and not as part of his role as CPO nor as a representative of my Department.

The roll-out of the National Paediatric Hospital is also a matter for the Minister for Health to manage within his overall multiannual capital envelope. The Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board, comprising top officials from relevant Departments and Agencies, jointly chaired by the Secretaries-General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG), provides strategic direction and leadership to the overall Project Ireland 2040 implementation process. However, it is a matter for each Department to manage its projects, subject to the usual long-established arrangements for oversight, monitoring and management of voted Exchequer resources.

Further Education and Training Programmes

92. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the number of healthcare assistants being trained is being increased through FETAC and-or SOLAS training programmes in view of the shortage of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43866/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Further education and training programmes are primarily delivered or contracted by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). ETBs are funded to deliver these programmes by SOLAS, who also provide overall strategic direction for the sector.

In 2017, there were 3,764 individuals began courses that led to a Level 5 QQI Major award in Healthcare Support (ISCED code 900). In 2018, 4,202 individuals began such courses.

In addition, there is a new national Healthcare Assistant apprenticeship programme in development at Level 6 that is scheduled to begin in 2020.

Further Education and Training Programmes Eligibility

93. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if persons qualifying under the long-term illness scheme are eligible for training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43861/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): There are no eligibility rules in the further education and training area that disqualify persons holding an Invalidity Pension from participating in training courses. However, before commencing the course applicants should make a request to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) for approval. Requests are reviewed by the DEASP and, if approved, an exemption letter is issued to the applicant. In respect of courses where a training allowance is paid, the participant will not be entitled to a training allowance as they retain their Invalidity Pension Allowance. In some circumstances, the participant may receive a travel and subsistence allowance from the course provider.

School Accommodation

94. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 172 of 17 September 2019, if the accommodation brief has been finalised; if so, the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43892/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The details of the accommodation to be provided at the school in question are expected to be determined shortly. My Department will be in direct contact with the school authority at that point.

Schools Building Projects Status

95. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 216 of 9 July 2019, when the design team is likely to lodge a planning application for the project in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43895/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy is aware that the delivery of a new building for the school to which he refers has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB). He will also be aware that KWETB and its design team for the project, which was appointed in June, will now take the project through the various stages of architectural planning and onwards through the statutory planning requirements and construction.

The Stage 1 (preliminary design) process is underway since the design team was appointed and has not yet concluded. As the Stage 2A (detailed design) process must also be completed before a planning application for the project can be lodged, it is too early in the architectural design process to be in a position to provide the Deputy with a definitive date for when this might happen.

Schools Building Projects Status

96. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 17 September 2019, if a definitive date for completion of phase 1 of the project has been given; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43896/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The school building project to which the Deputy refers is currently on site.

The first phase, consisting of the construction of the new 8 classroom school is due for completion in Quarter 4 2019. The second phase is due for completion in Quarter 2 2020.

Schools Building Projects Status

97. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 174 of 17 September 2019, if tenders have now been invited for the project; the closing date for receipt of tenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43897/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy has recently completed Stage 2(b) of architectural planning and has been progressed to tender stage.

My Department understands from the Design Team Leader that tenders have been sought for the appointment of a Building Contractor. The closing date for completed tenders is late November.

When the tender process has been completed and the tender report received and considered my Department will revert directly to the school regarding progression of the project to construction stage.

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

Schools Building Projects Status

98. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 173 of 17 September 2019, if there has been further progress in resolving the technical considerations; if a design team will be put in place for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43898/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department continues to engage with the landowner and Kildare County Council in regard to the technical considerations crucial to the delivery of the site and the commencement of architectural planning.

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

Schools Building Projects Status

99. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 170 of 17 September 2019, if approval has now issued for the invitation of tenders for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43899/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): This building project 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 is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b – Detailed Design, which includes securing Planning Permission, Fire Certificate and Disability Access Certificate and the preparation and final checks of the tender documentation.

The process of Pre-Qualification of contractors to compile a shortlist of suitable candidates is now complete. The next step for this project is Stage 3 – tender stage. The Department will shortly be in contact with the school and Design Team in that regard.

Schools Building Projects Status

100. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 84 of 26 September 2019, if the letter of acceptance has issued to the preferred contractor; when the contractor will go on site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43902/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, the

delivery of the project at Naas Community College has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB)

He will also recall from my previous answer that a preferred contractor for the project has been identified and a letter of intent issued from KWETB in that respect. The letter of acceptance has not issued yet, but can be expected to issue shortly with a view to ensuring that work begins on site next month.

Schools Building Projects Status

101. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 169 of 17 September 2019, if authorisation has issued to invite tenders for the project; if so, when tenders will be invited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43903/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is currently at Stage 2(b) – Detailed Design.

The pre-qualification process to select a shortlist of suitable contractors has been completed and the Design Team is currently finalising the tender documentation.

Once this work is complete, my Department will be in contact with the Board of Management of the school regarding the progression of the project to the next stage of architectural planning, Stage 3 - tender stage.

DEIS Administration

102. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps he will take regarding the urgent need for class size reduction in DEIS band 1 schools to cater to the range and severity of the needs of children in view of the fact that DEIS schools have not benefited from the staffing schedule for the past few years and with class sizes of up to 29 in DEIS band 1 schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43906/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): DEIS Plan 2017 allows for a reduced class size in Urban Band 1 primary schools with the application of a preferential staffing schedule to these schools of 20:1 at junior classes and 24:1 at senior classes to support those students at the highest risk of educational disadvantage.

Posts allocated on the basis of the staffing schedule are specifically for mainstream classes and should be deployed accordingly. School authorities are requested to ensure that the number of pupils in any class is kept as low as possible, taking all relevant contextual factors into account. However, school authorities should, where possible, use their autonomy under the staffing schedule to implement smaller class sizes for junior classes. The staffing schedule is available on my Department's website at https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0019_2019.pdf

As the Deputy may be aware, DEIS Plan 2017 acknowledges the allocation of teaching resources to DEIS primary schools with the highest concentrations of children at risk of educational disadvantage has served to improve learning outcomes. It also commits to the evaluation of the level of teaching resources for schools participating in DEIS to be undertaken to inform future policy in this area.

In order to facilitate this a Class Size Working Group was established comprising representatives from the Education Partners, the Educational Research Centre and the relevant Business Units in my Department. This group has met on a number of occasions to consider class size in the context of improved learning outcomes of those most at risk of educational disadvantage.

This report is currently being finalised, and will take into consideration the feedback and observations of the working group members. It is intended that this will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Teachers' Remuneration

103. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the delay in payment to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43907/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The managerial authorities of schools are requested annually to inform the Payroll Division of my Department of all teacher appointments to their schools as early as possible during the summer to allow the teacher to be set up for payment through the Department's payroll.

The teacher appointment form in this instance was signed in the school on 9 September 2019 and received in my Department on 24 September 2019.

The appointment form was reviewed by staff in my Department and returned to the person referred to on 3 October 2019 as a required declaration had not been completed.

The fully completed appointment form and declaration was subsequently received too late to be included in salary payments issued on 17 October.

I am glad to inform the Deputy that the teacher appointment has now been recorded in my Department's payroll system and the person referred to will be paid on 31 October 2019. The payment will include arrears of salary due to the person.

School Accommodation Provision

104. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has identified a permanent site for the new secondary school which is planned for the Blanchardstown village and Blanchardstown west planning areas; when the school will open; if the school will initially be in temporary accommodation; if so, the location of the temporary accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43926/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): As the Deputy is aware, a new post primary school for the Blanchardstown area was included in the announcement of new schools made 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.

Identified site options are currently being considered by my Department. Unfortunately, due to certain sensitivities I am not in a position to indicate their location at this time, however,

the proposed location for the school will be made known as soon as it is possible to do so.

The school will be established in September 2020 in suitable interim accommodation pending delivery of its permanent accommodation. My Department is currently examining all potential options for the interim accommodation.

School Management

105. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to amend section 18(1) of the Education Act 1998 which requires all schools to have audited accounts in order to exempt very small schools from the auditing requirement in view of the fact it costs an inordinate amount of money compared to the capitation grant they receive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44010/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): It is important to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for transparency and accountability in the management of public money.

As the Deputy will be aware, Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 requires all Boards of Management to keep accounts that are properly audited or certified in accordance with best accounting practice.

All Boards of Managements of schools are obliged to comply with Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 and the arrangements set out in my Department's circulars 0060/2017 and 0002/2018 in relation to the operation of the Financial Services Support Unit (FSSU). This includes the submission of accounts to the FSSU by an external accountant/auditor who has a current Practising Certificate, Professional Indemnity Insurance and is registered with a prescribed accountancy body in the State.

I am satisfied that this is the appropriate mechanism by which schools can comply with the requirement to make their accounts available for inspection by me in accordance with the Education Act 1998.

The independence of an external accountant/auditor provides assurance to the Board and the State that the accounts are prepared in line with good accounting practice and standards.

Use of the standard templates provided by the FSSU will help to reduce costs associated with the employment of an external accountant. These costs may be met from the Capitation funding provided by my Department.

In Budget 2020 I was pleased to have been able to provide for a further 2.5% increase in standard capitation funding for primary and post-primary schools that will apply from the start of the 2020/2021 school year. This is in addition to the 5% increase that applied from the start of the 2019/2020 school year.

Oideachas Riachtanas Speisialta

106. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an mbaireann an ciorclán a foilsíodh le gairid maidir le díolúine ón nGaeilge a fhoghlaim le ranganna speisialta i scoileanna Gaeltachta agus leis an scoil speisialta i nGaeltacht Chonamara; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [44013/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Leagtar amach i gciocláin 52/2019 agus 53/2019 maidir le díolúintí ó staidéar a dhéanamh ar Ghaeilge gur maidir le scoileanna lán-Bhéarla amháin a bheidh feidhm ag na socrúithe athbhreithnithe agus, dá bhrí sin, ní bheidh feidhm a thuilleadh ag díolúintí ó staidéar a dhéanamh ar Ghaeilge maidir le scoileanna a bhfuil Gaeilge ar an teanga teagaisc iontu.

I gcás go bhfuil ag daltaí cheana féin aon díolúintí a deonaíodh faoi théarmaí na gcioclán roimhe, beidh feidhm ag na díolúintí sin fós go dtí go mbeidh a n-oideachas iar-bhunscoile curtha i gcrích ag na daltaí.

Oideachas Gaeilge

107. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an bhfuil sé i gceist aige polasaí a fhoilsiú maidir leis an Oideachas lán-Ghaeilge taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht agus le teagasc na Gaeilge i ngach scoil; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [44014/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar is eol don Teachta Dála, tá Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030 i bhfeidhm ag an Rialtas cheana féin. Is é aidhm na físe atá leagtha amach sa straitéis sin ná úsáid na Gaeilge agus an t-eolas ar an nGaeilge mar theanga phobail a mhéadú ar bhonn incriminteach agus a chinntiú go mbeidh an oiread saoránach agus is féidir dátheangach sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla araon. Cé go ndírítear go mór sa Straitéis ar sheasamh na teanga a neartú laistigh dár gcóras oideachais, baineann rithábhacht leis an nGaeilge a tharchur mar theanga bheo laistigh den teaghlach agus ó ghlúin go glúin freisin. Is é cur chuige foriomlán an Rialtais ná creat tacúil a fhorbairt agus deiseanna a chruthú inar féidir an Ghaeilge a thabhairt ar aghaidh ar bhealach nádúrtha laistigh de theaghlaigh agus de phobail.

Ina theannta sin, tar éis próiseas comhairliúcháin a sheoladh, tharla sé i mí an Mheithimh 2018 gur fhoilsigh an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta Plean Gníomhaíochta don Ghaeilge. Is plean gníomhaíochta 5 bliana é sin a bhfuil mar aidhm leis creat comhtháite comhleanúnach a sholáthar chun tacú le cur chun feidhme na Straitéise 20 Bliain agus díritear ann ar ghníomhartha sonracha, intomhaiste, inghnóthaithe, réadúla agus amshonracha atá le cur chun feidhme thar an tréimhse cúig bliana suas go dtí an bhliain 2022.

Tá an Rialtas seo tiomanta do na haidhmeanna atá leis an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030 a chur ar aghaidh agus do chur chun feidhme a dhéanamh ar na gníomhartha atá sainaitheanta don Oideachas, mar atá leagtha amach sa Plean Gníomhaíochta cúig bliana don tréimhse 2018-2022.

Ina theannta sin, thug an Roinn Oideachais Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-2022 isteach agus tá an Polasaí á chur chun feidhme aici faoi láthair.

Maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge sna scoileanna uile, tugadh faoi roinnt gníomhartha, a bhfuil na cinn seo a leanas ina measc:

- Forbraíodh Curaclam nua Teanga na Bunscoile do gach rang idir rang na Naíonán Sóisearach go rang a sé agus tá sé á chur i bhfeidhm faoi láthair.

- Tá tacaíocht chuimsitheach á tabhairt ag seirbhísí tacaíochta forbartha gairmiúla na Roinne Oideachais do mhúinteoirí chun tacú le Curaclaim agus sonraíochtaí nua a chur chun feidhme, agus forbraíodh acmhainní agus eiseamláirí chun cabhrú le scoileanna ina leith sin.

- Tugadh sonraíochtaí nua isteach do Ghaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí agus foilsíodh treoirlínte measúnaithe do Ghaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí.

- Tá athbhreithniú ar siúl ar Ghaeilge na hArdteistiméireachta agus tá dréachtsonraíochtaí le bheith réidh le comhairliúchán poiblí i ráithe 4 den bhliain 2019.

- Tá treoirthionscadal 3 bliana á chur ar aghaidh chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar chur chuige CLIL (Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teangacha) i leith an Ghaeilge a theagasc agus a fhoghlaim ar leibhéal na Luathbhlianta, na Bunscoile agus na hIar-bhunscoile agus chun tacú leis an gcur chuige a chur chun feidhme.

- D'fhorbair an Roinn córas nua próiseála pátrúnachta ar líne, lena gcuirtear faisnéis oib-iachtúil ar fáil agus lena gcumasaítear do thuismitheoirí a sainrogha phearsanta a chur in iúl i dtaca leis an tsamhail pátrúnachta agus le teanga an teagaisc sna scoileanna nua atá á mbunú.

- Mhéadaigh mé cistiú chun tacú leis an gclár Gaelbhratach. Is clár tacaíochta do gach cineál scoile ar leibhéal na bunscoile agus na hiar-bhunscoile é sin agus tá sé mar aidhm leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun

cinn ar bhealach struchtúrtha, pleanáilte agus taitneamhach.

- Tosaíodh dhá cheann nua de chláir oideachais mhúinteoirí trí Ghaeilge ar mhaithe le mé-adú a dhéanamh ar an líon múinteoirí a bhfuil cumas acu Gaeloideachas ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar i scoileanna.

Tá an Ghaeilge ina cuid dár gcultúr agus dár n-oidhreacht agus tá sé mar thosaíocht ag an Rialtas seo an teanga a chur chun cinn agus a chosaint.

Apprenticeship Programmes

108. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average cost of creating and supporting each apprenticeship place with reference to the sector in which the apprenticeship is. [44025/19]

109. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department meets the cost of third level study for apprentices enrolled in a relevant apprenticeship. [44026/19]

110. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average cost of enrolling a person in a QQI level 5, 6 and 7 apprenticeship, respectively. [44027/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 to 110, inclusive, together.

The Higher Education Authority meets the cost of providing off-the-job training for apprentices in higher education institutions, with the apprentices themselves paying the Annual Student Contribution (ASC).

The ASC charged to craft apprentices is calculated on a pro rata basis of the time which they spend in higher education institutions 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 institution. Pro rata amounts are also charged to apprentices on new apprenticeship programmes that include a period in a higher education institution. These amounts vary based on the time

spent in the institution.

The total estimated annual cost per apprentice in craft apprenticeships, which span the construction, engineering, electrical and motor mechanics sectors is €7,159. This figure comes from the recently published Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Spending Review of Apprenticeships.

The review also provides an average annual cost of €9,877 for new apprenticeships but as this figure includes the development costs for these new programmes, it somewhat overstates the true ongoing cost of providing new apprenticeship places. Due to the majority of these programmes only coming into operation in recent years and the overall population being relatively low there is insufficient information to derive a reliable average cost, however this will be kept under review as greater numbers come on stream. The new apprenticeships span a wide range of sectors, including biopharma, finance, hairdressing, hospitality and food and ICT.

School Therapy Services

111. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will report on the roll-out of in-school and preschool therapy services; the number of schools now benefitting from such services; his plans to extend the service nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44042/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Deputy will be aware that a demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services was introduced for the 2018/19 school year.

The demonstration project has been developed by a Working Group which includes representatives from the Departments of Education, Children and Youth Affairs, Health, and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The project is being managed and co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education with clinical support also being provided by two HSE Therapy Managers which have been assigned to the project.

The purpose of the project is to test a model of tailored therapeutic supports that allows for early intervention in terms of providing speech and language and occupational therapy within 'educational settings'. This innovative pilot will complement existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare, and West Wicklow.

This region has been selected to ensure that the pre-school and in-school therapy model can be tested in both urban and rural locations and with a suitable mix of various types of schools and pre-schools.

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

75 Pre-school settings associated with primary schools participating in the project are being included in order to provide for therapy interventions to be made at the earliest possible time and to create linkages between pre-school and primary school provision.

In total, 150 settings are participating in the demonstration project.

Although initially designed as a one year pilot, a Government decision of 12th February, 2019, in relation to the Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme, also agreed to the establishment of a pilot of a new School Inclusion Model for children with special educational and additional care needs involving up to 75 participating schools in the CHO 7 region over the course of the 2019/20 school year.

The demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services is therefore continuing, as part of the School Inclusion Model, over the course of the 2019/20 school year.

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

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

112. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a higher education grant will issue to a student (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44049/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My officials have been advised by the awarding authority that the student in question was awarded the full non-adjacent rate of student grant. Payments for the maintenance grant to the student commenced in late September.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

113. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44060/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The number of financial settlements reached by the Department of Education & Skills and statutory bodies within its remit, and the number which included confidentiality clauses in the last five years is included in the table.

The Deputy may wish to note that the information set out in the table is not routinely compiled by my Department and that the management of litigation involving the statutory bodies concerned including the settlement of cases by such bodies is a matter for the body concerned.

| Year | Number of financial settlements reached by the Department of Education & Skills and statutory bodies | Number of financial settlements which included confidentiality clauses |
|------|--|--|
| 2015 | 14 | 4 |
| 2016 | 7 | 5 |
| 2017 | 9 | 7 |
| 2018 | 16 | 4 |
| 2019 | 15 | 5 |

| Year | Number of financial settlements reached by the Department of Education & Skills and statutory bodies | Number of financial settlements which included confidentiality clauses |
|-------|--|--|
| Total | 61 | 25 |

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal

114. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal system in view of the fact that some aspects of questioning may have an effect of retraumatising victims (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43854/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal administers two schemes:

- the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted and;
- the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted on Prison Officers.

The Tribunal is made up qualified barristers and solicitors. Under the terms of the Scheme, the Tribunal is limited to a Chair and 6 ordinary members who provide services on a part-time basis. It is entirely independent in the matter of individual decisions on applications for compensation.

The Deputy will appreciate that in these circumstances, I cannot comment on individual cases.

In relation to arrangements for the Tribunal, I can confirm that five Departmental staff act as Secretariat to the Tribunal. These staff receive applications and gather the necessary information from applicants and other stakeholders such as An Garda Síochána in relation to each case. When all required information is available, Tribunal staff send the file to the Tribunal for consideration and decision. Where a decision is appealed, Tribunal staff make arrangements for a Tribunal appeal hearing.

Each case is addressed on the basis of its individual circumstances. Tribunal members must be satisfied that all supporting documentation submitted is in order for example Garda reports, medical reports, vouched receipts for expenses, and so on. In some cases, as part of the medical data provided to the Tribunal, a psychiatric evaluation may be submitted. I would point out that the manner in which medical assessments are carried out and the information included by medical professionals in any medical reports submitted to the Tribunal are determined by the treating physicians.

I can further inform the Deputy that the Law Reform Commission in its fifth Programme of Law Reform published in 2019 has identified a review of the Scheme of Compensation for Injuries Criminally Inflicted as one of fifteen projects it intends to undertake.

Garda Deployment

115. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda public service vehicle inspectors attached to each division in Dublin as of 28 August 2019, in tabular form. [43870/19]

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. Very significant capital investment is also being made in Garda ICT, the Garda fleet and the Garda estate. In total, the Garda capital allocation has increased from €61 million to €92 million in 2019, which represents a 50% increase from 2018. The allocation for 2020 is increasing by a further €122 million to an unprecedented total of €1.88 billion. The capital allocation to An Garda Síochána is also increasing by 26% to a total of €116.5million.

This continuing investment in people and capital supports the Government's commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

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. The Commissioner is also responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, in light of identified operational demands.

I am assured however that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.

Information on the Garda workforce is available at the following link: http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Finally, I have been informed by the Garda authorities that there are 2 Garda public service vehicle inspectors attached to the DMR (roads policing) at present.

Prison Service Staff

116. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prison officers who left the Irish Prison Service in each of the past three years to date; and the number of officers who joined the service in each of the past three years to date in tabular form. [43871/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the following table sets out the number of Prison Grade staff who left the Irish Prison Service from 2017 to date; and the number of Recruit Prison Officers who have joined from 2017 to date. It should be noted that the figures for staff which have left includes resignations, retirements and deaths in service.

| | |
|------|---|
| Year | Number of Prison Grade Staff who left the Irish Prison Service |
| 2019 | 104 (up to 19/10/2019) |
| 2018 | 124 |
| 2017 | 147 |
| Year | Number of Recruit Prison Officers who joined the Irish Prison Service |
| 2019 | 167 (up to 19/10/2019) |
| 2018 | 181 |

| Year | Number of Prison Grade Staff who left the Irish Prison Service |
|------|--|
| 2017 | 86 |
| | |

Finally, the Deputy may be interested to know that it is anticipated that a new recruitment campaign for the Irish Prison Service will commence in Quarter 1, 2020. In the usual way, bearing in mind factors including retirement of existing staff, it can be expected that further recruitment will be necessary over the coming years in order for the Irish Prison Service to continue to provide safe and secure custody for those in their care.

Citizenship Applications

117. **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. [43883/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed 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 22 February 2019. Processing of this application is ongoing, with a view to establishing whether the conditions for naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, are satisfied. I understand that this application is in the final stages of processing and will be submitted to me 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.

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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

118. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44066/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): It will not be possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy within the time allowed. I will write to the Deputy when it has been collated.

Residency Permits

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the appropri-

ate procedure to be adopted by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44109/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can advise the Deputy that all non-EEA nationals need immigration permission to remain in the State. A person in a long-term relationship with an Irish citizen may be eligible to apply for De Facto Partnership permission to remain in the State.

In order to apply for De Facto Partnership immigration permission a non EEA national (the Applicant) who wishes to remain the State and is in a relationship with an Irish National or an Irish Resident (the Sponsor) must be in a position to provide documentary evidence of a durable relationship, akin to marriage, with evidence of cohabitation of at least two years on the date of application.

De Facto Partnership applications will only be accepted from individuals who have a valid permission to be in the State and are present in the State at the time of applying. However such applications are not accepted from persons who are in the State on foot of a short-stay visa or from those who are unlawfully in the State at the time of applying. If the applicant is a visa required national they must apply for and be granted an Irish D Join Partner visa for entry into the State.

Applicants must remain in the State for the duration of their application. There is no fee for De Facto Partnership applications. The processing time currently stands at 6-9 months.

Further information on applying for De Facto Partnership permission, including an application form, can be found on the Immigration Service website:

<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/De%20Facto%20Relationships>.

If the person concerned wishes to make a De Facto Partnership application they must apply in writing to - De Facto Partnerships, Residence Division - Unit 5, Immigration Service, PO Box 12695, Dublin 2.

A person wishing to join a spouse or other family member in Ireland should also refer to the Family Reunification Policy Document which is also available from the above webpage.

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 Eligibility

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and-or expected position in respect of entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44111/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department has no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from 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 from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the decision to deport in the case of a person (details supplied) will be revoked to facilitate further consideration of the merits of the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44112/19]

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 31 January 2019. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Orders are a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

The person concerned was required to present themselves at the Offices of the Garda National Immigration Bureau on 3 April 2019, to make arrangements for their deportation from the State. The person concerned failed to present on that occasion and is therefore recorded as a person who is evading deportation.

Representations have since 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 from the Immigration Service is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Eligibility

122. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected position in regard to entitlement to residency or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44113/19]

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. However, 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 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

123. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a deportation order will be revoked in the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44114/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I informed the Deputy in response to question number 113, which I answered on 19 September, the persons concerned are the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 27 June 2019. This Order requires the persons 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 persons concerned to submit representations requesting that the Deportation Orders be revoked, pursuant to Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). However, such applications would require substantial grounds to be successful.

Requests for the revocation of a Deportation Order are non-suspensive. If the persons concerned submit such a request, they are still required to present to the Garda National Immigration Bureau in the interim.

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.

Gender Balance

124. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the percentage of State boards meeting the 40% gender balance target in respect of their membership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44132/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The most recent figures, as of December 2018, show the average gender balance across all State Boards stood at 41.5% female and 58.5% male members.

The 40% target had been met in respect of almost half, 47.6%, of individual boards. The Public Appointments Service constitutes a model of best practice that can be used by Government Departments or by existing Boards to improve the gender balance of Boards currently failing to meet the 40% target.

The Deputy may be aware that, in March, the Government approved a set of recommendations made by the Inter-Departmental Group on Gender Balance on State Boards to promote greater gender balance in this area. Key actions include increasing the visibility of this issue, changing behaviour, and strengthening governance and reporting mechanisms. I can advise the Deputy that progress made on implementing these recommendations will be reviewed at the end of this year.

More information on these recommendations is available on my Department's website at this link: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR19000069>.

Garda Stations

125. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations; the number that do not have access to the PULSE system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44133/19]

126. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda stations that do not have access to broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44134/19]

127. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason some Garda stations do not have access to the PULSE system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44135/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 to 127, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, there has been an unprecedented level of investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years. An allocation of €1.76 billion has been provided to An Garda Síochána for 2019. I am also pleased to have secured an overall increase of €122 million to increase An Garda Síochána's budget to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for next year. Very significant capital investment is also being made, including investment of €342 million in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána. Furthermore, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT resources and the networking of Garda stations, are matters for the Garda Commissioner in light of availability of resources and identified operational demands. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that broadband networks and services are used to connect stations to the Garda network for official purposes. All of the connections to the Garda stations are managed in the telecommunications branch of An Garda Síochána to ensure the speed of the network connection meets the requirements of the particular location.

There are 565 Garda stations in the State. I am informed by An Garda Síochána that the number which are networked can vary but that at present, 519 of these stations are fully net-

worked.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that any member attached to a currently unconnected station can access PULSE at their local district station. Members in non-networked locations can also contact the Garda Information Services Center (GISC) or an associated networked station if required.

I am further advised by the Garda authorities that options for providing members attached to those remaining stations not yet networked with local access to Garda ICT services are actively being explored. This includes an assessment of the availability or otherwise of local broadband services and/or the provision of mobile technology.

Garda Recruitment

128. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full-year cost of hiring an additional ten members of An Garda Síochána; the cost of those members for the second, third, fourth and fifth year, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44136/19]

129. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full-year cost of hiring an additional 100 members of An Garda Síochána; the cost of those members for the second, third, fourth and fifth year, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44137/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 128 and 129 together.

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 investment amounting to €92 million. I am pleased to have secured an overall increase of €122 million to increase An Garda Síochána's budget for 2020 to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for next year in addition to €116million in capital investment. This level of funding will allow the Garda Commissioner to recruit up to 700 new Gardaí next year and additional Garda staff, the balance of which will be an operational matter for the Commissioner to decide.

This ongoing investment is intended to support growth in the organisation as well as the ambitious Garda reform plan, with the overall goal of ensuring a visible, professional and effective policing service to all our communities, urban and rural, now and into the future.

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 matter 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 2,800 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 through-

out 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 following table outlines the approximate cost of hiring an additional 10 members and an additional 100 members of An Garda Síochána in 2020 and the costs of those members for the second, third, fourth and fifth year. I am further informed that this estimate assumes that all new recruits commence training on 1 January 2020.

| Number of Recruits | Year 1 - 2020 | Year 2 - 2021 | Year 3 - 2022 | Year 4 - 2023 | Year 5 - 2024 |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 10 | 239,071 | 467,545 | 497,016 | 533,931 | 560,757 |
| 100 | 2,390,710 | 4,675,450 | 4,970,160 | 5,339,310 | 5,607,570 |

I am further informed that 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. Finally, I am informed that the annual cost will increase as the members move up the Garda pay scale each year.

Garda Civilian Staff

130. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full-year cost of hiring an additional 100 civilian staff to An Garda Síochána; the cost of those staff for the second, third, fourth and fifth year, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44138/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware in accordance with section 26(1)(b) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner has statutory responsibility for the recruitment of civilian staff and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the information requested and when it is received I will write directly to the Deputy.

Probation and Welfare Service Staff

131. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of probation officers in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44139/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Probation Service is the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders in our communities. It is committed to working to reduce offending, create safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation. The Probation Service has a national remit with services delivered locally by staff based in 35 community based offices across the country as well as staff based in all twelve prisons.

I am informed that the following table sets out the information requested by the Deputy, namely the number of full-time equivalent Probation Officers from 2008 and to date in 2019.

| Year | Number of Probation Officers FTE |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2008 | 248.6 |
| 2009 | 232.4 |
| 2010 | 224.6 |
| 2011 | 225.1 |
| 2012 | 217.8 |
| 2013 | 215.7 |
| 2014 | 216.8 |
| 2015 | 214 |
| 2016 | 200.1 |
| 2017 | 226.4 |
| 2018 | 215.6 |
| 2019 (to August 2019) | 209.9 |

Probation and Welfare Service Staff

132. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full-year cost of hiring an additional probation officer; the cost of that officer for the second, third, fourth and fifth year, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44140/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the Probation Service is an agency of my Department responsible as lead in the assessment and management of offenders in our communities. It works to reduce offending, create safer communities and fewer victims through offender rehabilitation.

The Probation Service has a national remit with services delivered locally by staff based in 35 community based offices across the country.

I am informed that the current salary scales applicable to the Probation Officer grade (post 1995 recruitment scale) are as follows: Engineer grade III and professional accountant grade III (PPC):31,529 – 33,971 – 34,582 – 37,630 – 40,688 – 43,747 – 46,807 – 48,696 – 50,580 – 52,476 – 54,360 – 56,249 – 58,139 – 60,024 – 61,921 – LSI 1 64,022 – LSI 2 66,118.

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

133. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff working in the forensic science laboratory in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44141/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of Forensic Science Ireland, previously known as the Forensic Science Laboratory, is set out in the following table.

As set out in the FSI Strategic Plan 2019-2022, available at forensicscience.ie, demand for FSI services continues to grow, and I am pleased that Budget 2020 provided an allocation of almost €40m for the development of new laboratory facilities at the Science Campus in Backweston. Budget 2020 also provided an additional €2.6m in current funding, bringing the total

allocation to €54.4m.

The Deputy will note an increase in staffing between 2018 and 2019, whereby FSI implemented a new workforce plan in 2018, creating new positions in Health and Safety Management and Information Systems Management to support an expanded scope under the Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence and DNS Database System) Act 2014.

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Total Staff | 101 | 97 | 101 | 91 | 98 | 97 | 94 | 91 | 102 | 105 | 114 | 142 |

Departmental Staff Data

134. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department assigned to the office of Internet safety in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44142/19]

135. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff working in the office of Internet safety in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44143/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 134 and 135 together.

It will not be possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy within the time allowed. I will write to the Deputy when it has been collated.

Departmental Staff Data

136. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department assigned to the victims of crime department in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44144/19]

137. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff working in the victims of crime department in each of the years 2008 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44145/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 137 together.

It will not be possible to provide the information requested by the Deputy within the time allowed. I will write to the Deputy when it has been collated.

Prison Service Data

138. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the bed capacity of the Prison Service; the percentage that is single cell accommodation; the percentage that is double cell accommodation; the percentage housed in cells with three persons or more; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44146/19]

142. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of

prisoners without 24-hour access to in-cell sanitation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44151/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 142 together.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that figures in relation to cell occupancy levels and in-cell sanitation are collated by the Irish Prison Service Statistics Unit for publication quarterly on its website.

This information is on the Prisons Service website, in the Information Centre, under “Statistics and Information - Census Reports” at <http://www.irishprisons.ie>.

As of 21 October 2019, there were a total of 3,968 prisoners in custody. Single cell occupancy across the prisons system would result in a bed capacity of less than 3,000. Accordingly, the Irish Prison Service is not in a position to provide single cell accommodation to all prisoners.

Further and in any event, it should be noted that regardless of capacity in some cases prisoners are housed together for other reasons. For example, family members and friends often elect or are assigned a shared cell. Shared cell accommodation can be very beneficial from a management point of view, particularly for those who are vulnerable and at risk of self-harm. There will always be a need for certain prisoners to be accommodated together.

Regarding sanitation, it is important to note that there has been significant reform and modernisation of the Prison Estate in recent years which has delivered in cell sanitation to Cork and Mountjoy Prisons. The current Limerick Prison redevelopment will deliver in cell sanitation for all prisoners in this prison.

Garda Data

139. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of protective service units operating here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44148/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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.

As the Deputy will be aware, I recently welcomed the Garda Commissioner’s adoption of a new Garda Operating Model which will see the number of Garda Divisions reduce from 28 to 19. This functional model has long been recommended by independent policing specialists, including the Garda Síochána Inspectorate and is also 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.

The Commissioner’s plan allows for Divisions of sufficient scale to be self-sufficient in the delivery of services, which will include greater availability of expertise, including in addressing domestic and sexual violence in each area.

I am informed by Garda management that it is expected that Divisional Protective Services

Units should be rolled-out to the remaining Garda 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'.

Prison Mental Health Services

140. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners who sought psychological services to date in 2019; the percentage who were given access to those services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44149/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised that the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service provides tailored psychological assessment and intervention services for people in custody. Their primary focus is in relation to mental health and personality disorder difficulties, and other offence related needs.

I am informed that the Service operates an open referral system, in that referrals are accepted from all sources including self-referrals, referrals from family members, Irish Prison Service staff and inreach/community services.

I am informed that between 1 January 2019 to 21 October 2019, a total of 1,260 people were referred to the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service. Where appropriate, a psychological care plan is developed based on the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service stepped model of care. This aims to ensure the most effective and appropriate treatment is delivered, based on identified need, and includes evidence-based primary, secondary and tertiary care interventions.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the information requested by the Deputy, on the percentage given access, is not readily available and would require a manual examination of records. Such an examination would require a disproportionate amount of staff time.

Prison Drug Treatment Services

141. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners who sought drug counselling services to date in 2019; the percentage who were given access to those services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44150/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Irish Prison Service has informed me that there are a range of programmes, support services and through-care options for prisoners who wish to address their substance misuse. I am further informed that the Irish Prison Service engages Merchants Quay Ireland to provide a prison-based addiction counselling service. This include structured assessments and evidence-based counselling interventions, with clearly-defined treatment plans and goals.

The counselling service provides a range of counselling and intervention skills related to substance misuse and dependency. These skills include motivational interviewing, motivational enhancement therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and harm reduction approaches.

I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the number of prisoners that have sought drug counselling services to date in 2019 is 1,570.

I am further informed that the percentage of prisoners that were given access to those services to date is 86%. The remaining 14% are on a waiting list for a consultation with a Merchants Quay Ireland counsellor.

Question No. 142 answered with Question No. 138.

Departmental Data

143. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the services for victims of crime provided by or funded by his Department; the level of such funding in 2017, 2018 and 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44152/19]

145. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff working in the national office for the prevention of domestic, gender and sexual-based violence in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44178/19]

146. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding provided to the national office for the prevention of domestic, gender and sexual-based violence in each of the years 2015 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44179/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 143 to 146, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled and I will write to her directly when it is available.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

144. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of young persons engaged with by Garda youth diversion programmes in 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44153/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The Garda Youth Diversion Programme is a statutory programme under Part 4 of the Children Act 2001, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which focuses on preventing criminal behaviour as well as diversion from the criminal justice system and rehabilitation of children between 10 and 18 years of age. The programme is an essential part of Government strategy to help tackle youth crime, administered by An Garda Síochána, and it is very important that it operates effectively.

As the Deputy may be aware, the operation of the Garda Diversion Programme is monitored by a Committee established under Section 44 of the Children Act 2001, whose annual reports are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. These reports include statistics on referrals to the Garda Diversion Programme.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the number of children referred for consideration under the Garda Diversion Programme in 2017 was 10,607. The figures for 2018 and to date in 2019 are not yet available. However, I am informed the 2018 Report will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas before the end of this year.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that an expert Steering Group is currently developing a new Youth Justice Strategy, including a review of the Children Act. The Steering Group commenced its work in February and has had a series of meetings during this year which will continue into next year.

The Group is tasked with advising and guiding the development of the new Strategy, including consideration of the full range of issues connected to children and young people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, from early intervention and preventative work, including family support, diversion from crime, through to court processes and facilities, supervision of offenders, detention and reintegration and support post release. It is intended to have a draft Strategy for public consultation by the end of this year and that the Strategy will be finalised in the first half of 2020.

Questions Nos. 145 and 146 answered with Question No. 143.

Work Permits Data

147. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the number of work permits is being increased to allow for the genuine shortage that is impacting on hospitals and the community and nursing home sectors; if she has met or written to the Minister for Health to discuss same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43866/19]

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 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 a review in March 2019, the role of Healthcare Assistant was not proposed for amendment at that 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 to clearly demonstrate efforts to address sectoral recruitment/retention issues and 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.

A further review of the Occupational Lists is currently underway. Submissions received, including those for the role of healthcare assistant, 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.

Equine Industry

148. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the financial supports available to a private equestrian centre that wishes to expand its business; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43872/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Across Government, we are providing a wide range of firm-level supports to ensure our businesses can start, grow and scale in Ireland. The Local Enterprise Offices are the first-stop-shop for all businesses in every county, and will be able to help guide entrepreneurs and business owners on the most appropriate supports for their circumstances. Alternatively, the full range of supports available to Irish businesses can be accessed through my Department's dedicated SME web-portal at www.supportingsmes.gov.ie.

Without more detailed information on, for example, the size of the business described or its number of employees, it is difficult to identify which specific supports may be most relevant to the business. However, it is most likely that an expansion by such a business would be suitable for funding under the Future Growth Loan Scheme, which provides funding for long-term strategic investment.

This scheme makes up to €300 million worth of loans available with a term of eight to ten years and is open to eligible Irish businesses, including those in the agriculture and seafood sectors. Finance provided under the scheme is competitively priced and has favourable terms, for example, no security is required for loans up to €500,000. Loans to businesses under the scheme can be used to fund investments in equipment, machinery, buildings and associated overhead costs for organisational and/or process innovation.

This scheme features a two-stage application process. Applications for eligibility under the scheme are made through the SBCI website. The SBCI assesses the applications and successful applicants are issued an eligibility reference number, which they can then use to apply for a loan under the scheme with one of the participating finance providers. Approval of loans is subject to the finance providers' own credit policies and procedures.

As of 18 October, there have been 1,551 successful applications for eligibility under the scheme, of which 376 have progressed to sanction at bank level to a total value of €64.39 million.

I am committed to ensuring that every business with growth ambition has access to the most appropriate and coherent set of supports to meet their needs. To that end, my Department has recently released an Overview of Government Supports for Indigenous Businesses, which is available on my Department's website.

Work Permits Data

149. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has listed healthcare assistants as one of the groups that should receive work permits in view of the shortage of same here and across the EU; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43880/19]

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 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 a review in March 2019, the role of Healthcare Assistant was not proposed for amendment at that 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 to clearly demonstrate efforts to address sectoral recruitment/retention issues and 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.

A further review of the Occupational Lists is currently underway. Submissions received, including those for the role of healthcare assistant, 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.

IDA Ireland Portfolio

150. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 229 of 10 July 2019, if there has been success in marketing the site by the IDA; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43894/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As I have indicated previously, the IDA met with the new owners of the Liffey Business Campus last December. The Agency has been provided with marketing information for the site and it continues to actively market the campus to potential investors looking to locate or expand in County Kildare.

More broadly, the Agency's efforts to attract more investment to Kildare will be assisted by the County's already strong profile as a home to overseas firms in the Technology, Financial Services and Pharmaceuticals sectors. IDA client companies such as Intel, Pfizer, and International Fund Services are all located there and continue to perform well. There are now almost 8,900 people employed across 29 IDA client companies in Kildare with 386 net new foreign direct investment (FDI) jobs added in 2018. I am hopeful that this positive trend will continue as the IDA continues to engage with their clients to create new jobs and source new investment

for County Kildare.

Departmental Funding

151. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding provided to the health innovation hub in each year since 2012. [43913/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A pilot project was established in 2012, based in University College Cork, as a precursor to the establishment of a National Health Innovation Hub in order to test the Hub model.

An independent evaluation of the pilot was carried out in Q2 2014 and concluded that the Health Innovation Hub has the potential to be a vital component of national innovation infrastructure and its value has been recognised by the relevant stakeholders in the healthcare sector. On the basis of this positive evaluation, Government agreed in July 2014 to establish the Hub at a national level with direct financial support from Enterprise Ireland and in-kind support from the HSE including assigned staff.

The National Health Innovation Hub (Health Innovation Hub Ireland), a joint initiative of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health, was launched in 2016.

Direct payments by Enterprise Ireland to the Health Innovation Hub in each year 2013-2018 are as follows:

| 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| €87,091 | €183,858 | €201,581 | €500,803 | €688,029 | €426,343 |

No payment was made in 2012.

Local Enterprise Offices Data

152. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of full and part-time staff employed in local enterprise offices nationally and by county in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the current and capital funding allocated to LEOs in each of the years 2016 to 2019 and in budget 2020, including staff and non-staff costs; the number of LEOs in each county and local authority; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43997/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the overall administration of the Local Enterprise Offices in partnership with my Department and the Local Authorities. This is a partnership which is working extremely well. The LEOs working locally on the ground are at the coalface of business supports for micro businesses in all their variations throughout Ireland and understand the needs of their local business community.

The data requested for the Local Enterprise Offices is presented as follows in tabular form and includes all data in respect of the years 2016 to 2019. With regard to Budget 2020 and the data for the coming year, the Deputy will be aware that Budget 2020 sets out the Current and Capital ceilings for my Department (€339 million and €632 million respectively). However, the definitive allocations for each of the subheads will not be finalised until the annual Revised Estimates process is completed. The Revised Estimates Volume is usually published in early

December and will set out the final agreed 2020 allocation for each subhead.

Table 1 – LEO employee data for 2016 to 2019

| Local Enterprise Office | Total 2016 Employed in LEO | 2017 Total Employed in LEO | 2018 Total Employed in LEO | 2019 Total Employed in LEO |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Carlow | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Cavan | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Clare | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Cork City | 5 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| Cork North/West | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Cork South | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Donegal | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Dublin City | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Dublin South | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown | 7 | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Fingal | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Galway | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Kerry | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Kildare | 5 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Kilkenny | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| Laois | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Leitrim | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Limerick | 6 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Longford | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| Louth | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Mayo | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Meath | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Monaghan | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Offaly | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Roscommon | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Sligo | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Tipperary | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 |
| Waterford | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Westmeath | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Wexford | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Wicklow | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 176 | 184 | 194 | 204 |

- LEO staff data provided is the aggregate of full and part time staff. There is variation in the part time status of LEO staff ranging from 0.5 whole time equivalent (WTE) to 0.95 WTE. Therefore the provision of aggregate part time date may infer that staff are half time rather than 0.8 WTE which is majority status for part time staff.

- The total employed in the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) each year is as reported to Enter-

prise Ireland in the fourth quarter of each year to claim their pay contribution.

- The Pay contribution model was agreed between Enterprise Ireland and the County and City Managers Association with sanction from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation to fund 178 LEO staff.

- Local Authorities may employ additional LEO staff but these are not recorded by Enterprise Ireland.

- The data above includes those employed by the Local Authority, those employed by Enterprise Ireland and seconded to the LEO and those on the LEO Graduate programmes.

Table 2 - Current and capital funding allocated to LEOs in 2019 including staff and non-staff costs

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2019 € | Non-staff Allocation[1] 2019 € | Current Allocation 2019 € | Capital Allocation[2] 2019 € |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Carlow | 196,061 | 43,049 | 239,110 | 847,098 |
| Cavan | 207,745 | 43,049 | 250,794 | 792,034 |
| Clare | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 734,736 |
| Cork City | 304,626 | 69,860 | 374,486 | 792,495 |
| Cork North/ West | 331,345 | 61,074 | 392,419 | 1,056,299 |
| Cork South | 267,132 | 43,049 | 310,181 | 789,074 |
| Donegal | 152,194 | 43,049 | 195,243 | 1,093,809 |
| Dublin City | 390,395 | 89,163 | 479,558 | 1,507,726 |
| Dublin South | 355,106 | 61,074 | 416,180 | 871,411 |
| Dun Laoghaire/Rath- down | 292,201 | 61,074 | 353,275 | 978,108 |
| Fingal | 234,220 | 61,074 | 295,294 | 1,021,165 |
| Galway | 327,904 | 61,074 | 388,978 | 895,231 |
| Kerry | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 681,841 |
| Kildare | 321,320 | 61,074 | 382,394 | 1,027,173 |
| Kilkenny | 225,339 | 63,049 | 288,388 | 696,328 |
| Laois | 183,425 | 43,049 | 226,474 | 613,030 |
| Leitrim | 202,083 | 43,049 | 245,132 | 564,315 |
| Limerick | 333,364 | 61,074 | 394,438 | 1,115,829 |
| Longford | 198,323 | 43,049 | 241,372 | 629,481 |
| Louth | 191,828 | 43,049 | 234,877 | 732,094 |
| Mayo | 233,844 | 53,049 | 286,893 | 746,598 |
| Meath | 292,149 | 61,074 | 353,223 | 867,282 |
| Monaghan | 197,805 | 43,049 | 240,854 | 669,891 |
| Offaly | 196,158 | 43,049 | 239,207 | 638,162 |
| Roscommon | 195,246 | 43,049 | 238,295 | 652,181 |
| Sligo | 207,745 | 43,049 | 250,794 | 647,714 |
| Tipperary | 228,889 | 61,074 | 289,963 | 1,034,612 |
| Waterford | 316,053 | 61,074 | 377,127 | 989,197 |
| Westmeath | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 1,077,426 |

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2019 € | Non-staff Allo- cation[1] 2019 € | Current Alloca- tion 2019 € | Capital Alloca- tion[2] 2019 € |
|---------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Wexford | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 766,441 |
| Wicklow | 217,824 | 43,049 | 260,873 | 699,337 |
| TOTAL | 7,749,814 | 1,617,694 | 9,367,508 | 26,228,115 |

Table 3 - Current and capital funding allocated to LEOs in 2018 including staff and non-staff costs

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2018 € | Non - staff Allo- cation[3] 2018 € | Current Alloca- tion 2018 € | Capital Alloca- tion[4] 2018 € |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Carlow | 202,083 | 43,049 | 245,132 | 709,294 |
| Cavan | 194,422 | 43,049 | 237,471 | 636,384 |
| Clare | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 717,891 |
| Cork City | 308,238 | 61,074 | 369,312 | 649,018 |
| Cork North/ West | 316,721 | 61,074 | 377,795 | 995,345 |
| Cork South | 279,697 | 43,049 | 322,746 | 850,860 |
| Donegal | 153,350 | 43,049 | 196,399 | 1,011,456 |
| Dublin City | 390,395 | 61,074 | 451,469 | 1,314,870 |
| Dublin South | 319,704 | 61,074 | 380,778 | 830,616 |
| Dun Laoghaire/Rath- down | 319,120 | 61,074 | 380,194 | 950,397 |
| Fingal | 232,959 | 61,074 | 294,033 | 944,744 |
| Galway | 308,146 | 61,074 | 369,220 | 908,287 |
| Kerry | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 635,469 |
| Kildare | 318,896 | 61,074 | 379,970 | 849,951 |
| Kilkenny | 231,710 | 43,049 | 274,759 | 571,032 |
| Laois | 184,171 | 43,049 | 227,220 | 555,002 |
| Leitrim | 202,083 | 43,049 | 245,132 | 510,610 |
| Limerick | 340,422 | 61,074 | 401,496 | 1,024,146 |
| Longford | 196,130 | 43,049 | 239,179 | 513,855 |
| Louth | 167,207 | 43,049 | 210,256 | 675,980 |
| Mayo | 237,226 | 43,049 | 280,275 | 647,704 |
| Meath | 297,165 | 61,074 | 358,239 | 704,299 |
| Monaghan | 196,341 | 43,049 | 239,390 | 527,059 |
| Offaly | 196,158 | 43,049 | 239,207 | 585,078 |
| Roscommon | 196,239 | 43,049 | 239,288 | 522,104 |
| Sligo | 207,745 | 43,049 | 250,794 | 630,647 |
| Tipperary | 204,827 | 61,074 | 265,901 | 1,079,311 |
| Waterford | 316,053 | 61,074 | 377,127 | 910,442 |
| Westmeath | 237,373 | 43,049 | 280,422 | 852,133 |
| Wexford | 224,981 | 43,049 | 268,030 | 666,278 |
| Wicklow | 147,106 | 43,049 | 190,155 | 670,922 |
| TOTAL | 7,601,414 | 1,550,819 | 9,152,233 | 23,651,182 |

Table 4 - Current and capital funding allocated to LEOs in 2017 including staff and

non-staff costs

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2017 € | Non - staff Allocation[5] 2017 € | Current Alloca- tion 2017 € | Capital Alloca- tion[6] 2017 € |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Carlow | 202,083 | 71,049 | 273,133 | 590,295 |
| Cavan | 87,274 | 70,549 | 157,823 | 589,614 |
| Clare | 221,164 | 43,049 | 264,213 | 667,734 |
| Cork City | 277,966 | 61,074 | 339,041 | 687,095 |
| Cork North/ West | 325,440 | 83,580 | 409,020 | 982,054 |
| Cork South | 271,004 | 63,049 | 334,054 | 872,575 |
| Donegal | 108,695 | 68,949 | 177,644 | 969,591 |
| Dublin City | 390,395 | 61,074 | 451,469 | 1,073,471 |
| Dublin South | 319,429 | 61,074 | 380,503 | 758,994 |
| Dun Laoghaire/ Rathdown | 227,216 | 61,074 | 288,290 | 839,481 |
| Fingal | 175,841 | 61,074 | 236,915 | 932,777 |
| Galway | 340,865 | 61,074 | 401,939 | 825,879 |
| Kerry | 236,240 | 43,049 | 279,290 | 624,410 |
| Kildare | 321,214 | 61,074 | 382,288 | 680,999 |
| Kilkenny | 226,366 | 63,049 | 289,416 | 701,137 |
| Laois | 176,737 | 43,049 | 219,786 | 526,226 |
| Leitrim | 202,083 | 43,049 | 245,133 | 494,676 |
| Limerick | 338,684 | 61,074 | 399,758 | 1,145,436 |
| Longford | 189,080 | 43,049 | 232,129 | 482,290 |
| Louth | 112,065 | 43,049 | 155,114 | 624,785 |
| Mayo | 227,432 | 73,049 | 300,481 | 621,018 |
| Meath | 239,843 | 61,074 | 300,917 | 667,325 |
| Monaghan | 193,264 | 56,486 | 249,750 | 595,072 |
| Offaly | 200,688 | 43,049 | 243,737 | 564,203 |
| Roscommon | 190,232 | 43,049 | 233,282 | 508,788 |
| Sligo | 207,745 | 43,049 | 250,795 | 588,192 |
| Tipperary | 129,047 | 71,074 | 200,121 | 966,070 |
| Waterford | 316,053 | 61,074 | 377,128 | 918,610 |
| Westmeath | 231,840 | 43,049 | 274,889 | 835,096 |
| Wexford | 174,309 | 43,049 | 217,359 | 626,490 |
| Wicklow | 147,006 | 43,049 | 190,056 | 600,564 |
| TOTAL | 7,007,300 | 1,748,172 | 8,755,472 | 22,560,947 |

Table 5 - Current and capital funding allocated to LEOs in 2016 including staff and non-staff costs

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2016 € | Non - staff Al- location 2016 € | Current Alloca- tion 2016 € | Capital Alloca- tion[7] 2016 € |
|--------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Carlow | 165,860 | 97,750 | 263,610 | 427,688 |
| Cavan | 52,301 | 90,885 | 143,186 | 475,427 |

Questions - Written Answers

| LEO | Pay Allocation 2016 € | Non - staff Allocation 2016 € | Current Allocation 2016 € | Capital Allocation[7] 2016 € |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Clare | 175,356 | 71,750 | 247,106 | 673,968 |
| Cork City | 209,588 | 95,750 | 305,338 | 498,411 |
| Cork North/ West | 297,089 | 121,750 | 418,839 | 858,524 |
| Cork South | 281,403 | 112,750 | 394,153 | 766,217 |
| Donegal | 85,190 | 106,995 | 192,185 | 589,441 |
| Dublin City | 212,776 | 62,750 | 275,526 | 1,080,998 |
| Dublin South | 191,093 | 96,750 | 287,843 | 620,346 |
| Dun Laoghaire/Rath- down | 206,536 | 70,750 | 277,286 | 637,543 |
| Fingal | 106,553 | 81,750 | 188,303 | 823,739 |
| Galway | 249,599 | 75,822 | 325,421 | 559,946 |
| Kerry | 259,551 | 61,750 | 321,301 | 471,006 |
| Kildare | 211,210 | 70,750 | 281,960 | 612,913 |
| Kilkenny | 223,582 | 74,750 | 298,332 | 473,167 |
| Laois | 155,267 | 68,750 | 224,017 | 379,569 |
| Leitrim | 238,101 | 48,750 | 286,851 | 348,271 |
| Limerick | 305,982 | 80,750 | 386,732 | 1,022,419 |
| Longford | 195,968 | 48,750 | 244,718 | 360,475 |
| Louth | 103,867 | 65,750 | 169,617 | 679,414 |
| Mayo | 179,197 | 105,500 | 284,697 | 570,308 |
| Meath | 237,424 | 77,750 | 315,174 | 487,908 |
| Monaghan | 224,712 | 74,512 | 299,224 | 419,796 |
| Offaly | 198,853 | 48,750 | 247,603 | 385,274 |
| Roscommon | 166,598 | 58,750 | 225,348 | 364,009 |
| Sligo | 231,480 | 63,750 | 295,230 | 505,280 |
| Tipperary | 126,310 | 84,750 | 211,060 | 1,005,844 |
| Waterford | 258,906 | 94,750 | 353,656 | 697,900 |
| Westmeath | 228,448 | 64,750 | 293,198 | 617,826 |
| Wexford | 179,665 | 69,750 | 249,415 | 543,832 |
| Wicklow | 158,398 | 59,200 | 217,598 | 472,541 |
| TOTAL | 6,116,862 | 2,407,664 | 8,524,526 | 18,430,000 |

[1] Includes an allocation of €7,000 per LEO for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Marketing and Promotion

[2] Funding as allocated to each LEO by the Enterprise Ireland Board and any subsequent reallocations. This is not the same as funding drawdown/received by the LEOs as LEOs may de-commit funding that has been allocated to them.

[3] Includes an allocation of €7,000 per LEO for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Marketing and Promotion

[4] Funding as allocated to each LEO by the Enterprise Ireland Board and any subsequent reallocations. This is not the same as funding drawdown/received by the LEOs as LEOs may de-commit funding that has been allocated to them.

[5] Includes an allocation of €7,000 per LEO for Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur Marketing and Promotion

[6] Funding as allocated to each LEO by the Enterprise Ireland Board and any subsequent reallocations. This is not the same as funding drawdown/received by the LEOs as LEOs may de-commit funding that has been allocated to them.

[7] Funding as allocated to each LEO by the Enterprise Ireland Board and any subsequent reallocations. This is not the same as funding drawdown/received by the LEOs as LEOs may de-commit funding that has been allocated to them.

InterTradeIreland Funding

153. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the details of the FUSION programme of InterTradeIreland; the current and capital budget allocation for the programme in each year over the 2018 to 2020 period in tabular form; the number of participants in each year in the programme; and the maximum funding permitted to a successful applicant. [43998/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): FUSION is InterTradeIreland's flagship technology transfer programme. It provides companies, which require assistance related to new products or process development, access to a three-way partnership that includes a third-level research institution with specialist expertise and a high-calibre science or technology graduate. Over 80% of FUSION graduates are offered jobs by their host companies and many of these continue to lead innovation projects in the business itself.

During 2018 the FUSION team processed more than 400 enquiries which resulted in the approval of 79 projects for support. A total of 59 graduate jobs have been created this year.

In 2018 companies that had previously completed FUSION projects reported a business value of £37.2m/€41.3m and a jobs impact of 409.

The budget and number of participants is given in the table.

| Years | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Budget | £3.23m | £3.4m | £3.4m |
| Participants | 79 | 77 | 77 |

The maximum funding provided to the participant (Company) is €33k for an 18 month project

Enterprise Ireland Funding

154. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the current and capital allocation made to the competitive feasibility fund for female entrepreneurs of Enterprise Ireland in each of the years 2016 to 2019 and in budget 2020; the number of applicants to the scheme in each year; the number of successful applicants approved for funding; the value of approved funding in each year in tabular form; and the maximum funding permitted to a successful applicant. [43999/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My

Department, through Enterprise Ireland (EI), is committed to supporting female entrepreneurs to achieve their potential in global markets. Its main vehicle for encouraging female-led export businesses is its Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs.

The aim of this fund is to accelerate the growth of female founded start-up companies that have the potential to employ more than ten people and achieve €1 million in export sales. Under the scheme, companies receive up to €50,000 equity investment to enable them to reach key commercial and technical milestones which will ensure the delivery of their product or service to an international audience.

The maximum support available is €50,000 for a 10% ordinary equity stake in the start-up company and €1,750 for mentor assignments per company. The investment is released in two equal tranches.

The most recent Competitive Start Fund for female entrepreneurs was launched in June 2019 and a total of €776,250 was made available for up to 15 female led companies.

As EI does not differentiate between current and capital allocation under this Fund, Table 1 refers to the total allocation for each of the specified years. In relation to the Competitive Feasibility Fund referred to in the question above, the Competitive Feasibility Fund is no longer in operation. In addition, the Competitive Feasibility Fund for Female Entrepreneurs was not active during the period 2016-2019.

Table 1: The Total Allocation under the Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs in each of the years 2016 to 2019

| Year | € |
|------|------------|
| 2016 | €1,293,750 |
| 2017 | €1,552,500 |
| 2018 | €1,035,000 |
| 2019 | €776,250 |

Table 2: The number of applicants to the Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs in each year 2016 to 2019

| Year | € |
|------|-----|
| 2016 | 238 |
| 2017 | 296 |
| 2018 | 100 |
| 2019 | 96 |

Table 3: The number of successful applicants approved for funding under the Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs for each year 2016-2019

| Year | € |
|------|----|
| 2016 | 25 |
| 2017 | 27 |
| 2018 | 9 |
| 2019 | 15 |

Table 4: The value of approved funding under the Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs in each year 2016-2019

| | |
|------|------------|
| 2016 | €1,293,750 |
| 2017 | €1,397,250 |
| 2018 | €465,750 |
| 2019 | €776,250 |

EI is currently developing a new strategy for female entrepreneurship to enable ambitious female-led companies to scale in international markets, as well as continuing to focus on increasing female founded High Potential Start-Ups. The 2020 budget allocation for the Competitive Start Fund for Female Entrepreneurs has not yet been defined.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

155. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of financial settlements reached by her Department and statutory bodies within her remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44055/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In the time available it has not been possible to provide the requested information. I have asked the state agencies under the remit of my Department to provide the details requested and I will respond in full to the Deputy as soon as the information is collated.

Mobility Allowance

156. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health his plans to replace the mobility allowance which was terminated in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44093/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in 2013.

The Deputy may be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Health and I, brought a Memorandum to Government on proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following Cabinet consideration, the Memorandum was withdrawn at that time. I intend to revert to Government in due course with revised proposals to reflect the discussions at that Cabinet meeting and further discussions between myself and Minister Harris, on the best way to progress the Transport Scheme.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme, operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

The Deputy may wish to note that in July last, my colleague the Minister for Rural and Community Development, 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.

The Deputy might be interested to know that the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty T.D., has commissioned research into the cost of disability. The cost of disability can be defined as the amount it costs a person with a disability to achieve the same standard of living as those persons without a disability. This includes extra living costs such as heating; disability aids and equipment; medical and drug costs; care costs and transport costs. Following a procurement process, Indecon International Consultants have been commissioned by that Department to carry out this research. It is hoped that the research, when complete, will inform policy direction in relation to the provision of adequate supports to meet the needs of people with disabilities, from a whole-of-Government perspective.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport supports 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.

Vaccination Programme

157. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the shortage of the BCG vaccine here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43859/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy would be aware, the BCG vaccine is given to protect babies against tuberculosis (TB). It is important to note that the number of cases of TB in Ireland is low. Most European countries do not give the BCG vaccine routinely to all babies.

Due to a lack of vaccine from the sole EU supplier, the BCG vaccine has not been available in Ireland since April 2015. The HSE National Immunisation Office and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) have sought an alternative supply of BCG vaccine that meets safety, quality and effectiveness standards that could be used in Ireland. To date no appropriate alternative manufacturer has been found.

I am informed that in 2013, a joint recommendation from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and the National TB Advisory Committee proposed moving from a universal neonatal BCG vaccination programme to a selective BCG vaccination programme targeting high risk groups only.

Following this recommendation, the Department of Health requested the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to undertake a Health Technology Assessment. HIQA reported in 2015 noting that selective vaccination is more effective and less costly than universal vaccination.

Given that both reports predate the discontinuation of vaccine supply, the HSE were requested earlier this year to undertake an updated review of the epidemiology of TB in Ireland,

considering the public health impact of having no BCG vaccination since April 2015. This review will be used to inform an updated recommendation to my Department regarding the future provision of BCG vaccination in Ireland.

Home Care Packages Administration

158. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider carrying out a cost based analysis of the amount of home care support hours outsourced to private operators standing at 50% to examine whether this is value for money (details supplied). [43863/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Home Support services for older people are provided either by directly employed staff or by voluntary and private providers who have formal tender arrangements with the HSE to deliver the services.

The National Service Plan 2019 set a target to deliver 18.26 million hours to over 53,000 people, including 360,000 hours as part of an Intensive Home care Package. By the end of July more than 10 million hours of home support had been delivered nationally and almost 52,000 people were in receipt of the service. The latest preliminary data available to me indicates that this has increased to over 11.8 million hours by the end of August.

Despite this significant level of provision, demand for home support continues to grow and nationally over 7,000 people have been assessed and are waiting for either new or additional services.

I acknowledge that in some cases access to the service may take longer than we would like. However, the HSE has assured the Department that people 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 resources and as determined by the local front line staff who know and understand the clients' needs, and who undertake regular reviews of those care needs to ensure that the services being provided remain appropriate.

In line with commitments given in the Programme for Government we have made improved access to home support services a priority in Budget 2020. An additional investment of €52 million is being made in 2020 which will provide over 19.2 million hours of home support. This is 1 million hours more than the 2019 target and represents a substantial increase in service provision. This investment is focused on enabling older people to remain at home and, as appropriate, provision of hours will also be targeted at times of peak demand, at the beginning and end of the year, to ensure more timely egress from hospital for older people.

I have asked the HSE to address the cost-based analysis aspect of the Deputy's question.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

159. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the 686 persons who are waiting for placement under the fair deal scheme; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the figures have increased drastically since 17 September 2019 when there were 525 persons waiting (details supplied). [43864/19]

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.

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.

In the context of planning and preparing for the challenges of the winter period, the Department and the HSE have been considering a comprehensive approach to delayed transfers of care (DTCs). An additional €26m has been made available for the last quarter of 2019 to support the hospital and community system to improve patient egress. The investment is supporting home support and transitional care as well as keeping the waiting time for access to support under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) at 4 weeks to the end of the year. The HSE were authorised to take immediate action in that regard last month, and released significant support to over 700 people to take up places under the NHSS and over 300 transitional care bed approvals. My Department is continuing active engagement with the HSE with regard to planning for the winter ahead. I understand that, as of 21st October, there are 433 people on the NHSS National Placement List and the wait time for funding release is within 4 weeks on average.

Hospital Facilities

160. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated capital and current funding required to have electrophysiology activity in the cardiovascular laboratory at the Mater Hospital increased on site from three to five days per week. [43867/19]

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 Staff Data

161. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of recruiting three additional whole-time equivalent senior pharmacists for the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics. [43868/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I wish to advise the Deputy that the first point on the salary scale for a senior pharmacist is €61,641. When 12% PRSI is added to this figure, the cost per new senior pharmacist in Year 1 would come to €69,037.92.

The cost of recruiting three additional full-time senior pharmacists for the NCPE would amount to approximately €207,113 in Year 1.

Hospital Facilities

162. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when work on the new 20-bed cystic fibrosis unit at Beaumont Hospital will commence; when it will be completed; and when it will be fully operational in view of the fact it was included in the programme for partnership Government in May 2016. [43878/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the public healthcare facilities and infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to you in relation to this matter.

Cancer Services Provision

163. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health if resources will be provided to the oncology unit in Wexford General Hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43879/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Staff who are trained in the utilisation of fluorouracil (5FU) chemotherapy pumps are located in the oncology day ward in Wexford General Hospital.

Where a chemotherapy pump is used, patients will usually return to the hospital providing their treatment to have the pump disconnected.

If a patient wishes to have a pump disconnected at another location, arrangements can normally be put in place by the hospital providing the patient's care to ensure that a patient can be facilitated, depending on local capacity at the time in the second location.

Health Services Provision

164. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the locations to which he plans to extend a programme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43889/19]

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

165. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding an antenatal service (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43890/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

166. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a post (details supplied) at Cavan General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43891/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE Model of Care for Neurology, was developed by the HSE's National Clinical Programme for Neurology in collaboration with consultants, nurses, health and social care professionals and patient support groups. It provides a framework for neurology services, including for Parkinson's Disease patients, using international best practice and describes care provision using an integrated service approach. The model is fully aligned with the objectives of Slaintecare and proposes a hub and spoke model, with services provided as close to home as possible but with access to specialist services where required.

The roles performed by Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialists include identifying the patient's needs and coordinating their care; monitoring symptoms; helping with drug management; and providing emotional and lifestyle support.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospital Procedures

167. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in 2018 a team from hospitals (details supplied) carried out two operations on the damaged spinal cords of babies in the womb, the first surgeries of their kind in the UK; if such specialist foetal surgery for spina bifida will be available in here; if it is likely to become available under the treatment abroad scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43909/19]

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 Eligibility

168. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for home help by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43910/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Assisted Human Reproduction

169. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the commissioning of an evidence review of international public funding models for fertility treatment. [43911/19]

170. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the funding his Department and the HSE are providing for fertility treatment. [43912/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 and 170 together.

In parallel with the ongoing drafting of assisted human reproduction (AHR) legislation, officials in my Department, in conjunction with the HSE, have been developing a model of care for infertility, which incorporates a public funding element. This work has also included examining proposals for the allocation of a related €1 million fund which was announced by An Taoiseach in December 2018. Accordingly, options in relation to the parameters of such a models are being finalised and I expect to be in a position to make an announcement in the coming weeks.

The Health Research Board (HRB) report “Assisted reproductive technologies: International approaches to public funding mechanisms and criteria – An evidence review” was commissioned by the Department and published in March 2017.

This review examined the public funding mechanisms for AHR in different countries. It looked at the associated costs and benefits for the funder, provider and patient, the criteria for accessing the public funded service and the basis for these criteria in different jurisdictions.

The review did not indicate a recommendation or preference for a specific funding model; rather, it outlines the pros and cons of such funding models, the different aspects of models in different jurisdictions, as well as the different rationales underpinning such funding models. The evidence from the review has been informing the work undertaken by the officials in my Department in the context of considering policy options for a potential public funding model for AHR.

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 infertility services at all levels of the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Food Labelling

171. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the introduction of mandatory calorie posting. [43915/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is developing a General Scheme of a Public Health (Calorie Posting and Workplace Wellbeing) Bill and will conduct a consultation and regulatory impact analysis as part of that process. It is anticipated that the General Scheme will be developed by end of year.

The objective of this legislation is to require food premises to display calories on menus and to require all public sector employers to have in place a Health and Wellbeing policy and to report on same.

Maternity Services

172. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to St. Vincent's University Hospital; the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43918/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive recently published its Capital Plan for 2019-2021 outlining the projects to be progressed over the three-year period.

The Capital Plan includes the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital from Holles Street to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus.

The Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of public healthcare infrastructure projects and has advised that the enabling works for this project are currently underway, including the construction of the decant facility comprising the new pharmacy block and an extension to the carpark at St Vincent's Hospital. These works will facilitate the construction of the new hospital, which is expected to commence in late 2020 or early 2021.

It is important to recognise that all capital development proposals must progress through a number of approval stages, in line with the Public Spending Code, including detailed appraisal, planning, design and procurement, before a firm timeline or funding requirement can be established. 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.

HIQA Remit

173. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when HIQA will be given powers to regulate private health care. [43919/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was established in 2007. HIQA is an independent authority established to drive high-quality and safe care for health and social care services in Ireland. HIQA's mandate extends across a range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, HIQA's role is to develop standards,

inspect and review health and social care services and support informed decisions on how services are delivered.

HIQA operates under the Health Act 2007, which sets out the functions which the Authority is to carry out. HIQA has responsibility for setting standards for healthcare services, and monitoring compliance with those standards. It also regulates facilities providing care for the elderly and those with disabilities, and has a role with regard to inspecting some of the social care services which are accessed by children to determine if they are meeting the relevant National Standards. In addition, it undertakes functions in relation to Health Information and Health Technology Assessment.

Section 9 of the Act sets out the grounds under which HIQA may undertake an investigation into a particular service, or may be requested to undertake such an investigation by the Minister for Health.

The Act provides HIQA with the power to set standards for the healthcare services delivered by the HSE, and then to undertake monitoring programmes to assess compliance with these standards. In this regard, HIQA published the National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare in 2012; they represent the overarching standard which public health services are expected to meet. Flowing from these themes, HIQA have also developed standards for particular services, e.g. National Standards for the prevention and control of healthcare-associated infections in acute healthcare services. HIQA has in turn conducted a thematic inspection programme against these standards since 2012, which has resulted in the publication of over 300 reports of inspection visits to date. In addition, HIQA has also undertaken thematic inspection programmes in relation to nutrition and hydration in acute hospitals, and in relation to medication safety.

In such cases, HIQA typically undertakes both announced and unannounced inspections of healthcare facilities in order to ascertain the degree of adherence to expected standards. A report of the inspection visit will subsequently be published on HIQA's website, and frequently attracts media attention. In cases where remedial action is required, depending on the severity of the risk identified, HIQA may draw the matter to the attention of hospital management during the inspection and request an immediate response, or in less severe cases, will raise the issue in writing. In either case, an appropriate management response would be expected.

Further standards also continue to be developed i.e. most recently the National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Services and National Standards for the Conduct of Review of Patient Safety Incidents.

The Patient Safety Licensing Bill, in line with the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy, will see HIQA become the licensing authority for all hospitals and certain designated activities. The Bill will, for the first time, introduce a licensing requirement for all hospitals, public and private, and certain designated high risk activities in the community. It was approved by Government in December 2017 and underwent pre-legislative scrutiny at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health on 13 June 2018.

HIQA will be the licensing body, with statutory powers to require hospitals to undertake improvements and the authority to remove a licence from a service which is failing to meet required standards.

In advance of a formal licensing regime for public and private hospitals it is proposed that the Patient Safety Bill will bring the private/independent healthcare sector within the remit of the Health Act 2007. The proposed bill will extend HIQA's powers to set and monitor standards, and undertake investigations, where necessary, to the private acute hospital sector. The Patient Safety Bill underwent Pre-Legislative Scrutiny at the Oireachtas Health Committee on

26 September 2018. Officials of my Department and the OPC are continuing to progress this legislation. It is expected that the Patient Safety Bill will be brought to Cabinet next month.

It should also be noted that HIQA is now responsible for the regulation of medical exposure to ionising radiation. This follows my signing of the new Statutory Instrument 256/2018 on 9th January last governing the regulation of medical exposures to ionising radiation.

HIQA was designated to take on the responsibilities of the “Competent Authority” for Medical Ionizing Radiation, as required by European Directive 2013/59/Euratom. These functions formerly resided with the HSE, however the transfer of responsibility was required in order to ensure Ireland complied with the European regulations. Such a move was also recommended by the International Atomic Agency in its review of Irish regulatory practice in this area.

I have set out above the current responsibilities of HIQA, and the additional roles it is expected to acquire in the coming period. However, I can also assure the Deputy that HIQA’s role and remit will continue to be kept under review by my Department.

Health Services Staff Data

174. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of occupational therapists employed in the south Kildare NDT team; if additional personnel will be employed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43933/19]

175. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of speech and language therapists employed in the south Kildare NDT team; if additional personnel will be employed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43934/19]

176. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychologists employed in the south Kildare NDT team; if additional personnel will be employed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43935/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 to 176, 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 Data

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if the 1,000 posts for new front-line staff in the HSE primary care services announced in budget 2020 include the positions which were previously offered, accepted and frozen in the HSE’s embargo on starting newly appointed professional staff. [43939/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to

the Deputy on this matter.

HSE Staff Data

178. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number, grade and title of all HSE posts in CHO 9 in which interviews have been held, posts offered and accepted but which are awaiting sanction by the HSE for the new staff to begin their work. [43940/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

179. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health if the drug epliodex is available to medical card patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43981/19]

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.

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 not received a formal application for pricing and reimbursement to date for the drug Epidyolex. If an application for reimbursement is received, it will be processed in line with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Voluntary Sector Funding

180. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to an organisation (details supplied) for a project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44003/19]

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.

Voluntary Sector Funding

181. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided for an organisation (details supplied) to sustain its activities in the 2020 Estimates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44004/19]

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.

Voluntary Sector Funding

182. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the funding provided for a charity (details supplied) in each year since 2008 to provide services for persons with an intellectual disability; the extra funding that will be provided to it in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44009/19]

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.

Significant resources have been invested by the health sector in disability services over the past number of years. This year alone, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has allocated €1.9 billion to its Disability Services Programme, an increase of €346 million since 2016. The overall Budget for disability services in 2020 will be in excess of €2 billion. Discussions in terms of how these monies will be allocated across the Disability Services Programme next year are currently underway as part of the HSE's National Service Planning process for 2020.

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.

Maternity Services

183. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in respect of the proposed move of the National Maternity Hospital to a site on the St. Vincent's campus and his announcement in December 2018 that agreement had been reached by which an organisa-

tion (details supplied) would transfer its shareholding in St. Vincent's Healthcare Group and withdraw from the group and that the necessary legal documents would be finalised early in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44030/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The St Vincent's Healthcare Group has confirmed the process by which the Religious Sisters of Charity will withdraw from the Group and transfer their shareholding to a new company St Vincent's Holdings CLG. The Sisters have of course, already resigned from the Group's Board. I am advised that Revenue has approved the proposed revisions to the constitution of the St Vincent's Healthcare Group and the Group continues to engage with the Charities Regulator in relation to the constitution of St Vincent's Holdings CLG.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department is engaging with the St Vincent's Healthcare Group, the National Maternity Hospital and the HSE in relation to the legal framework which will be put in place to protect the State's significant investment in the new maternity hospital. The overall framework being put in place will unequivocally copper-fasten the principle that patient care in the new hospital will be delivered without religious, ethnic or other distinction and that any medical procedure which is in accordance with the laws of the land will be carried out there.

Home Help Service

184. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours required in the future to meet the recommendations of the health service capacity review in view of the additional home support hours announced in budget 2020. [44031/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Health Service Capacity Review 2018, published in January, outlines projections of demand and capacity requirements for a range of health services to 2031. As our population, particularly our older population continues to grow, key projections from the analysis indicate, for the period 2016-2021

- 12% growth in overall population;
- 59% growth in 65+ population; and
- 95% growth in 85+ population.

The review notes that if key reforms and productivity measures are implemented, a 120% increase in home supports will be required by 2031.

In line with commitments given in the Programme for Government we have made improved access to home support services a priority in Budget 2020. An additional investment of €52 million is being made in 2020 which will provide over 19.2 million hours of home support. This is 1 million hours more than the 2019 target and represents a substantial increase in service provision. This investment is focused on enabling older people to remain at home and, as appropriate, provision of hours will also be targeted at times of peak demand, at the beginning and end of the year, to ensure more timely egress from hospital for older people.

While the existing home support service is delivering crucial support to many people across the country, it needs to be improved to better meet the changing needs of our citizens. The Department of Health is currently developing plans for a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home support services for older people and adults with a disability. Included in this investment is dedicated funding for the testing of the new statutory home-support scheme

in 2020.

The design of the new scheme will involve the establishment of a model of service with a streamlined central system of administration to improve and simplify how people access home-support services. While the administration of the scheme will be centralised, the delivery of services will be co-ordinated at local level in line with a person's assessed need. A core component of the Scheme and the testing phase will be the implementation of InterRAI, as the standardised assessment tool for determining need under the new scheme.

Medicinal Products Data

185. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of making contraception free in 2021. [44032/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Working Group on Access to Contraception examined the potential costs associated with a State funded contraception scheme. The Working Group submitted its report on 7th October 2019 and I expect to publish it shortly.

General Practitioner Training

186. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioner training places being provided; and the estimated full-year cost of increasing the number to 274. [44033/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As GP training is currently the responsibility of the Health Service Executive, I have arranged for this question to be referred to the Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Eligibility

187. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of his request to the HSE to review and extend the arrangement for giving medical cards to persons with a terminal illness under budget 2020. [44034/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE.

As part of Budget 2020, I announced that the HSE would undertake a review and extend arrangements regarding the provision of emergency medical cards in cases of terminal illness. My Department is in discussion with the HSE about the approach to be taken.

Drugs Payment Scheme Threshold

188. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of reducing the drugs payment scheme threshold to €100. [44035/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated cost of reducing the Drugs Payment Scheme monthly threshold to €100 in 2019 is €25.2 million.

Drugs Payment Scheme Threshold

189. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of reducing the drugs payment scheme threshold for single headed households to €72. [44036/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated cost of reducing the Drugs Payment Scheme threshold for a single-headed household to €72 is €8.3 million, where a single headed household is defined as one eligible DPS patient on a family card in a claim month.

Prescriptions Charges

190. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of abolishing prescription charges. [44037/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The estimated cost of abolishing prescription charges for all medical card holders in 2019 is €82m.

Prescriptions Charges

191. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated revenue from prescription charges in 2020. [44038/19]

192. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated revenue from prescription charges in 2021 allowing for the full-year effects of the changes to be made by budget 2020. [44039/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 191 and 192 together.

As part of Budget 2020 I made a number of announcements in relation to reducing the cost of medicines for individuals and families. These measures are in line with previous commitments given in the Programme for Partnership Government and under Sláintecare.

From 01 July 2020 prescription charges will be reduced for all medical card holders.

Prescription charges for the over 70s will be reduced to €1.00 with a monthly cap of €10. This measure is expected to cost €7m in 2020.

Prescription charges for the under 70s will be reduced to €1.50 with a monthly cap of €15. This measure is expected to cost €7m in 2020.

The estimated revenue from prescription charges in 2020 prior to any reduction is estimated at €82m.

It is not possible to estimate at this point the revenue arising from prescription charge income in 2021 due to further budgetary changes which are due under the medical card thresholds.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Data

193. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing a community neuro-rehabilitation team in each of the nine CHO areas. [44040/19]

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.

Voluntary Sector Funding

194. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the additional funding which will be given to a group (details supplied) in view of the growth in the number of clients served by the group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44045/19]

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.

Significant resources have been invested by the health sector in disability services over the past number of years. This year alone, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has allocated €1.9 billion to its Disability Services Programme, an increase of €346 million since 2016. The overall Budget for disability services in 2020 will be in excess of €2 billion. Discussions in terms of how these monies will be allocated across the Disability Services Programme next year are currently underway as part of the HSE's National Service Planning process for 2020.

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.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

195. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a petition regarding stage 3 melanoma (details supplied); the actions he plans to take regarding the points raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44048/19]

197. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to an inequitable situation which has arisen between public and private patients in respect of the treatment of patients with stage 3 melanoma by a company (details supplied) which has sanctioned the use of immunotherapy for its customers, which has been proven to be successful to prevent the cancer recurring in stage 3 patients; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that this treatment is unavailable to public patients who have stage 3 melanoma despite his pronouncement earlier in 2019 that patients in public hospitals are not treated in a different way regardless of whether they have private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44053/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 195 and 197 together.

A standard process is in place for the HSE reimbursement of new drugs, and new indications for existing drugs. This assessment process is intended to arrive at decisions on the funding of drugs that are clinically appropriate, fair, consistent and sustainable. All cancer drugs which have been approved for reimbursement since 2012 have gone through this process.

Nivolumab (Opdivo) is approved by the HSE for reimbursement through the Oncology Drugs Management System for the following melanoma indications;

- As monotherapy for the treatment of advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma in adults.

- In combination with ipilimumab is indicated for the treatment of advanced (unresectable or metastatic) melanoma in adults.

The HSE is considering an application received for reimbursement of Nivolumab (Opdivo) for the following indication (stage 3 Melanoma Cancer patients):

- As monotherapy for the adjuvant treatment of adults with melanoma with involvement of lymph nodes or metastatic disease who have undergone complete resection.

Meanwhile, I am not in a position to comment on the business decisions of a private health insurer on the medicines covered under their schemes.

Hospital Waiting Lists

196. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [44050/19]

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. 197 answered with Question No. 195.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

198. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of financial

settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation [44064/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information requested by the Deputy concerning medical negligence cases is not readily available. Accordingly, I have asked the State Claims Agency to collate the information and it will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

My Department will also collate information on legal actions which were outside the remit of the State Claims Agency and will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible on the matter.

Primary Medical Certificates Applications

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a primary care medical certificate will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44121/19]

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.

National Children's Hospital Administration

200. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the concerns raised in the August 2019 minutes of the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board with regard to the satellite centres in Blanchardstown and Tallaght; the original budgeted cost of each of the satellite centres; if the cost of the satellite centres will exceed the original budgeted cost; if so, the amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44181/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (NPHDB) has statutory responsibility for planning, designing, building and equipping the new children's hospital. I have referred your question to the NPHDB for direct reply.

Greyhound Industry Data

201. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 79 of 15 October 2019, the number of runners, greyhounds injured, greyhounds that died or were put to sleep and the causes of the injuries and deaths in each greyhound track for the period 1 January 2019 to date in 2019, by month in tabular form. [43886/19]

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.

Please see attached the requested details in tabular form as supplied to me by Bord na gCon.

Instances of fatalities in greyhounds at stadia are extremely rare and are regrettable when they do occur. I have received assurances from Bord na gCon that best practice regarding veterinary care and advice is followed in every case.

[Injury Breakdown Q1]

[Injury Breakdown Q2]

[Injury Breakdown Q3]

[Injury Breakdown Jan - Sept]

Fish Farming

202. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions taken in respect of the commitment contained in the programme for partnership Government that the potential for the development of onshore close containment fish farming as an emerging technology will be explored; the long-term strategy for the development of onshore close containment fish farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43887/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Programme for a Partnership Government commits to exploring the potential for the development of onshore close containment fish farming as an emerging technology. Separately, my Department's National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development, published in 2015, proposes 24 actions to drive the sustainable development of the aquaculture sector and grow production in the sector by 45,000 tonnes by 2023. The Plan targets a 30% increase in production derived from onshore close containment recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS). Considerable international developmental effort is being put into land based RAS systems. A number of technological challenges need to be overcome to make RAS economically viable.

An Bord Iascaigh Mhara funded a 2015 study by the Irish Salmon Growers Association 'Potential for Land Based Salmon Growout in Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) in Ireland'. The report describes in detail all technical aspects of RAS production and system design and operations. It also covers important biological aspects of land based salmon production.

As part of my Department's €240 million European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme, an aquaculture Knowledge Gateway Scheme is being implemented by BIM. In close collaboration with aquaculture enterprises and researchers, the Scheme aims to develop knowledge, innovation and technology in the aquaculture sector to ensure its sustainable development. An important part of the focus of the Scheme will be the applied research and development on RAS identified in the National Strategic Plan. This may take the form of applied research undertaken by BIM on behalf of the sector or initiatives from industry operators or research institutions. Universities and Institutes of Technology can avail of 100% grants up to a value of €500,000 under the Knowledge Gateway Scheme to conduct research, studies and trials into RAS technology, while aquaculture enterprises can receive grants of 50% with a value of up to €200,000.

To further incentivise RAS developments, I made 50% grants up to value of €1 million available to aquaculture enterprises under the EMFF Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme for capi-

tal investment in commercial RAS developments.

In 2019, BIM is continuing its research into Recirculating Aquaculture Multitrophic Pond Systems (RAMPS), which has been underway since 2016, funded through a number of EMFF grants under the Knowledge Gateway Scheme. RAMPS is a novel production method developed by BIM. The system involves utilising cutaway peatlands and poor agricultural land for freshwater fish production. The system has the potential to significantly increase Ireland's aquaculture production of organic produce in a sustainable and cost-effective way. The project involves cultivation of perch and trout in earthen ponds utilising duckweed and algae for bioremediation. Subsequently, it is envisaged that the duckweed will be harvested and may be utilised in the cosmetic, animal protein and pharmaceutical sectors.

Meat Processing Plants

203. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the financial supports he will put in place for small abattoirs that process sheep skins and cattle hides and that may cease trading due to market conditions. [43904/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that small abattoirs do not fall under the remit of my Department.

They are approved and supervised by the the relevant Local Authority and therefore falls under the remit of the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government.

Forestry Grants

204. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a forestry application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43905/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application for Afforestation Grant and Premium Scheme, was submitted on behalf of the person named in November 2018. My Department is obliged to carefully vet all applications for the scheme, considering any potential impacts the afforestation may have. These include impacts on any archaeological and environmental assets and on the surrounding landscape.

The application was referred to my Department's Archaeologist and then to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The application is hydrologically connected to the River Moy SAC, which is an important SAC for salmon, among other species.

My Department's Ecologist is also reviewing the application and will consider the SAC and the peat soils found on site, along with any possible effects that may occur during the full rotation on water quality. It is likely that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be required. Further information on this will be provided to the applicant and their registered forester, when the Ecologist has completed the review.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

205. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the basic payment scheme and the area based schemes payment will issue to a person (details

supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44000/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application under the 2018 Basic Payment Scheme was received on 9 May 2018. During processing, issues arose regarding the eligibility of four of the land parcels declared. The eligibility review is ongoing for the parcels concerned. However, payment will issue in the coming weeks on the remainder of the eligible land declared.

An application under the 2019 Basic Payment Scheme was received on 25 April 2019 and, as above, payment will issue in the near future on the remainder of the eligible lands declared, pending the outcome of eligibility review.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

206. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44054/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is not possible to provide the information requested in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Inland Fisheries Ireland Staff

207. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of new personnel employed by Inland Fisheries Ireland, both temporary and permanent, in 2018 and to date in 2019; and the job titles of each. [43877/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Inland Fisheries Ireland's current authorised staffing level is 312 full time equivalent and it is also sanctioned to employ additional temporary seasonal staff on an annual basis. The details requested by the Deputy are in the tables.

2018

| Job Title | Permanent | Temporary | Grand Total |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Administrative Assistant Grade IV | | 3 | 3 |
| Assistant Inspector | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Catchment Care Officer | | 1 | 1 |
| Fisheries Assistant | | 12 | 12 |
| Fisheries Officer | | 39 | 39 |
| Fisheries Project Animator | | 1 | 1 |
| General Operative | | 7 | 7 |
| Ghillie | | 2 | 2 |
| Human Resources Business Partner | 1 | | 1 |

Questions - Written Answers

| Job Title | Permanent | Temporary | Grand Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Junior Data Entry of Log Books | | 1 | 1 |
| Junior Fisheries Assistant | | 1 | 1 |
| Learning & Organisational Development Manager | 1 | | 1 |
| Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer | 1 | | 1 |
| Research Officer | | 1 | 1 |
| Technician | | 4 | 4 |
| Grand Total | 4 | 73 | 77 |

2019

| Job Title | Permanent | Temporary | Grand Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Admin Support (Officer), Catchment CARE, INTERREG Project | | 1 | 1 |
| Administrative Assistant Grade IV | 1 | | 1 |
| Data Manager | 1 | | 1 |
| Education & Outreach Coordinator | | 2 | 2 |
| Fisheries Assistant | | 12 | 12 |
| Fisheries Officer | 10 | 39 | 49 |
| General Operative | | 1 | 1 |
| Ghillie | | 3 | 3 |
| Health & Safety Assistant | | 1 | 1 |
| National Strategy for Angling Development Director | 1 | | 1 |
| Payroll and Pensions Executive | 1 | | 1 |
| Research Officer | | 1 | 1 |
| Technician | | 2 | 2 |
| Grand Total | 14 | 62 | 76 |

Landfill Sites

208. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 533 of 17 September 2019, if tenders have now been invited for the project; the closing date for receipt of tenders; the number of contractors invited to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43901/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I refer to the reply to Question No 530 of 15 October 2019. The position is unchanged.

Electricity Grid

209. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the contacts and responses to date his Department has received from the ESB regarding a documentary (details supplied) earlier in 2019 in which it was revealed that the ESB had polluted the Dodder River as a result of poor maintenance of utility equipment and had shielded this from the public for many years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43917/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department can confirm that a protected disclosure was made to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in May 2018 on these and other issues and the matter has been and continues to be dealt with in accordance with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. The Department continues to engage appropriately with the individual concerned and the company on the matter which is ongoing. Nevertheless, these issues are primarily operational matters for the Board and management of the ESB.

Just Transition Fund

210. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he is taking to ensure a just transition in Bord na Móna in view of further concerns regarding the future of 2,000 jobs expressed by the group of unions following a meeting with management at the end of September 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43932/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Ireland's necessary transition away from carbon-intensive sources of energy, towards more sustainable, renewable energy sources, will have a significant impact on the workers in these carbon-intensive sectors, their families, and the Midlands as a whole. Government has committed to delivering a whole of Government approach, and to working with local stakeholders, to ensuring that a just transition is provided to those impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Further details of this comprehensive whole of Government response to support the region through the transition will be announced shortly. Budget 2020 includes a number of measures that form part of this response. These include:

- €6 million for a Just Transition Fund;
- €5 million for bog restoration and rehabilitation; and
- €20 million to deliver a new model to group housing upgrades.

The Just Transition Fund will be initially targeted at the Midlands and will support retraining and reskilling workers and assist local communities and businesses in the Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition. There will be further engagement with local stakeholders, including the Midlands Transition Team, on the application of the funding.

The bog restoration and rehabilitation fund will support the National Parks and Wildlife Service to restore to their natural habitat 1,800 hectares of bog. This restoration will return these

bogs to carbon sinks once more, which, over the next 5 years, will result in 28 million tonnes of carbon being stored. 70 jobs will be created in Year One, rising to 100 as the programme develops.

The delivery of a new model to group housing upgrades together is set out in the Climate Action Plan. The €20m allocated in the budget will be targeted at the Midlands and will support an estimated 400 jobs directly and indirectly, as well as significantly upgrading the social housing stock in the region during 2020.

I have also announced that a Just Transition Commissioner will be appointed. This Commissioner will engage with all relevant stakeholders in the Midlands, including Bord na Móna, the Midland Regional Transition Team, Trade Unions as well as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). This appointment will be part of the Government's Just Transition Plan, which is currently being led by the Department of An Taoiseach. Further details on this role will be provided as part of an announcement on the All-of-Government response to support the Midlands region through the transition.

Energy Efficiency

211. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding funding streams which are available to gym owners and fitness entrepreneurs to assist with the significant costs associated with purchasing self-power generating treadmills and exercise bicycles, thus ensuring the business has a higher degree of energy self-sufficiency and incentivises companies to be more green conscious, energy efficient and environmentally aware; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43936/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department supports businesses through a range of supports and grants administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

As the scope for reductions in energy or related carbon emissions from the technologies the Deputy mentions is limited, and as the focus for grant supports needs to be on technologies with the potential to deliver the most effective impact (i.e. significant users of heat or electricity), no specific supports are envisaged for this type of equipment. However, the Excellence in Energy Efficient Design (EXEED) grant scheme can be applied to any investment project where energy is a factor. EXEED has supported a number of projects in the Leisure Sector. Power generating treadmills and exercise bikes could form part of an overall investment in an energy efficiency project in a leisure centre.

Beyond the specific grant supports available, the SEAI also provides information and advisory services to businesses. These range from an SME guide to energy efficiency and case study examples of best practice to advice on energy efficiency design. New online audio-visual modules for businesses focusing on energy efficiency opportunities are also being developed and will be available in the coming months.

By availing of these supports and improving their energy efficiency, businesses can cut costs as well as carbon, free up resources that can be invested in more productive activity, improve their competitiveness, resilience, and green credentials. I would encourage all businesses to engage with SEAI to benefit from these supports.

Waste Management

212. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the impediments there are to banning single use plastic bottles. [44005/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Article 18 of the EU Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste prohibits Member States from impeding the placing on the market of their territory of packaging which satisfies the provisions of this Directive. Plastic bottles fall under the definition of packaging for the purposes of this Directive.

However, we are committed to leading the way in reducing single use plastics and are working both at a national and European level to tackle the problem. The Government has:

- Agreed that Government departments and bodies will no longer purchase single-use plastic cups, cutlery and straws
- Strongly supported new EU legislation on Single-use Plastic (SUP), which will ban straws, cotton bud sticks made from plastic, plastic plates and cutlery, plastic coffee stirrers and plastic balloon holders
- Commenced a clean oceans initiative to collect, reduce and reuse marine litter and clean up our marine environment (by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine)
- Commissioned a review to establish the best way to reach a 90% collection target for beverage containers, after which the Minister will announce the necessary actions
- Introduced a new law to ban microbeads (by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government).

We have committed to a 90% separate plastic bottle collection target and a 55% recycling target for all plastic packaging. Further consideration of measures to tackle single use plastics will be undertaken in the context of developing a Circular Economy Strategy.

Angling Sector

213. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to revoke by-law 806 relating to Inland Fisheries Ireland as it relates to salmonid waters in view of the fact that there was no appropriate assessment carried out prior to its introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44007/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Canney): The Conservation and Prohibition on Sale of Coarse Fish Bye-law No. 806, 2006 (copy attached for information) provides for the following conservation measures:

- A bag limit of 4 coarse fish in any one day,
- Prohibits the killing of any coarse fish greater than 25 cm in length,
- Prohibits the sale of any coarse fish in Ireland (excluding NI); this provision will not apply to fishing tackle dealers and fish bait suppliers who have been granted an exemption by Inland Fisheries Ireland.

These conservation objectives remain relevant and, accordingly, I do not think it would be appropriate to revoke the Bye-Law.

Waste Disposal Charges

214. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the special weight allowance for waste collection services will be put in place for those households that have a person with incontinence. [44041/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since mid-2017, a range of charging options have operated, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste. This 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 been examining this issue in detail and has engaged with relevant stakeholders, including representative organisations and the HSE, 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. However, there are complex issues at play in this area, which are understandable given the sensitive nature of the medical data in question.

Waste Disposal Charges

215. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated full-year cost of monitoring the prices of residential waste collection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44044/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): A Price Monitoring Group (PMG) has met on a monthly basis since September 2017 to monitor the on-going cost of residential waste collection to homeowners across Ireland. The group monitors 26 service offerings across the State (comprising 19 individual companies with several of those being monitored in more than one area). To date the PMG has cost €47,810. Further information on the PMG is available at www.dccae.gov.ie.

Climate Change Policy

216. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he plans to hold a public consultation process as part of the preparation of the long-term strategy of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44047/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is currently in the process of preparing Ireland’s Long-Term Strategy to meet the requirements of Article 15 Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. This preparation of this Strategy will be informed by Ireland’s National Energy and Climate Plan, as well as the Government’s Climate Action Plan 2019, which was published in June of this year.

In parallel with this requirement, the Climate Action Plan commits the Government to evaluating in detail the changes required to adopt a more ambitious commitment of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as part of finalising Ireland’s long-term climate strategy.

It is my intention to hold a public consultation on this ongoing work during November. This will build on public consultations that were already undertaken on the development of the draft National Energy and Climate Plan and the ongoing engagement that I am undertaking through a series of regional roadshows in relation to the implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

Trading Online Voucher Scheme

217. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount allocated to the digital trading voucher scheme in budget 2020; and the number of digital vouchers expected to be provided under the scheme in 2020. [44051/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is an initiative specifically designed to support small and micro enterprises to trade online. Funded by my Department and administered by Enterprise Ireland through the national network of 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), the scheme offers financial assistance of up to €2,500, subject to matched funding, to help small businesses to develop their online trading capability. This is coupled with training, mentoring and networking supports. Small businesses, with 10 or fewer employees, less than €2m in turnover, and that have little or no capacity to trade online, are eligible to apply.

The Trading Online Voucher Scheme budget forms part of my Department's Communications Programme budget for 2020. Detailed allocations at subhead level will be published in the revised estimates volume in December 2019. It is anticipated that in the region of 1,250 vouchers will be approved in 2020, which is of the same order as 2019. The Trading Online Voucher Scheme is, however, demand-led and as a result the level of funding drawn down by the LEOs is dependent on the level of approved applications.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

218. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44057/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): There were 4 financial settlements and 11 legal cost settlements by my Department in the five-year period to 23 October 2019. Four of these cases included confidentiality clauses. The information requested in relation to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. The Department will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisations in relation to this request.

Cycling Facilities Funding

219. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the projects and timeframes covered by the expenditure of €9 million on greenways and €146 million on other cycling infrastructure which was mentioned recently. [43928/19]

224. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding allocated by his Department towards cycling infrastructure and cycling projects; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [43923/19]

246. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding that will be made available to the cycling and walking programme and sustainable urban transport programme in 2020. [43975/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 219, 224 and 246 together.

I am aware there has been some confusion in recent weeks as regards Budget 2020's allocations to support active travel and greenways

I can confirm that Budget 2020 has allocated €91 million to the two principal active travel funding programmes which are mainly administered through the National Transport Authority. This is a significant increase on Budget 2019's allocation of €48 million toward the same two programmes.

Separately there is also a €23 million allocation for the Greenways programme, which supports leisure-orientated walking and cycling. This is a significant increase on Budget 2019's allocation of €13million toward the same programme.

Together these three funding programmes total €114 million next year and that includes the €9 million additional allocation, split evenly across active travel and greenways programmes, which arises from the introduction of carbon tax measures.

The Deputy will be aware that allocations made available under these funding programmes do not capture all public expenditure dedicated to active travel (or leisure-orientated walking and cycling); it also benefits from funding provided under BusConnects, the roads programmes, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and from the tax incentive available under the Cycle-to-Work Scheme.

I have no doubt the Deputy welcomes these increased allocations and looks forward, as I do, to the delivery of a number of important projects across the country in 2020.

Rural Transport Services Provision

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he can assist rural communities dealing with transport in areas not served by public transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44131/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public 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 referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Road Network

221. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if officials from his Department will examine the bridge that was built in Athy, County Kildare, on the Barrow that is impossible to cross in a wheelchair (details supplied); and if he will examine fixing the issue. [43876/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads, including bridges, is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993.

In cases where a piece of bridge infrastructure is owned by a party other than the Road Authority (for example by Irish Rail or Waterways Ireland) then it is a matter for the Road Authority to liaise with the appropriate party regarding maintenance responsibilities.

The issue raised by the Deputy is, therefore, a matter for the local authority.

Rail Services

222. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 163 of 26 September 2019, if there has been further progress on the approval of the capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43893/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I can confirm to the Deputy that, in line with the requirements of the Public Spending Code, my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have completed their review of the business case relating to this significant expenditure of taxpayers' money.

I will now bring a Memorandum to Government on the matter at the very earliest opportunity.

Driver Test Data

223. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the failure rates in Dublin for the driver theory test and outside of Dublin, respectively, (details supplied). [43916/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the information requested by the Deputy is held by the Road Safety Authority, I have forwarded this question to the Authority for direct response. Please contact my office if no reply is received within 10 working days.

Question No. 224 answered with Question No. 219.

Greenways Funding

225. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding available to connect greenways to local towns they pass close to along their routes. [43929/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Funding was awarded

to 10 Greenways in 9 counties in June of this year. Many of these Greenways have plans to include links to towns along their routes. In fact, as part of the Terms and Conditions that issued following the funding announcement, some projects were specifically asked to ensure certain towns were connected directly to the Greenway.

A big part of why I want to develop Greenways around the country is so that these local towns can benefit from the increased tourism in the area. We have seen the impact a Greenway can have on towns such as Kilmacthomas on the Waterford Greenway, and it is my hope that towns along these new routes will see similar benefits.

Aviation Industry Regulations

226. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the consideration national policy has given to the differential impacts of aviation emissions on the climate depending on the time of day and year when they are omitted; and the actions taken or under consideration by his Department or agencies under his aegis to reduce the climate impacts of aviation emissions by taking the time of day and year and weather conditions into account in the timing and routing of flights. [43930/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Ireland's policy to reduce the climate impact of aviation emissions is aligned with the strategies being pursued at EU level and globally by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. These strategies do not address the differential impacts of emissions depending on the time of day and year – further scientific work on the climate impact of non-CO2 emissions is needed in this regard and this is being advanced via ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection.

Ireland is however taking action based on the ICAO 'basket of measures' approach to address aviation emissions generally as follows -

On aircraft technology, Irish airlines have invested heavily in more fuel efficient aircraft over recent years. Irish airlines also operate with relatively high passenger load factors meaning emissions, on a per passenger basis, compare favourably with other airlines in Europe.

Operational initiatives to improve air traffic flows can also reduce fuel burn and emissions. The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) and airlines actively engage in such initiatives e.g. the ENSURE and Dublin Point Merge projects. The future space-based navigation and positioning system Aireon, in which IAA is a partner, will feed into optimised flight operations across the globe also reducing emissions.

On market based measures, Irish airlines have participated in the EU-ETS scheme since 2012. The inclusion of intra-European flights in the EU ETS has delivered around 100 million tonnes of CO2 reductions/offsets between 2012 and 2018. Since 1 January 2019, Irish airlines are monitoring emissions via modified EU-ETS templates to prepare participation in ICAO's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme in International Aviation from the pilot phase in 2021. CORSIA aims at carbon neutral growth in aviation from 2020.

Finally, Ireland supports efforts towards the production and use of sustainable aviation fuels that produce less or no carbon. Work in this area needs to be prioritised, particularly at an EU level, to incentivise research, production and use of those fuels.

Road Traffic Legislation

227. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans following the ruling by a High Court Judge that a section of road traffic law on the third payment option was unconstitutional (details supplied). [43938/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the judge in this case has indicated that she will give a ruling on 30 October. When the ruling is given I shall seek legal advice before considering what would be the most appropriate response.

Departmental Budgets

228. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the reduction by €115 million between the capital expenditure ceiling for 2020 for the Vote group published in the mid-year expenditure report 2019 and that outlined in budget 2020 will be accounted for. [43957/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2020 capital ceiling for my Department, published in Appendix 7 of the Revised Estimates 2019, and P. 9 of the Mid Year Expenditure Report 2019, was €2.058bn. My Department secured €1.943bn in Budget 2020, an increase of €357m.

The nature of multiannual capital projects is that the actual pace of delivery does not always mirror that forecast at the outset of the project. The Department, through its agencies, is able to estimate with accuracy when funds will be drawn down from the capital investment programme. Taking the two years 2020 and 2021 together our analysis forecasts that some capital expenditure profiled for 2020 will now fall to be paid in 2021. This re-profiling does not impact on the pace of any major projects.

As a result, due to the large number of projects in the pipeline and the various stages of progression of those projects, my Department was able to re-profile €125m or 6.4% of capital, without delaying projects presently in the pipeline. As part of this, I have asked TII to draw on their cash reserves in 2020, which they had earmarked for major road projects in 2021. This will allow a release in the order of €50m in 2020. The estimated value of projects re-profiled in practice is, as a result, €75m, or 3.8%.

Working closely with Minister Donohoe, I have a commitment from my Cabinet colleague that this capital funding will be returned in 2021 (with the exception of some €33m which I have asked to be spread over the following two years at the request of TII to suit their projected spending).

Separately, my Department received €10.5m from funds ringfenced for carbon tax. The €10.5m will be invested in EV charging infrastructure (€1.5m), Urban Cycleways (€4.5m) and Greenways (€4.5m).

The following is a table of the subheads where funds have been re-profiled and a summary of the specific projects.

| Subhead | Description | Amount Re-profiled (000s) |
|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| A.3 | Regional Airports | 2 |
| B.3.1 | TII Reserves | 50 |
| B.3.6 | A5 | 28 |

| Subhead | Description | Amount Re-profiled (000s) |
|---------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| B.8.2 | Heavy Rail programme IM-MAC | 15 |
| C.3.2 | Coast Guard | 2 |
| D.4 | Local Authority Swimming Programme | 2 |
| D.5 | National Sports Campus | 6 |
| D.7 | Large Scale Infrastructure | 10 |
| E.6 | Tourism Product Development | 10 |
| Total | | 125 |

A.4 Regional Airports: Completion of Ireland West Airport Knock Runway Overlay Project ahead of schedule has created the opportunity to bring forward expenditure, facilitating the re-profiling of funds from 2020 to 2021.

B.3.1 Grants to Transport Infrastructure Ireland re Capital Renewal and Maintenance of National Roads: TII will draw on their cash reserves in 2020 and which they had earmarked for major road projects in 2021. This will allow a release in the order of €50m in 2020.

B.3.6 A5 Border to Derry Road: Ongoing planning delays within the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland are delaying the requirement for delivery of a funding commitment of €28m originally profiled for 2020.

B.8.2 Heavy Rail Safety and Development: €14m of small projects can be safely deferred until 2021. This is approximately 5.5% of the total annual value of the maintenance programme.

C.3.2 Coast Guard: The Office of Public Works planning and scheduling of two Coast Guard projects, Greystones Coast Guard Station and the development of the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centre at Malin Head, mean that €1m can be re-profiled from each of these projects to 2021.

D.4 Local Authority Swimming Programme: The profile of projects expected to proceed in 2020 means that €2m can be re-profiled without impacting on the current project schedules.

D.5 Sport Ireland (Velodrome and National Badminton Centre): The project has not yet gone to tender.

D.7 Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund: The fund is at project selection stage and it is anticipated that €10m can be re-profiled from 2020 without impacting on the development of projects by successful candidates, when selections are completed and announced.

E.6 Tourism Product Development: €10m can be re-profiled without impacting on planned projects for 2020.

Light Rail Projects

229. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of conducting a feasibility study into the possibility of another Luas line in Dublin or another city. [43958/19]

236. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the proposed Luas green line extensions as specified on page 55 of the National

Development Plan 2018-2027; the status of the project; the projected commencement date for construction; the projected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43965/19]

237. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the proposed Luas red line extensions as specified on page 55 of the National Development Plan 2018-2027; the status of the project; the projected commencement date for construction; the projected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43966/19]

238. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the proposed Luas line to Lucan as specified on page 55 of the National Development Plan 2018-2027; the status of the project; the projected commencement date for construction; the projected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43967/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 236 to 238, inclusive, together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. As the Deputy is aware Project Ireland 2040 provides funding for appraisal, planning and design of LUAS network expansions to Bray, Finglas, Lucan, Poolbeg and a light rail corridor for Cork.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and our regional cities, including light rail.

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.

Transport Policy

230. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered measures to support carpooling such as introducing legislation to allow persons to reimburse each other for the cost of wear and tear and fuel without requiring a commercial licence or insurance. [43959/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy's suggestion is interesting and one which I believe could be usefully developed as part of a submission on the review of sustainable mobility policy which I will be launching very shortly.

This review will look at all aspects of current policy in relation to sustainable mobility. It 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 and would welcome further engagement with the Deputy on the matter raised.

Public Transport Fares

231. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the provision of free public transport to children under 12 and 18 years of age and third level students. [43960/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of fares in relation to public passenger transport services. 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.

Rail Network

232. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the €3 billion allocation for the development and construction of MetroLink; the planning stage of the project; the estimated commencement date for construction; the estimated completion date of the entire project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43961/19]

233. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the light rail system from the city centre to Swords as part of the MetroLink project; the projected commencement date; the projected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43962/19]

234. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the light rail system from the city centre to Sandyford as part of the MetroLink project; the projected commencement date; the projected completion date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43963/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 232 to 234, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have completed non-statutory consultation periods over 2018 and 2019 in relation to MetroLink.

Consultations held this year related to MetroLink's "Preferred Route" which is now a 19 kilometre route from Charlemont to Estuary in North County Dublin. Submissions received during the most recent consultation period are still being considered and I understand a report on those submissions will be published in due course.

Work has commenced on developing a preliminary business case, and cost estimation will form a central part of that business case. The NTA and TII hope to submit a finalised business case to me and my Department early next year, which I will then bring to Government for its approval. This process is in line with the Public Spending Code.

As the Deputy may be aware, the formal planning permission for a proposed railway development is given by way of a Railway Order. I understand from the NTA and TII that they expect to lodge a Railway Order application with An Bord Pleanála next year and construction can begin once that procedure is complete. At this stage, the projected completion date for the MetroLink is 2027.

Rail Network Expansion

235. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of the proposed DART underground as specified on page 55 of the National Development Plan 2018-2027; the status of the project; the projected commencement date for construction; the projected completion date of the entire project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43964/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, as part of Project Ireland 2040 the funding priority in relation to the DART Expansion Programme is to ensure delivery of the non-tunnel elements of the programme over the next ten years.

The initial sequencing of investment will therefore focus on -

- electrification of the Northern Line to Drogheda,
- electrification of the Kildare Line to Hazelhatch,
- electrification of the Maynooth Line to Maynooth and M3 Parkway ,
- better utilisation of the Phoenix Park Tunnel,
- expansion of the rail fleet, and
- other measures such as re-signalling and junction/station changes.

The DART Expansion Programme's remaining element is the DART Underground Tunnel (also known as the DART Interconnector) as referred to by the Deputy. Project Ireland 2040 commits toward establishing the route of the DART Underground Tunnel and ensuring its protection to allow for its future delivery. The cost estimate for the delivery of such a project would only be developed following the completion of any design work on the project.

Noting the National Transport Authority's statutory responsibilities in relation to the delivery of public transport infrastructure including the DART Expansion Programme, 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.

Questions Nos. 236 to 238, inclusive, answered with Question No. 229.

Motor Insurance Costs

239. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of each of the measures recommended by the motor insurance working group that fall within the remit of his Department. [43968/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is

responsible for five recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, specifically recommendations 28 to 32.

Recommendation 28 is to establish a database to identify uninsured drivers. Legislation is in place to enable the creation of such a database, referred to as the Motor Third Party Liability (MTPL) database. My officials have been engaging with the Motor Insurers' Bureau of Ireland, Insurance Ireland and the Garda Síochána on this project, which has been long and complex. I would like here to acknowledge the contribution of all stakeholders. The first phase of the database is almost ready to go live, and I hope to sign the necessary commencement order for the legislation before the end of November. In order for the full benefit of this database to be achieved, some small amendments to the legislation will still be required, and these are included in the Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which is currently being drafted.

Recommendation 29 calls for the development of a protocol to provide that the insurance industry use the driver number to check driver details on the national vehicle and driver file. This recommendation is dependent on prior completion of recommendation 28.

Recommendation 30 - Expedite development of the Master Licence Record. This is a highly complex project, and we will require further legislative amendment in order to achieve it. This legislation too will be addressed in the Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Recommendation 31 calls for the establishment of a protocol in regard to insurance companies requiring proof of NCT or Certificate of Roadworthiness. This project is dependent on the prior completion of Recommendation 30.

Finally, Recommendation 32 is to 'require the insurance industry to promote compliance with road safety legislation.' My officials worked with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and Insurance Ireland to assist in the development of a protocol for the insurance industry to promote road safety in policy documents and through other mechanisms. While a protocol was agreed, final sign-off and implementation has yet to occur, and my officials are working with the RSA and Insurance Ireland to expedite this.

Cycling Policy

240. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department is considering measures to support e-bikes in particular, such as raising the allowable amount under the bike to work scheme in view of the higher cost of such vehicles. [43969/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy may be aware the Cycle-to-Work Scheme, which I am very supportive of, is a tax incentive aimed at encouraging employees to cycle to and from work by allowing for beneficial tax arrangements in respect of the purchase of a bicycle and certain related cycling equipment. The Scheme of course applies to e-bikes as it does to other bikes and provides a substantial benefit to those who avail of it and that benefit should not be overlooked.

Tax policy generally and tax incentives, such as this scheme, are matters for the Minister for Finance in the first instance.

I am about to launch a consultation on sustainable mobility policy and, as part of that, I would welcome engagement with the Deputy on any particular incentives he might have in mind. I think it important that any fiscal incentive is supported by appropriate analysis and fits with an overall policy framework, an approach I would hope he supports.

Public Transport Initiatives

241. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has considered retrofitting public transport vehicles such as buses and trains with racks to carry bicycles; and the estimated cost associated with fitting a bicycle rack to a bus. [43970/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area including, in consultation with the public transport companies, the suitability and where required retrofitting, of public transport vehicles.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a direct reply regarding the specific issue raised. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 days.

Rail Network

242. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of electrifying the rail network with reference to the cost of electrifying one kilometre of railway track; and the cost of purchasing one electric train. [43971/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, 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, including the DART Expansion Programme which provides for electrification of the network and expansion of the fleet.

Noting the NTA's responsibilities in the matter raised and their relevance to the Deputy's question generally, 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.

Departmental Funding

243. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department provides funding for the provision of gymnasium or leisure centre facilities; and if so, the details of such provision in each of the last five years. [43972/19]

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.

Details of all allocations under the Sports Capital Programme since 2000, including allocations to gymnasiums and leisure centres are available on the Department's website <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/471ed5-sports-capital-allocations/>.

Separately, 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. Details of all allocations under the Swimming Pools Programme are also available on the Department's website at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c4d1-local-authority-swimming-pool-programme/>.

In relation to the future development of large sport infrastructure 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 new scheme opened for applications on 19th November 2018 and the closing date for applications was the 17th April 2019. Leisure centre facilities are eligible under the scheme. Full details of all applications received are available on the Department's website. Allocations under the LSSIF are expected later this year.

Public Service Obligation Data

244. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of PSO funding that will be made available to each State public transport operator in 2020. [43973/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for securing the provision of public transport services by way of Public Services Obligation (PSO) contracts in respect of services that are socially necessary but commercially unviable.

The funding of those services comprises both the fares paid by passengers and the subvention payments from the Exchequer. The main purpose of the subvention payment is to meet the gap between the income from fares and the cost of operating services. In 2020, the Irish Exchequer will provide just over €300 million in subvention for public service obligation (PSO) transport services and Rural Transport Local Link services.

Since 2010 my Department no longer pays subvention for public transport services directly to operators. The award of Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding falls under the independent statutory remit of the NTA. The allocations to the 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, referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Cycling Facilities Provision

245. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of providing a 20 bicycle parking rack for a public place. [43974/19]

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 responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure, including cycling infrastructure.

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.

Question No. 246 answered with Question No. 219.

Public Transport Fares

247. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if public transport fares will increase as a result of the carbon tax on fuel being increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43976/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): It is now clearly recognised that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption. My Department has put in place a twofold approach to tackle this climate challenge; firstly, by continuing to invest in the public and sustainable transport network to develop capacity and increase attractiveness of alternatives to private car travel; and secondly, by encouraging a transition away from fossil fuels towards lower emitting alternatives.

A move away from carbon-intensive fuels is required if we are to achieve our decarbonisation objectives. Undoubtedly, such a move will also have clear co-benefits for our air quality, particularly in urban areas, and consequently for public health. As the Deputy will be aware, the Climate Action Plan called for the implementation of a carbon tax of at least €80 per tonne by 2030 and an assessment of the trajectory of increases over successive budgets. The changes to carbon tax under Budget 2020 represent the beginning of this upward trajectory; and while the increase from €20 to €26 is small, I expect that, over the longer term, these changes will have the effect of incentivising the transition towards non carbon taxed transport fuels.

In relation to possible future increases in public transport fares, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for public transport fares and I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

248. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44069/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The State Claims Agency (SCA) manages these matters on behalf of my Department, the Marine Casualty Investigation Board and the Road Safety Authority and I will forward your question to the SCA for direct response to you.

I have also forwarded your question to the remaining agencies under the aegis of my Department for direct response to you. If you do not receive a reply within 10 working days please contact my private office.

Services for People with Disabilities

249. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding is provided through his Department to ensure that staff dealing with the public at airports, ports, public transport stations and so on have received disability awareness training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44107/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is committed to the whole of government approach to advancing the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

The allocation of funding for agency staff training, including disability awareness training, is a matter for the individual agencies under the aegis of my Department.

I have forwarded your question to the agencies for direct response to you. If you do not receive a reply within 10 working days please contact my office.

Bus Services

250. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the percentage of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann fleet, respectively, that is wheelchair accessible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44108/19]

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.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network.

In light of the NTA’s responsibility in this matter, I have forwarded your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Legislative Programme

251. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the road traffic (miscellaneous provisions) Bill, the Road Safety Authority (amendment) Bill and the Road Safety Authority (commercial vehicle roadworthiness) Bill. [44167/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The General Scheme of a Road Traffic (Miscellaneous) Provisions Bill has been approved by Government for drafting, subject to further consideration and finalisation of certain aspects. The remaining provisions are being drafted by parliamentary counsel.

Officials from my Department are currently in the process of preparing General Schemes for both the Road Safety Authority (Amendment) Bill and the Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) (Amendment) Bill.

National Transport Authority Staff

252. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the

number of additional staff members who will be hired for the National Transport Authority following the increase in the allocation to the agency in budget 2020. [44168/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER) for 140 permanent staff during 2019, an increase of 26 staff on the number sanctioned for 2018. The NTA also has 145 outsourced placements from third party service providers, which are necessary to deliver its strategic programme.

My Department is in discussion with DPER concerning a further increase in staff numbers in the NTA to support the delivery of its capital investment programme.

Departmental Budgets

253. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding provided to his Department in appropriations-in-aid in each year since 2016; and the way in which this funding has been spent in tabular form. [44169/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Please see in the table the funding provided to my Department in appropriations-in-aid from 2016 to 2018.

| Programme | Description | 2018 (000s) | 2017(000s) | 2016(000s) |
|----------------|---|-------------|------------|------------|
| Administration | | | | |
| 1 | Receipts from pension-related deduction on public service remuneration | 3,903 | 3,548 | 3,478 |
| Civil aviation | | | | |
| 2 | Irish Aviation Authority refund of subscriptions to international organisations | 6,285 | 5,911 | 6,238 |
| 3 | Irish Aviation Authority recoupment of rents, etc. | 394 | 394 | 394 |
| 4 | Irish Aviation Authority payment for associated costs | 2,938 | 2,036 | 2,655 |
| Land transport | | | | |
| 5 | Road transport licence fees | 872 | 1,140 | 1,287 |
| 6 | Receipts from Local Government Fund | | 345,500 | 361,243 |

| Programme | Description | 2018 (000s) | 2017(000s) | 2016(000s) |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------|------------|------------|
| Administration | | | | |
| 7 | Miscellaneous land transport receipts | 5,637 | 14,970 | 2,460 |
| Maritime transport and safety | | | | |
| 8 | Receipts under the Merchant Shipping and Wireless Telegraphy Act 1919 | 580 | 537 | 491 |
| Tourism services | | | | |
| 9 | Tourism Ireland pension receipts | 311 | 257 | 311 |
| Sports services | | | | |
| 10 | Sport Ireland pension receipts | 86 | 91 | 133 |
| 11 | Dormant accounts | 5,000 | 4,551 | 4,493 |
| Miscellaneous receipts | | | | |
| 12 | Miscellaneous receipts | 341 | 308 | 444 |
| | Total | 26,347 | 379,243 | 383,627 |

Appropriations-in-Aid are regarded as moneys provided by the Oireachtas, are used to contribute towards general funding within my Department and are not ring-fenced for specific purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

254. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date by which expenditure will be achieved in roads, rail and bus taking into account a possible backlog in remedial or other works. [44170/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Project Ireland 2040 Capital Tracker published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provides details of infrastructure projects, indicative allocations, current status, project commencement dates and proposed completion dates. It is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

The individual projects and programmes are subject to compliance with the Public Spending Code, including its requirements in relation to appraisal and Sanctioning Authority approval points.

Penalty Points System

255. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the master licence record project with reference to the amount that was spent on this project in 2019; and the amount that has been budgeted for 2020. [44171/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Garda Inspectorate report ‘The Fixed Charge Processing System, a 21st Century Strategy’ contained a recommendation that a system be introduced to ensure that all penalty points are endorsed on driving licences. The Master Licence Record (MLR) programme was approved by the previous Minister of this Department, and the Minister for Justice and Equality. The programme seeks to assist in the endorsement of penalty points by matching vehicle and driver records on my Departments National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF), and over time, by establishing owner identity for all vehicle records.

The first two phases of the MLR matching project are now complete. These phases involved associating vehicle owner records with driver records by matching existing NVDF records. The MLR now contains 1.3 million records, which includes 33% of currently-taxed vehicle records. This matching process is run every week by my Departments officials after which a file containing the vehicle-driver associations is sent to An Garda Síochána.

Phase 2 of the MLR programme primarily involves establishing vehicle owner identity when individuals engage with other Departmental systems, such as change of vehicle ownership and application for motor tax. Although legislation and legal advice are still pending on some measures, systems are currently in development to establish vehicle owner identity with regard to the registration of privately-imported vehicles and online change of vehicle ownership between private individuals.

Just over €1.5m was spent on the project for the period January to September 2019 inclusive. The budget for the programme in 2020 has not yet finalised. Any development costs in this regard will be met from my Department’s Revised Estimate.

Ministerial Meetings

256. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he has met at chairperson level with each of the agencies and companies for which his Department is the parent Department; and the dates of these meetings in tabular form. [44172/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The table sets out the meetings I have had involving Chairpersons of agencies and companies under the aegis of my Department from January 2018 to date.

| Agency/Company | Number of Meetings | Dates |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bus Eireann | 2 | 23-08-201808-08-2019 |
| CIE | 2 | 09-08-201808-08-2019 |
| Shannon Group | 2 | 24-01-201920-06-2019 |
| daa | 2 | 22-08-201820-09-2019 |
| Dublin Bus | 3 | 26-04-201809-08-201808-08-2019 |
| Dublin Port | 1 | 05-06-2019 |

| Agency/Company | Number of Meetings | Dates |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Failte Ireland | 2 | 15-11-201811-04-2019 |
| IAA | 3 | 23-04-201824-09-201820-06-2019 |
| Irish Rail | 2 | 09-08-201808-08-2019 |
| NTA | 2 | 09-08-201808-08-2019 |
| RSA | 1 | 10-04-2019 |
| Sport Ireland | 1 | 11-07-2019 |
| TII | 2 | 14-02-201918-09-2019 |
| Tourism Ireland | 1 | 20-12-2018 |

Ministerial Meetings

257. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of times he has met with the national civil aviation development forum. [44173/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have met with the Steering Committee of the National Civil Aviation Development Forum on two occasions, 8 March and 28 November, 2018. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss Brexit and implication for the Irish Aviation Sector. I co-chaired both meetings with the Tanaiste & Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Marine Safety

258. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the implementation of the safety of life at sea convention in addition to the transposition of the EU recreational craft directive, the marine equipment directive and the organisation of working time for inland waterways. [44174/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974 (SOLAS Convention) is an international convention of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) relating to the safety of ships (both passenger ships and cargo ships of >500 gross tonnes) that are engaged on international voyages. The Convention entered into force in 1980 and Ireland is a party to it since 1983.

The SOLAS Convention sets the international safety standards for ships' construction, equipment and operation. As a party to the Convention, and in its role as a Flag State, Ireland is responsible for ensuring and certifying that ships on the Irish register that undertake international voyages comply with the relevant SOLAS requirements, which vary according to the size of the ship and the year of construction.

The SOLAS Convention is amended on a continual basis to take into account technical evolution and practical experiences. Such amendments are made at meetings of the Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO, which are held once or twice a year, as decided by the Committee.

Primary legislation to give effect to the SOLAS Convention is provided for in the Merchant Shipping (Safety Convention) Act 1952, the Merchant Shipping Act 1966, the Merchant Shipping Act 2010 and most recently in the Merchant Shipping (Registration of Ships) Act 2014. The Acts in general provide a framework for implementation of the SOLAS Convention through

the making of secondary legislation containing the detailed technical Rules and Regulations.

Numerous statutory instruments have been made over the years to give effect to the individual SOLAS Chapters and the subject matter contained in the Convention. Work is continuing in so far as is possible within existing resources to address ongoing IMO amendments.

Officials in the Maritime Safety Policy Division of my Department are working on a general scheme for a planned Merchant Shipping (International Conventions) Bill. This is at the preparatory stages in my Department, prior to seeking Government approval for its drafting in due course. The main purpose of the Bill is to provide the required legislative framework for Ireland to become a party to a number of international maritime conventions. The Bill also provides an opportunity to update the definition of the SOLAS Convention in primary legislation, which will enable Ireland to make the necessary statutory instruments to give effect to the latest amendments to the Convention.

Additionally, under Port State Control, foreign ships in national ports are inspected to verify that the condition of the ship and its equipment complies with the requirements of international conventions (including the SOLAS Convention) and that the ship is manned and operated in compliance with those conventions.

Port State Control inspections are carried out by the Marine Survey Office (MSO) of my Department while Flag State activities are undertaken by both the MSO and by authorised Recognised Organisations on their behalf.

As regards the transposition of the named EU Directives, I can confirm that Directive 2013/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on recreational craft and personal watercraft (or the “EU Recreational Craft Directive”) was transposed into Irish law through S.I. No. 65 of 2017 - the European Union (Recreational Craft and Personal Watercraft) Regulations 2017.

Directive 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on marine equipment (or the “Marine Equipment Directive”) was transposed into Irish law through S.I. No. 177 of 2017 - the European Union (Marine Equipment) Regulations 2017.

Council Directive 2014/112/EU of 19 December 2014 implementing the European Agreement concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time in inland waterway transport (or the “Organisation of Working Time for Inland Waterways Directive”) entered into force on 12/01/2015 with a transposition deadline of 31 December 2016.

The Directive aims to lay down more specific working time requirements for mobile transport workers in inland waterway transport (IWT). Ireland supports Directive 2014/112/EU and believes that it is important to ensure the protection of workers and provide legal certainty for businesses and operators on inland waterways.

However, in general terms Ireland is exempt from EU inland waterway Directives as they relate to waterways of a greater size and carrying a greater capacity of goods/passengers than exist in Ireland. Ireland’s inland waterways are not navigable for commercial traffic and Ireland does not have any interconnected inland waterway commercial transport for the purposes or on the scale envisaged in EU Directives for this sector. Ireland keeps a watching brief on matters regarding inland waterways to ensure they do not conflict or overlap with existing legislation.

Rail Network Expansion

259. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review of the western rail corridor. [44175/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, Project Ireland 2040 committed to conducting an independent review of a possible extension to the Western Rail Corridor (WRC).

In line with that commitment an external company was commissioned to prepare a financial/economic appraisal and business case on proposals for extending the existing WRC from Athenry to Claremorris.

I understand the work is almost complete and I expect the business case will then be submitted to my Department where it will be reviewed in line with the requirements of the Public Spending Code.

As stated in Project Ireland 2040 if the findings of the review are approved by Government, the project will be prioritised during the lifetime of the National Development Plan.

Departmental Reviews

260. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has completed a review of the national cycle policy framework; and if so, the main findings of the review. [44176/19]

261. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department has completed a review of the smarter travel policy framework; and if so, the main findings of the review. [44177/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 260 and 261 together.

I will shortly launch a public consultation on reviewing sustainable mobility policy. It looks across all aspects of current policy in relation to public transport and active travel, and preparations are now at an advanced stage for launching very shortly.

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. The documentation will include a high-level assessment of the actions under the existing policies, Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future and the National Cycle Policy Framework and I will also publish a report of last year's initial Round Table Discussion with stakeholders and an Ex Post Evaluation of the Smarter Travel Areas programme 2012-2016.

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.

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.

National Childcare Scheme

262. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the universal subsidy amount in the national childcare scheme by amounts (details supplied) for all children aged between one and five years of age in tabular form. [43941/19]

263. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the universal subsidy amount in the national childcare scheme by amounts (details supplied) for all children aged between one and three years of age in tabular form. [43942/19]

264. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing each income assessed subsidy, level or grade in the national childcare scheme by amounts (details supplied) for all children aged between one and five years of age in tabular form. [43943/19]

265. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the income assessed subsidy amount in the national childcare scheme by amounts (details supplied) for all children aged between one and three years of age in tabular form. [43944/19]

267. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of childcare funding that is used to provide income assessed subsidy payments in respect of children aged between three and 15 years of age. [43946/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 to 265, inclusive, and 267 together.

The total annual cost of providing income-assessed subsidies for children between the ages of 3 and 15 years in receipt of the National Childcare Scheme is estimated at €95.9m.

The costs are arrived at by:

- establishing the number of families with children under 15 years by income bracket (data supplied by CSO) and
- profiling these families by reference to the age of their children and
- estimating the proportion of children in each income bracket and age range using centre-based care and
- calculating estimated subsidy rates based on income levels and age profile and
- applying estimates of the average hours used by age group for term time and non-term time and
- Limiting the dataset to the relevant cohort identified by the Deputy.

The scheme's cost model is based on key assumptions around behaviours and rates of growth, with certain metrics extrapolated from available data. As such, all estimates remain heavily caveated insofar as the scheme represents a considerable departure from existing schemes and this renders estimates inherently challenging to predict. It is particularly difficult to estimate the behavioural changes that will come by creating drastic increases in the level of subsidy available.

With regard to the analyses set out below relating to increases to subsidy rates, it should be noted that substantial increases in childcare capacity would be required to meet the likely demand created by increasing the total subsidy payment, particularly at the higher end.

The existing maximum subsidy rates for a 1-3 year old is €4.35 per hour. Table 1 summarises the estimated additional full year costs where all income assessed subsidies are increased in 50 cent intervals for children between the ages of 1 and 3 years across the National Childcare Scheme.

Table 1: Increased Income-Assessed Subsidy Rates for 1- 3 year olds

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Increase all subsidy rates by | € 0.50 | € 1.00 | € 1.50 | € 2.00 | € 2.50 | € 3.00 | € 3.50 | € 4.00 | € 4.50 | € 5.00 | € 5.50 | € 6.00 | € 6.50 |
| Additional Cost per annum | €10m | €19m | €28m | €38m | €48m | €58m | €69m | €80m | €91m | €102m | €114m | €125m | €138m |

Table 2 summarises the estimated additional full year costs where all income assessed subsidies are increased in 50 cent intervals for children between the ages of 1 and 5 across the National Childcare Scheme.

The existing maximum subsidy rates for a 1-3 year old is €4.35 per hour and for a 3-5 year old is €3.95.

Table 2: Increased Income-Assessed Subsidy Rates for 1- 5 year olds

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Increase all subsidy rates by | € 0.50 | € 1.00 | € 1.50 | € 2.00 | € 2.50 | € 3.00 | € 3.50 | € 4.00 | € 4.50 | € 5.00 | € 5.50 | € 6.00 | € 6.50 |
| Additional Cost per annum | €17m | €34m | €51m | €69m | €87m | €106m | €125m | €144m | €164m | €184m | €205m | €226m | €247m |

Table 3 summarises the estimated additional full year costs where the Universal subsidy is increased in 50 cent intervals for all children between the ages of 1 and 3 years old up to €6.50 across the National Childcare Scheme, assuming the minimum Targeted Subsidy is increased so as never to be below the universal subsidy.

It should be noted that this measure assumes the 50c per hour universal rate remains for children under 1 year old.

Table 3: Increased Universal Subsidy Rates for 1- 3 year olds

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Universal Rate | .50c | €1 | €1.50 | €2 | €2.50 | €3 | €3.50 | €4.00 | €4.50 | €5.00 | €5.50 | €6.00 | €6.50 | €7.00 |
| Additional Cost per annum | | 20m | 43m | 66m | 90m | €115m | €141m | €168m | €199m | €239m | €280m | €322m | €366m | €412m |

Finally, table 4 summarises the estimated additional full year costs where the Universal subsidy is increased in 50 cent intervals for all children between the ages of 1 and 5 years old up to €6.50 across the National Childcare Scheme, assuming the minimum Targeted Subsidy is increased so as never to be below the universal subsidy.

It should be noted that this measure assumes the 50c per hour universal rate remains for children under 1 and that a universal subsidy is introduced for children between the ages of 3-5 (where they would not have already qualified if they were not yet ECCE eligible).

Table 4: Increased Universal Subsidy Rates for 1- 5 year olds

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Uni- versal Rate | .50c | €1 | €1.50 | €2 | €2.50 | €3 | €3.50 | €4.00 | €4.50 | €5.00 | €5.50 | €6.00 | €6.50 | €7.00 |
| Addi- tional Cost per an- num | | €35.2m | €61.2m | €88.2m | €116m | €145m | €175m | €208m | €252m | €305m | €360m | €416m | €474m | €533m |

Child and Family Agency Services

266. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of early years services to which Tusla has applied conditions (details supplied) upon granting their registration or re-registration by county in tabular form. [43945/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the matters to which the Deputy refers are operational matter for Tusla, I have requested Tusla to respond to the Deputy directly within 10 working days.

Question No. 267 answered with Question No. 262.

Childcare Services Data

268. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in crèches and childcare; the amount of subsidy being paid; the annual subsidy in the sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43947/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Number of children in childcare:

My Department collates figures on the total number of children in early learning and care and school age childcare who are availing of one of my Department's programmes, which include the universally available programmes Community Childcare Subvention Universal (CCSU) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The number of children registered on each Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) programme, along with the cost, for the 18/19 programme year was as follows:

| Programme | Call 2018/19 | Approved Child Registra- tions | Total Paid to date € |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| CCSP | | 35,514 | 105,118,527 |
| CCSU | | 33,780 | included in CCSP figure above |
| CCSRT - Transition | | 432 | included in CCSP figure above |
| CCSR -Resettlement | | 300 | included in CCSP figure above |

| Programme Call 2018/19 | Approved Child Registrations | Total Paid to date € |
|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| CCS | 12,483 | 32,751,172 |
| ASCC | 228 | 432,440 |
| CEC (AS) | 686 | 872,797 |
| CEC (PS) | 670 | 1,700,025 |
| CETS | 1,929 | 5,803,419 |
| ECCE | 108,189 | 293,384,153 |
| Total | 194,211 | 440,062,534 |
| | | |
| ECCE PSP* Payments | | 9,439,029 |
| CCS PSP Payments | | 8,566,120 |
| TEC PSP Payments | | 609,828 |
| Total PSP Payments | | 18,614,976 |
| | | |
| | Total Paid to date € | 458,677,510 |

*Programme Support Payment (PSP) recognises the additional time required of childcare providers to complete the administrative work associated with the DCYA funded early learning and care and school age childcare programmes.

The annual subsidy in the sector

The total expenditure on subsidies, capitation or PSP for 2018/2019 programme year amounts to €458,677,510. Approximately 4,500 services availed of this investment.

Childcare Services Data

269. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of crèches and crèche places that are operational, broken down by county and by status, that is, community or private. [43948/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Each year Pobal conducts research on behalf of my Department to examine a number of factors related to childcare services in Ireland, including the monitoring of capacity. The Early Years Sector Profile report, which was published in November 2018 and relates to the 2017/2018 programme year, indicates that existing childcare provision nationally meets current needs nationwide in terms of capacity whilst recognising that small pockets of under-supply may exist within this.

The following table is the latest information available taken from the Pobal report

| County | Enrolled | Vacant places |
|--------|----------|---------------|
| Carlow | 2,057 | 68 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|
| Cavan | 3,120 | 104 |
| Clare | 4,280 | 383 |
| Cork City | 4,246 | 295 |
| Cork County | 14,662 | 1,032 |
| Donegal | 6,575 | 882 |
| Dublin – Dublin City | 16,075 | 581 |
| Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown | 6,357 | 224 |
| Dublin – Fingal | 11,149 | 450 |
| Dublin – South Dublin | 9,294 | 373 |
| Galway | 10,514 | 620 |
| Kerry | 5,625 | 186 |
| Kildare | 8,045 | 304 |
| Kilkenny | 3,944 | 195 |
| Laois | 3,695 | 298 |
| Leitrim | 1,437 | 74 |
| Limerick | 7,805 | 278 |
| Longford | 1,685 | 59 |
| Louth | 4,297 | 197 |
| Mayo | 4,509 | 331 |
| Meath | 6,996 | 355 |
| Monaghan | 3,623 | 190 |
| Offaly | 2,697 | 225 |
| Roscommon | 2,311 | 98 |
| Sligo | 3,144 | 88 |
| Tipperary | 6,662 | 437 |
| Waterford | 4,612 | 203 |
| Westmeath | 3,781 | 385 |
| Wexford | 5,724 | 281 |
| Wicklow | 4,276 | 224 |
| Total | 173,197 | 9,420 |

The majority of early years services are operated by private organisations. In 2017/18 private services accounted for 74% (3,342) of all services contracted to provide at least one of the three early years programmes, with community services accounting for the remaining 26% (1,201). Over recent years, there has been a slight increase in the number of private services while the number of community services has remained relatively constant.

For reference please see figure 3.2 from the Early Years Sector Profile report attached, which gives a breakdown of the number of services by county and percentage by organisation type in the programme year 2017-18, which is the latest data available.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

270. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of applicants to each level of the AIM scheme; the number of successful applicants to each level of the scheme; the number of applicants who have drawn down their entitlements under

the scheme; and the average cost of meeting the needs of one child on each level of the scheme in tabular form. [43949/19]

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 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. The levels of AIM for which applications may be made (either by the setting or by the setting and the parent together) are Levels 1, 4, 5 or 7.

AIM Level 1 – AIM Level 1 recognises that a strong culture of inclusion must be fostered and embedded to support all children’s maximum participation in the ECCE programme. This includes the higher education programme in Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years (LINC). Pre-school settings can elect to employ an Inclusion Coordinator who has graduated from the LINC Programme and has agreed to take on the role of Inclusion Coordinator (INCO) in the pre-school setting. Note – the LINC Programme commenced in September 2016, with the first cohort of graduates taking on the Inclusion Coordinator role from September 2017. The role of the INCO relates to the setting as a whole, and accordingly the average cost per application in the table relates to the cost per setting.

| Programme call | No. of INCO applications received | Approved INCO applications | No. of approved services that received a payment | Total cost of INCO payments for each programme call | No. of children registered on ECCE in services that received INCO funding | Total INCO funding per service (not per child) |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| AIM 2017 | 768 | 728 | 727 | €1,644,435.23 | 26,625 | €2,262 |
| AIM 2018 | 1,393 | 1,286 | 1,283 | €3,013,263.10 | 43,933 | €2,349 |
| AIM 2019* | 1,698 | 1,316 | 1,222 | €829,728.50 | 38,457 | €679 |

AIM Level 4 - AIM Level 4 involves expert educational advice and support from Early Years Specialists employed by Better Start. Level 4 involves advice and guidance to settings, and does not involve direct funding to settings. Whilst such support initially has direct benefit to the child who prompted the request for advice, the support provided has a wider benefit in upskilling the workforce across the setting that receives the support.

| Programme call | No. of applications received | No. of approved applications | Average cost per child |
|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| AIM 2016 | 2,390 | 2,333 | n/a |
| AIM 2017 | 3,254 | 3,211 | n/a |
| AIM 2018 | 4,170 | 4,105 | n/a |
| AIM 2019* | 3,173 | 2,884 | n/a |

AIM Level 5 - AIM Level 5 provides for access to specialised equipment, appliances, assistive technology and/or minor alterations capital grants for early learning and care settings to ensure children with a disability can participate in the ECCE programme. A short report from a designated professional is required confirming that the specialised equipment or minor building

alterations are necessary.

| Pro-gramme call | No. of ap-plications received | No. of approved applica-tions - Equipment / Minor alterations | No. of ser-vices that received a payment | Total amount paid to services for alterations each pro-gramme call | Total amount paid to services for equip-ment each programme call | Total cost per ap-proved application (across all types of Level 5 spending) |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| AIM 2016 | 320 | 191 / 25 | 236 | €117,538.75 | €346,991 | €2,151 |
| AIM 2017 | 401 | 286 / 42 | 244 | €58,301.58 | €592,746 | €1,985 |
| AIM 2018 | 493 | 364 / 47 | 282 | €132,628.63 | €817,103 | €2,311 |
| AIM 2019* | 249 | 175 / 19 | 149 | €41,676.92 | €66,462 | €557 |

AIM Level 7 - AIM Level 7 provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE programme. In line with best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, Level 7 does not fund one-to-one support for a child. Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider, which can be used either to reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room or to buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Level 7 assistance is a shared resource for the pre-school setting.

| Programme call | No. of ap-plications received | No. of ap-proved ap-plications | No. of ser-vices that received a payment ** | Total amount paid to services for each pro-gramme call | Average cost per approved application |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| AIM 2016 | 1,760 | 1,317 | 771 | €3,412,414.55 | €2,591.05 |
| AIM 2017 | 3,533 | 2,978 | 1,546 | €11,898,156.38 | €3,995.35 |
| AIM 2018 | 3,626 | 2,854 | 1,750 | €17,253,275.93 | €6,045.30 |
| AIM 2019* | 4,606 | 3,646 | 1,373 | €5,501,892.74 | €1,509.02 |

* Please note that AIM 2019 figures are as at 22 October 2019. Applications continue to be received and processed and figures for AIM 2019 are likely to change over the coming months.

** Some services receive more than one Level 7 payment, where there is more than one child with a disability attending. In some cases where there is more than one child with a disability in a single pre-school room, depending on the level of need a single additional staff member may be approved and is a shared resource for all the children in that pre-school room. Decisions on Level 7 approvals respond to the needs of the child and to the needs of the setting.

Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes

271. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to cases in which a child has been deemed in need of level 7 of the AIM scheme but has been unable to access entitlements under the scheme due to the fact the child-care facility has been unable to provide the required member of staff for this scheme (details supplied). [43950/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the deputy is aware, the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) 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 preschool providers 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 learning and care. AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the preschool service.

Under Level 7 of AIM, preschool providers, in partnership with parents, can apply for additional capitation to fund extra support in the preschool room or to enable the reduction of the adult-to-child ratio. Where additional capitation is given to fund extra support in the preschool room, the preschool manager is responsible for recruiting a member of staff to take on this role.

The Better Start Early Years Specialist Service within Pobal administers AIM Level 7 on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Where there is a delay in recruitment of staff to provide AIM Level 7 support, service providers must complete the 'Notification of Change' form and submit this to Pobal.

Pobal has advised that data is available for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 (to date) preschool years on services which have been approved for AIM Level 7 support to support a child or children to access preschool, but who have informed Pobal that they have been unable to recruit suitable staff. Pobal has advised that the total number of preschool services who have notified them that they have been unable to recruit suitable staff to provide AIM Level 7 support is seven over the two years (six in 2018-19 and one to date in 2019-20).

It is important to note that in the small number of instances where a level 7 support is not available, the child and service provider will still be able to avail of supports under Levels 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 of AIM.

Children are entitled to two years' of free preschool under the ECCE programme. Where a child has availed of AIM Level 7 in their first year of preschool, the preschool provider can submit a second year extension request for the child to avail of AIM Level 7 support in their second year of preschool.

Pobal data on Level 7 supports is broken down as follows:

| - | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 (as of 18th October 2019) |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Total AIM Level 7 applications approved (including second year extensions) | 3,924 | 3,464 |
| Total AIM Level 7 applications approved (including second year extensions) where the preschool service has notified Pobal it is unable to recruit suitable staff | 6 | 1 |

Recruitment of staff has been a significant challenge to many services in recent years. Other than poor terms and conditions which impact retention, this is believed to be mostly due to the major expansion that has occurred in the sector which included a doubling of investment and a doubling of the number of early learning and care and school age childcare places.

The Pobal Sector Profile data is showing that, now that capacity has been doubled, the growth rates are levelling off although we expect that the further budgetary increase for 2020 will continue to support further growth in capacity. Turnover of staff has reduced by approx. 3.5% over the last two years.

A number of factors should begin to see the recruitment difficulties being experienced lessening over time. 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 (ELC) sector. First 5 commits to at least doubling investment in ELC 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 ELC 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 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) universal preschool programme and the National Childcare Scheme, when it comes into operation later this year.

The new Funding Model will be a key vehicle to achieve the vision of ELC services that are equipped to provide high-quality, graduate-led services for children, affordability to parents and sustainability for providers. ELC services that operate in the context of disadvantage will also receive extra support to provide additional services to families.

Alongside the new Funding Model, work has also begun on a Workforce Development Plan (WDP), which will ensure appropriate levels of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will aim to help to address recruitment difficulties by establishing role profiles, career pathways, qualifications requirements and associated policy mechanisms. The Workforce Development Plan will set out plans to raise the profile of careers in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare, establishing a career framework and leadership development opportunities and work towards a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce.

The Workforce Development Plan will be carried out in two stages. The first stage will involve preparation of a core report that sets out a high-level vision for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) workforce for the period 2020-2028 and a pathway for achieving the commitments set out in First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028), in relation to development of the ELC and SAC workforce. It will include qualification requirements for different roles in the sector, including ELC, SAC, and childminders. This stage is expected to conclude by mid-2020. The second stage of the Workforce Development Plan will involve completion of implementation plans by working groups to be specified in Stage 1. Stage two of the plan is expected to be completed by mid-2021.

Living Wage

272. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of providing the living wage of €12.30 to every member of staff in her Department and agencies under her aegis. [43951/19]

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. DPER Circular 17/2019 sets out the adjustments to the pay of civil servants on 1 September 2019 as provided for under the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 and is available on 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.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

273. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the number of hours available under the ECCE scheme each week by five, ten, 15 and 20 hours, respectively. [43952/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): €297m has been allocated for the Early Childhood Care and Education programme in 2020.

There are currently a maximum of 15 hours per week available on the ECCE scheme. The following table outlines the annual cost of increasing the number of hours available per week in 2020 by the specified hourly increments:

| ECCE Capitation Costs | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | Annual Cost (m) | Increase (m) |
| No change | €297 | |
| 5 hour increase | €396 | €99 |
| 10 hour increase | €495 | €198 |
| 15 hour increase | €594 | €297 |
| 20 hour increase | €693 | €396 |

Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) funding is linked to ECCE capitation. Subsequently, any increase in durations for the ECCE programme will also have an impact on AIM expenditure.

Initial estimates indicate that, in 2020, AIM level 7 will cost circa €26m and AIM level 1 will cost circa €5.4m. The two levels combined are therefore forecast to cost €31.4m.

The table below captures the projected impact of the outlined ECCE hour increases on the allocation for AIM Levels 1 & 7 in 2020.

| Associated AIM costs | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Proposed change | Annual Cost (€m) | Increase (€m) |
| No change | €31.4 | |
| 5 hour increase | €41.9 | €10.5 |
| 10 hour increase | €52.3 | €20.9 |
| 15 hour increase | €62.8 | €31.4 |
| 20 hour increase | €73.3 | €41.9 |

Please note, that for the purposes of this PQ, the estimates have been prepared by extrapolating simply from current hourly costs/rates. Additional hours in ECCE or AIM might result

in some critical mass efficiencies and hence reduced costs, or indeed, extra costs such as for the provision of meals. A more detailed costing exercise would be required to prepare further estimates for any future policy development.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

274. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the number of weeks available under the ECCE scheme by one, two, three, four, five, six and seven weeks. [43953/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): €297m has been allocated to the Early Childhood Care and Education programme in 2020.

ECCE is currently available for 38 weeks throughout the year. The following table outlines the cost of expanding the scheme as per the specified weekly increments:

| | | ECCE Capitation Costs |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Proposed change | Annual Cost (€m) | Increase (€m) |
| No change | €297.0 | |
| 1 week increase | €304.8 | €7.8 |
| 2 week increase | €312.6 | €15.6 |
| 3 week increase | €320.5 | €23.5 |
| 4 week increase | €328.3 | €31.3 |
| 5 week increase | €336.1 | €39.1 |
| 6 week increase | €343.9 | €46.9 |
| 7 week increase | €351.7 | €54.7 |

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is offered to children with disabilities who wish to participate in ECCE. AIM. Subsequently, any increase in duration of the ECCE programme will also have an impact on AIM expenditure.

Initial estimates indicate that, in 2020, AIM level 7 will cost circa €26m and AIM level 1 will cost circa €5.4m. The two levels combined are therefore forecast to cost €31.4m. The following table captures the projected impact of the outlined ECCE increases on the allocation for AIM Levels 1 & 7 in 2020.

| Associated AIM costs | | |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Proposed change | Annual Cost (€m) | Increase (€m) |
| No change | €31.4 | |
| 1 week increase | €32.2 | €0.8 |
| 2 week increase | €33.1 | €1.7 |
| 3 week increase | €33.9 | €2.5 |
| 4 week increase | €34.7 | €3.3 |
| 5 week increase | €35.5 | €4.1 |
| 6 week increase | €36.4 | €5.0 |
| 7 week increase | €37.2 | €5.8 |

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

275. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the esti-

mated cost of increasing the higher and normal rates of ECCE subvention by €5, €10, €15 and €20. [43954/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): €297m euro has been allocated Early Childhood Care and Education programme in 2020.

The standard capitation rate for ECCE is currently €69 and the higher capitation rate is €80.25. The table outlines the annual cost of increasing the standard and higher capitation rates as per the specified increments:

| | | ECCE Capitation Costs |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Proposed change | Annual Cost (€m) | Increase (€m) |
| No change (€69, €80.25, per week) | €297.0 | |
| €5 increase (€74, €85.25, per week) | €316.5 | €19.5 |
| €10 increase (€79, €90.25, per week) | €336.0 | €38.9 |
| €15 increase (€84, €95.25, per week) | €355.5 | €58.4 |
| €20 increase (€89, €100.25, per week) | €374.9 | €77.9 |

Some supports available under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) are linked to ECCE capitation. Subsequently, any increase in ECCE rates may also have an impact on AIM expenditure. Initial estimates indicate that AIM Level 7 supports will cost circa €26m in 2020. The following table captures the impacts the outlined ECCE increases would have on the estimated allocation for AIM Level 7 support costs in 2020.

| | | Associated AIM costs |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Proposed change | Annual Cost (€m) | Increase (€m) |
| No change | €26.0 | |
| €5 increase | €28.0 | €2.0 |
| €10 increase | €30.0 | €4.0 |
| €15 increase | €32.0 | €6.0 |
| €20 increase | €34.0 | €8.0 |

Child and Family Agency Funding

276. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided to Tusla for 2020 by programme area. [43955/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware, I announced a significant increase in the funding allocation to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency for 2020. Tusla will have available to it some €814 million in funding, representing an increase of 3.8% over 2019.

This funding will allow Tusla to:

- meet increasing demand for existing services and continue to improve overall service performance,

- continue the progress made to reduce the number of children awaiting the allocation of a social worker, and

- address significant cost pressures being experienced in residential care.

The process of allocating funding within specific programme areas has yet to be concluded. The precise level of funding to be allocated to each programme area will be outlined in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020 volume, to be published later this year.

Area Based Childhood Programme

277. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided to each ABC centre for 2020. [43956/19]

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

DCYA is now the sole funder of the ABC Programme. In November 2017, my Department initiated a process, in consultation with key ABC Programme stakeholders, to consider options for sustaining the work of the ABC Programme within a new vision for a community based prevention and early intervention programme from 2019 and beyond. Following these consultations, the decision was taken to transfer the current ABC Programme to Tusla, from September 2019 as part of the national Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS).

A working group was established in May 2018 to support the transition into this new national structure that can build on the achievements to date in both the ABC and PPFS Programmes, and strengthen Tusla's prevention and early intervention operations. As part of this national structure, it will take a renewed focus on addressing child poverty and inform the delivery of prevention and early intervention initiatives, improving the lives of children and families throughout Ireland.

The budget agreed for 2020 for the Prevention Programme in Tusla, including funding for the ABC Programme, is €9.5m. The local budgeting process is ongoing, it is expected that areas will receive similar budgets in 2020, which will be drawn down on a needs basis.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

278. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the need for a women's refuge at a location (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44001/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence whether in the context of family or otherwise.

I have received representations from an organisation in County Laois with regard to the proposed development of a women's refuge in the county.

In 2019, additional funding was provided to support the national strategic review of domes-

tic violence accommodation. The substantive work of the national review will be completed by the end of 2019, and will inform future provision of domestic violence emergency refuge accommodation.

It is important to note that while Tusla is responsible for the provision of services and supports to victims of domestic violence, the provision of capital funding for domestic violence refuges is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Where appropriate, Tusla will work closely with emergency domestic violence refuges to ensure the necessary supports and services are provided.

I have requested that Tusla respond to the Deputy directly with regard to its views on the proposed development in Laois.

Domestic Violence Services Funding

279. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if funding will be provided for a children's worker (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44002/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is responsible for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence whether in the context of family or otherwise.

I provided additional funding of €1.5m to Tusla this year to increase domestic, sexual and gender-based violence service provision. A proportion of this funding was allocated for the national roll-out of a healing programme for children who have been impacted by domestic abuse, and the recruitment of 12 additional outreach workers for women and children affected by domestic violence in identified areas of need.

To date this year, 8 children's programmes have been delivered in 7 Tusla areas and planning is ongoing to deliver children's programmes in the remaining 10 Tusla areas by year end. Data will be collected to gather evidence on the effectiveness of such programmes for children.

I have requested that Tusla respond to the Deputy directly with regard to the Deputy's proposal.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

280. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of providing an additional refuge place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44021/19]

281. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of providing an additional 327 refuge places in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44022/19]

282. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of providing ten additional refuge places; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44023/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 280 to 282, inclusive, together.

Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, the provision of services for victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is a statutory responsibility of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Tusla currently provides financial support for the provision of 155 family units of domestic violence accommodation:

- 145 family units of accommodation are provided in emergency refuge accommodation,
- 10 family units of accommodation are provided in emergency non-refuge accommodation

A family unit equates to one refuge place. A family unit can accommodate one adult and up to three children.

The approximate non-capital cost of providing one refuge place in an emergency domestic violence refuge is €100,000 per annum. Based on this figure, the cost of providing an additional 10 refuge places would be €1 million. The cost of providing an additional 327 refuge places would be €32.7 million.

It is important to note that, while Tusla is responsible for the provision of services and supports to victims of domestic violence, the provision of capital funding for domestic violence refuges is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. As capital costs for the development of refuges is not the responsibility of Tusla, or my Department, they are not included in the costings above.

Delivery of an additional 327 refuge places would require significant strategic planning and collaboration between Government Departments and State agencies.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

283. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of financial settlements reached by her Department and statutory bodies within her remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44056/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of the Department and agencies other than Tusla is set out in tabular format as follows. I can confirm that there were no confidentiality clauses included in any of the settlements.

| Department/ Agency | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Oberstown Children Detention Campus | 3 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 8 |
| Department | | | | 1 | |
| Total | 3 | 9 | 4 | 11 | 8 |

I have requested the information from Tusla and will revert to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Departmental Data

284. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the data depository of her Department with key indicators on data on children and youth affairs. [44154/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Throughout 2018 and 2019, my department have been working on making key data on children and young people publicly available in the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) statbank. The data will be easily accessible in many formats, in line with the government's Open Data Initiative. All indicators available in State of the Nation's Children (SONC) and the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF) indicator set will be included.

Regarding SONC in particular, my department has also been working on modernising the delivery of this report, developing methods to allow it to be updated directly from the underlying data tables on statbank, as mentioned above. In this way, the most recently published data will always be presented. This is a considerable improvement on the current situation, where the report is only updated biennially.

It is envisaged that the work on this project will be completed by the end of 2019. My department will issue further information around this time through the usual channels. In the meantime, should you be interested, all previous SONC reports are available on the department's website (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48d829-state-of-the-nations-children/>).

Public Liability Insurance

285. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress made on issues relating to public liability insurance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43888/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As the Deputy is aware, my Department has, for some time, been examining how best to introduce a scheme to indemnify private land owners, particularly in upland areas, with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes. This is a complex issue and the legal rights of landowners must be respected, while trying to facilitate access to their lands for recreational users on a permissive basis.

My Department has been advised that an indemnity scheme such as has been proposed will require legislative provision. My officials met with the Attorney General's Office to explore the various options open to the Department and to identify the precise legislation which would require to be introduced to implement such a scheme. It appears that a number of separate pieces of legislation could require amendment.

In light of the complexity involved, I am also considering other options that might be available to address the matter as an interim measure. My officials have been making enquiries into alternative options and will continue to work to find a solution that meets the concerns of landowners who provide access to their lands for recreational purposes.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

286. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Develop-

ment when announcements will be made on funding (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44016/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I launched the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme on 16th April last. The closing date for receipt of applications from Local Authorities under the Scheme was 28th June 2019.

Over 300 applications for funding were received from the Local Authorities.

I can confirm that an application was received in respect of the town referred to by the Deputy.

My officials have completed their assessment of all of the applications received and the successful applicants will be announced very shortly.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

287. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44068/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I can confirm that no financial settlements were reached by my Department since its establishment in 2017. One statutory body within my Department's remit, Water Safety Ireland, had one financial settlement which did not include a confidentiality clause.

Question No. 288 answered with Question No. 10.

Departmental Funding

289. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of applications and inquiries received by his Department directly or bodies under his aegis for funding to date in 2019; the extent to which he expects to be in a position to meet these demands in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44123/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in 2017 to support the creation of vibrant and sustainable communities across this country and is committed to the successful delivery of a number of programmes which have provided financial and other supports to community groups and organisations across the country.

My Department delivers a coherent package of supports to strengthen rural and urban communities. These supports enable economic growth and development and also support communities to address gaps in meeting social needs, including those caused by higher levels of deprivation.

Over €230 million was invested by the Department in 2018 in rural and community supports, across a range of programmes and initiatives. In 2019 funding supports from my Department increased by 26% to €291 million. This is allowing for even more supports to be provided this year which will meet the projected out-turn, for my Department and its agencies, based on the level of demand. The exact figures for applications and of enquiries will be forwarded

separately to the Deputy.

I was delighted to secure a further increase of 6% to €308 million for 2020 which demonstrates that Government commitment to investing in communities will continue.

My Department will continue to support our communities to become and remain sustainable and desirable places to live, work and raise families and we are committed to reviewing funding priorities on an ongoing basis to ensure supports remain targeted at those most in need.

Details of all these programmes, including eligibility criteria, how to apply, and other information, can be found on the Government's website, gov.ie.

Community Development Initiatives

290. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he envisages his Department engaging in a supportive role to communities seeking assistance nationally in the coming year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44124/19]

293. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which his Department or bodies under his aegis are proactive in their engagement with local community groups with regard to the determination of the extent to which assistance is available or can be made available in various cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44127/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 290 and 293 together.

My Department is committed to the successful delivery of a wide range of programmes and supports to communities seeking assistance.

These schemes include large-scale investments in rural regeneration and renewal of our towns and villages, in rural development, and in community supports such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme and the Community Services Programme. In 2019 these had an allocation of €43.2 million and €46.2 million respectively. For 2020 this funding is being maintained – with an additional €1.5 million being provided for use across these two programmes to fund some new organisations and to provide targeted supports for disadvantaged communities.

These targeted investments for community development will assist organisations, communities and individuals right across the country. This builds on strong existing funding – including €12.6 million for supports for the community and development sector and €12.5 million in dormant accounts funding for a range of measures.

There are also small-scale financial grants and supports available through schemes like the Community Enhancement Programme (€4.5 million in 2019), the CLÁR Programme (€5 million in 2019) and the various supports to local community and voluntary groups and social enterprises.

€1.2 million is being provided to support the implementation of measures in the “Strategy for Community and Voluntary Sector development in Ireland”. This will include enhanced supports for the structures which drive local engagement in decision making – the Public Participation Networks and the Local Community Development Committees. A further €300,000 is

being allocated to support delivery of the recently published “National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland”.

I am delighted with the impacts these investments have had and are having in communities, however, I know that there are some groups or community organisations that may not have considered seeking funding because they do not have the experience of submitting funding applications or lack understanding of the criteria in place.

To help these groups, my Department, in conjunction with Pobal, held a series of six ‘Helping Hands’ events nationwide earlier this year, to make groups more aware of funding programmes, and to provide practical guidance on making applications. These events provided hints and tips on how to make a better funding application and how to identify local supports that community groups can draw upon.

I was delighted with the feedback from these events, and I have asked my officials to consider running or participating in similar events into 2020.

My Department also engaged with local community groups through a series of regional ‘Rural Opportunity’ information sessions during between March and May of this year to raise awareness of the extent to which assistance is available to rural communities from across Government Departments. Staff from my Department and a number of other Departments and agencies were also on hand at the events to provide further information to attendees on the range of supports available.

My hope is that these ongoing efforts will encourage individuals and communities to take their own ideas or projects forward to ensure that our funding and supports have the broadest possible reach.

Community Development Initiatives

291. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which he expects to address the socioeconomic needs of disadvantaged urban communities nationally in the coming year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44125/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department’s mission is to support viable, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland. The Department’s Community Development programmes play a key role in tackling social exclusion and addressing deprivation in all communities, both urban and rural.

The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) has a funding allocation nationally of €38m in 2019 and will provide €190m over the lifetime of the Programme.

SICAP supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups.

There is also €4.5m in funding for the Community Enhancement Programme in 2019, providing funding towards grants for Community Groups across Ireland. The allocation of funding is weighted towards those communities in most need. It is hoped to continue this programme into 2020.

I have also provided ring-fenced supports for particular areas of urban deprivation includ-

ing, for example, €6.5m for initiatives in Dublin's North East Inner City in 2019.

All of these measures play a role in addressing the socioeconomic needs of disadvantaged urban communities nationally.

Community Development Initiatives

292. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the degree to which he expects to be in a position to address the socioeconomic needs of rural areas nationally in the coming year, including issues such as isolation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44126/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am satisfied that my Department delivers an effective package of supports which strengthen rural communities across the country, including dealing with the issue of isolation, and that this will continue into the coming year. Funding priorities are reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure our supports remain targeted at those most in need socially and economically.

Initiatives such as the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, the Community Services Programme, LEADER Programme, the Community Enhancement Programme and other funding for community groups and social enterprises provide supports that are addressing the requirements of rural communities and areas facing disadvantage and issues of isolation.

In addition, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will provide €1 billion over the next 10 years for rural towns and villages, while the Town Centre Living Initiative, a pilot programme aimed at testing approaches to the revitalisation of towns and villages, was launched in six towns in October 2018.

My Department also continues to develop policy that can assist with the effective targeting of future funding. We are developing a new Government rural development policy to follow on from the Action Plan for Rural Development, a cross-Government plan to support economic and social development in Ireland's rural areas, while the Strategy for the Community and Voluntary Sector and Ireland's first National Social Enterprise Policy have both been published in recent months.

Question No. 293 answered with Question No. 290.

Departmental Funding

294. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if consideration will be given to a possible offer of funding to support a community based enterprise at a location (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44128/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Funding may be available through the LEADER Programme for the type of community based organisation referred to by the Deputy depending on the nature of the proposed activity to be funded.

LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020 which is delivered through Local Action Groups in each of the 28 LEADER sub-regional areas around the country. To date, over 2,400 projects have been approved under the current LEADER programme

for funding in excess of €91 million.

In order for a project to be eligible for LEADER funding, it must be compatible with the actions outlined in the approved Local Development Strategy for the relevant LEADER area, and it must comply with the Operating Rules and EU Regulations in place for the programme.

The decision to approve a project, or otherwise, is a matter for the Local Action Group which administers the programme in each LEADER area.

I understand that the organisation in question submitted two Expressions of Interest to the Kildare Local Action Group. Following assessment, one was deemed ineligible as the proposed project activity did not qualify for financial support under the LEADER 2014-2020 Operating Rules.

The second proposal has been deemed eligible and the Local Action Group has invited the promoter to submit a full application for detailed consideration.

Departmental Funding

295. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the extent to which grant aid support can be offered to support a community based organisation (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44129/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Funding may be available through the LEADER Programme for the type of community based organisation referred to by the Deputy, depending on the nature of the proposed activity to be funded.

LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020 which is delivered through Local Action Groups in each of the 28 LEADER sub-regional areas around the country. To date, over 2,400 projects have been approved under the current LEADER programme for funding in excess of €91 million.

In order for a project to be eligible for LEADER funding, it must be compatible with the actions outlined in the approved Local Development Strategy for the relevant LEADER area, and it must comply with the Operating Rules and EU Regulations in place for the programme.

The decision to approve a project, or otherwise, is a matter for the Local Action Group which administers the programme in each LEADER area.

I understand that the organisation in question submitted an Expression of Interest to the Kildare Local Action Group in August 2019 and that this is currently under consideration by the Group.

Question No. 296 answered with Question No. 22.

Invalidity Pension Reviews

297. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on the review requested of an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied) who supplied further medical evidence in August 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43853/19]

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 8 April 2019. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on 22 July 2019 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review or appeal.

He requested a review of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of the review. Following a review of all the information available it was decided that there was no change to the original decision. He was notified on 22 October 2019 of the outcome of the review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Labour Activation Programmes

298. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if persons qualifying under the long-term illness scheme are eligible for workplace programmes and training courses even if they are drawing credits rather than receiving a social welfare payment; the supports available for persons in this category to assist them in returning to the labour market in circumstances in which this is possible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43860/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is committed to supporting as many people as possible to participate in employment and to become more self-sufficient by providing supports that address barriers they may encounter in finding and sustaining employment or self-employment. There are a range of supports available to people with long term illness to assist them to enter employment.

Community employment (CE) and Tús are work placement schemes that aim to provide quality work opportunities while also assisting in providing certain services of benefit to communities. The Department's main focus is on activation and to progress as many participants as possible from Community Employment and Tús into full-time and sustainable employment. These work programmes are available to persons on a qualifying social welfare payment which may include time spent on certain long term illness schemes for example disability allowance, blind pension, illness benefit and invalidity pension.

The back to work enterprise scheme assists people on certain social welfare payments including disability allowance, carer's allowance, incapacity supplement, invalidity pension, illness benefit and blind pension who wish to become self-employed. The back to work enterprise allowance is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are on social welfare payments to develop a business. Individuals in receipt of the back to work enterprise allowance may also receive financial support in the form of the enterprise support grant subject to a maximum amount of €2,500 over the two year period of the back to work enterprise allowance scheme.

The wages subsidy scheme gives financial support to employers who employ people with disabilities. The objective of the wages subsidy scheme is to increase the likelihood of people with disabilities obtaining and sustaining employment in the open labour market by providing financial incentives to private sector employers.

Youth employment support scheme aims to give you the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment, while on a work placement in a host organisation. The scheme is open to organisations in the private, community and voluntary sectors. People in receipt of disability allowance and blind pension can be supported under this scheme.

The training support grant funded by my Department is designed to facilitate quick access to short-term training that is identified to assist participants in receipt of long term illness schemes such as disability allowance, illness benefit (after 6 months), carer's allowance, blind pension, invalidity pension. This grant can support someone up to €500 per annum with the costs associated with training or development.

The back to education allowance scheme, operated by my Department, provides people with a second chance education that will improve their prospects of securing employment. It enables eligible people such as those in receipt of disability allowance, incapacity supplement, blind pension, invalidity pension, illness benefit/credits and carer's allowance to pursue approved education courses and to continue to receive income support for the duration of a course of study, subject to meeting certain conditions.

I would advise the Deputy to advise any one in the situation she has outlined to contact their local intreo centre for information on the options available to them.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

299. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the income disregard of €332.50 will be increased for those carers who can work the extra 3.5 hours announced in budget 2020 in view of the fact that there is fear among carers they may be penalised as the income disregard did not increase; and if the issue will be revisited (details supplied). [43862/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In Budget 2020, I announced that recipients of Carer's Allowance would be allowed to increase the number of hours they can work, study or attend a training course, outside the home, from 15 to 18.5 hours per week. Over 1,200 family carers are expected to benefit from this change at an estimated cost of €11.6 million.

I particularly prioritised this measure in response to the carers I have met who have told me that they found the current number of 15 hours to be too restrictive. An increase to 18.5 will accommodate increased participation by carers in work or training to strengthen their connection with the labour force, while also serving the additional purpose of reducing the social alienation experienced by many carers.

The existing income disregard and means test for Carer's Allowance is the most generous within the social welfare system, with the amount of weekly earnings disregarded at €332.50 for a single person and €665 for a couple. By comparison, the income disregard applied to applicants for Disability Allowance is €120 per week, with 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 disregarded. For Jobseeker's Allowance, it is €20 per day up to a maximum of €60 for 3 days and the balance is assessed at 60%. For Jobseeker's Transitional Payment, the weekly income disregard is €150 with 50% of the balance assessed as means.

In deliberating measures for Budget 2020 I did include an examination of the disregard for Carer's Allowance. In its pre-Budget submission, Family Carers Ireland looked for an increase in the disregard for Carer's Allowance of €117.50 for a single person and €235.00 for a couple per week. My Department costed this proposal using the ESRI SWITCH model. Allowing for

income tax and Working Family Payment offsets, net expenditure is estimated to be approximately €55 million per year.

Changes to schemes are considered in an overall budgetary and policy context and from an evidence based perspective. Some 86% of the current recipients of Carer's Allowance have no means or means of less than €7.60 per week and would not benefit by an increase in the disregard.

Only 0.1% of current Carer's Allowance recipients have means of between €250 and €300 per week, so, it is highly unlikely that any will have their payment reduced as a result of choosing to work additional hours.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Commencement of Legislation

300. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when she expects the Parent's Leave and Benefit Bill 2019 which has passed through the Houses of the Oireachtas will be enacted; when eligible parents will be able to apply for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43884/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Parent's Leave and Benefit Bill completed all stages in Houses of the Oireachtas on the 15th of October and has been sent to the President for signature. Following enactment, commencement orders will be made by me in respect of Part 5 of the Act and by the Minister for Justice and Equality in respect of the other provisions. Parent's leave and benefit will be available to all parents in respect of children born or adopted on or after 1st November 2019.

This new scheme provides two weeks paid leave to both parents and who take parental leave from their employment to care for their child. The scheme will support parents during the first year of the child's life, in line with the Programme for Government commitment and allows parents more flexibility in achieving and managing a work life balance.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

301. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of discussions between her Department and community employment supervisors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43908/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, 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.

Rural Social Scheme Data

302. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of places nationally for the rural social scheme; and the number of places vacant in each county. [43914/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Rural Social Scheme (RSS) is an income support initiative which provides part-time employment opportunities in community and voluntary organisations for farmers or fishermen who are in receipt of certain social welfare payments and underemployed in their primary occupation. The RSS is a supplementary income support scheme which is delivered through 36 Implementing Bodies (IBs) or Local Development Companies and Údarás Na Gaeltachta in the Gaeltacht areas.

There is a total of 3,350 places allocated nationally to the Implementing Bodies (IBs) and Údarás na Gaeltachta who deliver the RSS. As at 21st October, 2019 there are 110 vacancies on the scheme.

Table 1 outlines the number of RSS vacancies in each county.

* Please note there is a category for “Islands” which covers the offshore islands.

Table 1

| County | Vacancies |
|-----------|-----------|
| Carlow | 2 |
| Cavan | 3 |
| Clare | 1 |
| Cork | 38 |
| Donegal | 2 |
| Dublin | 5 |
| Galway | 0 |
| Kerry | 10 |
| Kildare | 0 |
| Kilkenny | 7 |
| Laois | 2 |
| Leitrim | 0 |
| Limerick | 0 |
| Longford | 0 |
| Louth | 4 |
| Mayo | 2 |
| Meath | 0 |
| Monaghan | 0 |
| Offaly | 4 |
| Roscommon | 3 |
| Sligo | 6 |
| Tipperary | 4 |
| Waterford | 2 |
| Westmeath | 0 |

| County | Vacancies |
|----------|-----------|
| Wexford | 5 |
| Wicklow | 5 |
| *Islands | 5 |
| Total | 110 |

State Pension (Contributory) Data

303. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number in receipt of the State pension, contributory, in the pre-2012 rate bands by gender; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43937/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): According to the records available to my Department, as at 30 September 2019 there were 222,455 state pension (contributory) claimants in receipt of a state pension (contributory) (SPC) based on the pre-2012 rate bands.

Under social welfare legislation, there are a number of ways to qualify for a State pension (contributory). In the majority of cases, the rate of pension entitlement is determined by the ‘yearly average’ of social insurance contributions a person achieves over their working life. In order to qualify for a maximum rate of pension, an applicant should have a yearly average of 48 paid and/or credited contributions from 1979, or from their date of entry into insurable employment, to the end of the last complete tax year preceding the year they turn pension age.

The following table provides a breakdown by gender of the current State pension (contributory) personal payments based on pre-September 2012 rate bands.

| Yearly Average Rate Bands | Male | Female | Total | % of Max SPC rate |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|---------|-------------------|
| 48+ | 81,488 | 23,833 | 105,321 | 100% |
| 20 to 47 | 34,475 | 27,935 | 62,410 | 98% |
| 15 to 19 | 4,757 | 5,603 | 10,360 | 75% |
| 10 to 14 | 5,658 | 6,019 | 11,677 | 50% |

In other SPC cases, pension entitlement is determined using other eligibility criteria. For example, a person who is in receipt of Invalidity Pension at maximum rate immediately prior to their 66th birthday will automatically transfer to the maximum rate of State pension (contributory) on reaching pension age.

The following table shows the breakdown of such cases by gender.

| Rate Calculation not based on Yearly Average | Male | Female | Total |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Invalidity ‘saver’ cases | 10,262 | 10,808 | 21,070 |
| Other, including pre-53 SPC, half-rate self-employed, etc. | 5,214 | 6,403 | 11,617 |
| Total | 15,476 | 17,211 | 32,687 |

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Data

304. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of civil servants and public servants, respectively, in receipt of the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44020/19]

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, relative to family size. WFP is designed to prevent in work poverty for low paid workers with child dependents and to provide a financial incentive to take up employment.

There are currently 3,237 (combined total) civil and public servants in receipt of WFP. I am advised that the information available to the Department does not permit a distinction between these two groups of employees for further analysis.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Farm Assist Scheme

305. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 533 of 2 April 2019 and taking into account any proposed changes announced in budget 2020, the latest costings regarding the scheme in question over a full calendar year; and the first year costs arising. [44043/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The farm assist scheme is a means-tested payment for farmers on low incomes and is similar to jobseekers allowance. Recipients retain the advantages of jobseekers allowance such as keeping secondary benefits and access to activation programmes.

The estimated cost of farm assist over a full year for 2020 is almost €61 million and is based on the average number of recipients. The scheme is demand led and the average number of recipients for 2020 is 5,480. This estimated costing also includes increases in the rates for qualified children which I announced in Budget 2020. Recipients with qualified children aged 12 and over will receive a weekly increase of €3 and those with qualified children under 12 will receive an increase of €2 per week with effect from 6 January 2020.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

306. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will provide the insurance contribution record of a person (details supplied); the level and amount of arrears that would be payable to the person due to their mistake; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44052/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for State pension (contributory) has not been received from the person concerned. Once an application is received, their eligibility for pension will be determined and they will be notified of a decision without delay. Further, I am advised that the address provided by the Deputy for the person concerned is different to their address held by my Department.

Under social welfare legislation late claims for the State pension (contributory) may only be backdated for a maximum period of 6 months. Backdating of a late claim beyond 6 months will be considered in circumstances where the failure to claim arose as the result of either incorrect information having been supplied by my Department, or the claimant's serious incapacity by illness or infirmity.

Contact details for the Mullingar Intreo Office are as follows:

Address: Blackhall Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

Telephone: (076) 6285100.

If the person concerned is not in a position to use the online facility they can request a statement by contacting the Department's customer service team for assistance on (01) 4715898. Customers who wish to use a LoCall option can call from a landline on 1890 690 690. The customer service team is available to assist from 9am to 5pm; and is also open during lunchtime.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

307. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of financial settlements reached by her Department and statutory bodies within her remit nationally; the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44061/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) provides litigation, advisory and conveyancing services to Government Departments and Offices. Generally, the CSSO provides legal representation in relation to court cases taken against the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Where it is considered appropriate to do so, the CSSO may enter compromise agreements with the legal representatives of individuals who have applied to the Courts seeking, for instance, a Judicial Review of an executive decision, typically related to their entitlements under Social Welfare legislation, and/or damages arising from such decisions. The terms of settlement in those instances may include a clause setting out that the applicant and their legal representatives agree not to disclose or reveal the contents of the settlement. The Deputy will appreciate that this is a routine practice in litigation and many factors are taken into consideration when settling a case, including the opportunity cost of defending the case further, the plaintiff's wish for confidentiality, etc.

The CSSO, rather than my Department, would retain the records of Court cases settled.

Direct Provision Payments

308. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the allowance for adults in direct provision from €38.80 per week to €40, €41, €42, €43, €44 and €45, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44070/19]

309. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-

tion the estimated full-year cost of increasing the allowance for children in direct provision from €29.80 to €31, €32, €33, €34 and €35, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44071/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 and 309 together.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection administers the daily expenses allowance which is paid to applicants for international protection who live in the direct provision system where they are provided with full board, accommodation and other services by 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 and per child to €38.80 per adult and to €29.80 per child.

There are approximately 4,490 adults and 1,883 children residing in the system of direct provision in respect of whom daily expenses allowance is being paid. The full-year costs, based on the current numbers, to increase adult rate from €38.80 to amount €40.00, €41.00, €42.00, €43.00, €44.00 and €45.00; and of increasing the weekly child rate from €29.80 to €31.00, €32.00, €33.00, €34.00 and €35.00 are provided in the tabular statements.

Any increases to the rate of daily expenses allowance would have to be approved by Government and considered in a budgetary context.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Tabular Statement 1: Cost of increasing Adult Rate of Daily Expenses Allowance

| Proposed Rate | Additional full year cost to increase adult rate from €38.80 to amount shown |
|-----------------|--|
| Increase to €40 | €280,200 |
| Increase to €41 | €513,700 |
| Increase to €42 | €747,100 |
| Increase to €43 | €980,700 |
| Increase to €44 | €1,214,000 |
| Increase to €45 | €1,447,600 |

Tabular Statement 2: Cost of increasing Child Rate of Daily Expenses Allowance

| Proposed Rate | Additional full year cost to increase child rate from €29.80 to amount shown |
|-----------------|--|
| Increase to €31 | €117,500 |
| Increase to €32 | €215,400 |
| Increase to €33 | €313,300 |
| Increase to €34 | €411,200 |
| Increase to €35 | €509,200 |

Social Welfare Benefits Data

310. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing payments (details supplied) by €5, €10, €15 and €20, respectively, taking into account increases announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and

if she will make a statement on the matter. [44072/19]

335. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the State pensions by €5, €10, €15 and €20, respectively, taking into account changes announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44098/19]

336. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing each social assistance payment by €5, €10, €15, €20, €25 and €30, respectively, taking into account increases announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44099/19]

337. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing all social insurance payments by €5, €10, €15, €25 and €30, respectively, taking into account increases announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44100/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 310 and 335 to 337, inclusive, together.

The costings sought by the Deputy are detailed in the following table.

| Scheme | Full year cost of a €5 increase | Full year cost of a €10 increase | Full year cost of a €15 increase | Full year cost of a €20 increase | Full year cost of a €25 increase | Full year cost of a €30 increase |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m |
| Social Insurance Schemes | | | | | | |
| State Pension (Contributory) | 116.9 | 233.6 | 350.3 | 467.0 | 583.9 | 700.6 |
| Widow/er’s or Surviving Civil Partner’s (Con) Pension | 33.0 | 66.0 | 99.0 | 132.0 | 165.0 | 198.0 |
| Deserted Wife’s Benefit | 2.3 | 4.5 | 6.8 | 9.1 | 11.4 | 13.6 |
| Invalidity Pension | 16.3 | 32.5 | 48.8 | 65.1 | 81.4 | 97.6 |
| Partial Capacity Benefit | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| Guardian’s Payment (Contributory) | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| Death Benefit Pension | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 1.0 | 1.2 |
| Disablement Pension | 1.3 | 2.5 | 3.8 | 5.1 | 6.3 | 7.6 |
| Illness Benefit | 13.4 | 26.7 | 40.1 | 53.5 | 66.8 | 80.2 |
| Injury Benefit | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.3 |

| Scheme | Full year cost of a €5 increase | Full year cost of a €10 increase | Full year cost of a €15 increase | Full year cost of a €20 increase | Full year cost of a €25 increase | Full year cost of a €30 increase |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m |
| Incapacity Supplement | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.5 |
| Jobseeker's Benefit | 8.9 | 17.9 | 26.8 | 35.7 | 44.6 | 53.6 |
| Carer's Benefit | 0.7 | 1.5 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 3.7 | 4.5 |
| Health and Safety Benefit | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Maternity & Adoptive Benefit | 5.4 | 10.9 | 16.3 | 21.8 | 27.2 | 32.7 |
| Paternity Benefit | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.4 | 1.7 |
| Total Social Insurance Schemes | 200.0 | 399.8 | 599.6 | 799.4 | 999.4 | 1,199.2 |
| Social Assistance Schemes | | | | | | |
| State Pension (Non Con) | 25.3 | 50.6 | 75.9 | 101.2 | 126.5 | 151.8 |
| Blind Person's Pension | 0.3 | 0.6 | 0.9 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con) Pension | 0.3 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.7 | 2.0 |
| Deserted Wife's Allowance | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| One-Parent Family Payment | 10.2 | 20.5 | 30.7 | 40.9 | 51.2 | 61.4 |
| Carer's Allowance | 12.4 | 24.8 | 37.1 | 49.5 | 61.9 | 74.3 |
| Half Rate Carer's Allowance | 5.0 | 10.0 | 15.0 | 20.0 | 25.0 | 30.0 |
| Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory) | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Jobseeker's Allowance Max Rate €203 | 38.7 | 77.4 | 116.3 | 155.0 | 193.8 | 232.5 |

| Scheme | Full year cost of a €5 increase | Full year cost of a €10 increase | Full year cost of a €15 increase | Full year cost of a €20 increase | Full year cost of a €25 increase | Full year cost of a €30 increase |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m | €m |
| JA age 18 to 24 on €112.70 rate | 2.9 | 5.9 | 8.8 | 11.7 | 14.7 | 17.6 |
| Disability Allowance | 40.8 | 81.5 | 122.4 | 163.2 | 203.9 | 244.7 |
| Farm Assist | 1.8 | 3.6 | 5.5 | 7.3 | 9.1 | 10.9 |
| Employment Support Schemes (BTWA & BTEA) | 2.3 | 4.5 | 6.8 | 9.0 | 11.3 | 13.5 |
| Employment / Internship Schemes (CE, Tús, RSS etc.) | 9.7 | 19.4 | 29.2 | 38.9 | 48.6 | 58.3 |
| Supplementary Welfare Allowance | 4.7 | 9.4 | 14.1 | 18.8 | 23.5 | 28.2 |
| Total Social Assistance Schemes | 154.6 | 309.2 | 464.2 | 618.8 | 773.4 | 928.0 |
| Grand total Social Insurance & Social Assistance Schemes | 354.6 | 709.0 | 1,063.8 | 1,418.1 | 1,772.8 | 2,127.2 |

It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2020.

Fuel Allowance Data

311. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the fuel allowance by one, two, three and four weeks, respectively, in tabular form taking into account increases announced in budget 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44073/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated cost of increasing the fuel allowance season by the periods sought by the Deputy are detailed in the following table.

| | 1 week increase | 2 week increase | 3 week increase | 4 week increase |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fuel Allowance | €9.2m | €18.3m | €27.5m | €36.6m |

It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2020. Any decision to extend the fuel season would need to be considered in an overall budgetary context.

Living Alone Allowance

312. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the living alone allowance by €2, €3, €4, €5 and €6, respectively, taking into account budget 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44074/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing the living alone allowance by €2, €3, €4, €5 and €6 per week is as follows:

| Increase | Cost of Increase |
|----------|------------------|
| €2 | €22.4m |
| €3 | €33.6m |
| €4 | €44.8m |
| €5 | €56.0m |
| €6 | €67.1m |

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

Household Benefits Scheme

313. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year expenditure on the household benefits package by benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44075/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Household Benefits Package comprises a choice of either Electricity or Gas Allowance, and Free Television Licence. These allowances provide a contribution towards electricity or gas, as well the cost of the annual Television Licence. Only one household package is paid per household. Household Benefits Package may be funded from either Vote 37 or the Social Insurance Fund, depending on the origin of the primary scheme entitlement of the recipient (e.g. State Pension (Non-Contributory) from the Vote or State Pension (Contributory) from the Fund).

The allocation for the Household Benefits scheme in 2020 is €254,462 as published in the 2020 Budget Estimates on Budget Day, details of which are in the following table.

| | Vote 37 | Social Insurance Fund | Total |
|-------------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | €000 | €000 | €000 |
| Electricity Allowance | 51,453 | 121,520 | 172,973 |
| Gas Allowance | 4,877 | 16,442 | 21,319 |
| Free Television License | 15,149 | 45,021 | 60,170 |
| Total | 71,479 | 182,983 | 254,462 |

Rent Supplement Scheme Data

314. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing rent supplement limits by an average of 10%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44076/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement continues its important role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 18,300 recipients for which the Government has provided €132.4 million for 2019.

Based on the current customer volumes and the spread of recipients across all counties, the forecast full year cost of increasing rent limits by 10% would be approximately €14.1 million.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Data

315. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure on the free travel scheme taking into account changes announced as part of budget 2020; the estimated cost of increasing expenditure by 10%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44077/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The allocation for the Free Travel scheme in 2020 is €95m, as published in the 2020 Budget Estimates on Budget Day.

The cost of increasing expenditure by 10% would be €9.5 million.

Telephone Support Allowance

316. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the telephone support allowance by €1, €2, €2.50, €3, €4 and €5, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44078/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing the telephone support allowance by €1, €2, €2.50, €3, €4, and €5 per week is as follows:

| Weekly increase | Cost of increase |
|-----------------|------------------|
| €1.00 | €6.9m |
| €2.00 | €13.8m |
| €2.50 | €17.3m |
| €3.00 | €20.8m |
| €4.00 | €27.7m |
| €5.00 | €34.6m |

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

Qualified Child Increase Payments

317. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the qualified child increase in each age bracket by €2, €3, €4 and €5, respectively, taking into account increases announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44079/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The costings sought by the Deputy are detailed in the following table:

| Qualified Child Increase | €2 increase | €3 increase | €4 increase | €5 increase |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Children under 12 years cost of increase | €20.2m | €30.2m | €40.3m | €50.4m |
| Children aged 12 and over cost of increase | €11.8m | €17.7m | €23.5m | €29.4m |
| Total cost of increase | €32.0m | €47.9m | €63.8m | €79.8m |

It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

School Meals Programme

318. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing expenditure on the school meals programme by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, respectively, taking into account changes announced in budget 2020 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44080/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Budget 2020 increased funding for the School Meals Programme by €4 million, from €57.6 million in 2019 to €61.6 million in 2020. The Budget measure provides funding for an additional 35,000 primary school pupils to receive hot meals in place of the cold lunches they currently receive under the School Meals Programme.

The estimated cost of increasing expenditure on the School Meals Programme by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20% is detailed in the following table:

| 2020 Budget | +5% | +10% | +15% | +20% |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| €000 | €000 | €000 | €000 | €000 |
| 61,600 | 3,080 | 6,160 | 9,240 | 12,320 |

Departmental Expenditure

319. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the annual expenditure on the living wage commission; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44081/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Act 2015 established the Low Pay Commission, which makes recommendations regarding the National Minimum Wage to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

The annual expenditure of the Low Pay Commission, as outlined in the Commission's three year report published in January 2019 is as follows:

| Expenditure Item | 2015* | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Salaries | €94,000 | €150,000 | €112,000 | €149,200 |
| Fees | €61,400 | €81,000 | €60,000 | €75,300 |
| Research | €75,000 | €55,000 | €84,000 | €55,000 |
| Administration* | €20,300 | €21,000 | €15,000 | €27,600 |
| Total | €250,700 | €307,000 | €271,000 | €307,100 |
| of which: | | | | |
| Pay | €155,400 | €231,000 | €172,000 | €224,500 |
| Non-Pay | €95,300 | €76,000 | €99,000 | €82,600 |

* This includes payments during the Commission's interim period of operations from February 2015. The first full year of operation was 2016.

Further information regarding the Commission's three year report, and other reports can be found at www.lowpaycommission.ie

Child Benefit Data

320. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing child benefit by €10, €15, €20, €25 and €30, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44082/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing child benefit by €10, €15, €20, €25 and €30 per month is as follows:

| Monthly Increase | Cost of Increase |
|------------------|------------------|
| €10 | €147.6m |
| €15 | €221.4m |
| €20 | €295.1m |
| €25 | €368.9m |
| €30 | €442.7m |

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

Maternity Benefit Data

321. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing maternity benefit from 26 weeks to 30 and 34 weeks, respectively, for those who have had multiple births; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44083/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Justice and Equality has policy responsibility for maternity leave which is provided for in the 1994 and 2004 Maternity Acts. Any decision to extend the duration of mater-

nity leave, including that for families with multiple births, would be the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality. My Department has responsibility for the payment of maternity benefit which is provided for in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended).

Maternity Benefit is paid for 26 weeks at a rate of €245 per week. There is a provision of €256m for maternity benefit for 2019. CSO data from 2016 indicates that there were 1,215 instances of multiple births in Ireland, representing 1.9% of all births. Based on an apportionment of 1.9% of maternity benefit recipients, the table below estimates the additional cost of increasing the duration of maternity benefit by 4 weeks to 30 weeks, and by 8 weeks to 34 weeks where there are multiple births.

Estimated annual cost of increasing the duration of maternity benefit in respect of multiple births

| No. of weeks | Estimated additional full year cost |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 30 (additional 4 weeks) | €724,000 |
| 34 (additional 8 weeks) | €1,447,000 |

It should also be noted that there would be additional costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs for substitution or salary top-ups which would be a matter for my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Decisions around the extension of this benefit would have to be considered in a budgetary context and the impact it would have on employers.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Child Benefit Data

322. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of paying a double child benefit payment to parents on the birth of a child; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44084/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of issuing a double child benefit payment to parents on the birth of a child is €8.7 million in 2020.

This cost assumes the payment of €140, representing an additional months payment in respect of these children. It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

Jobseeker’s Payments

323. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of equalising jobseeker payments for those under 25 years of age to the standard rate in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44085/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): On Budget Day I announced targeted measures to support young jobseekers including the abolition of the age-related rates of payment for 25 year olds from January 2020. I also announced

that that the full rate of payment would be available to jobseekers aged 18 to 24 who are living independently and in receipt of State housing supports including rent supplement and the Housing Assistance Payment.

From next January, a young jobseeker aged 25 years will receive a weekly increase of €45.20 from €157.80 up to €203 and a younger jobseeker will benefit by up to €90.30 per week. These are significant weekly increases that will benefit almost 2,100 young people at a cost of €5.2 million. Once these measures are introduced, there will be approximately 14,000 young jobseekers in receipt of age related rates of payment. The cost of increasing the rate of payment to the full rate for this group would be approximately €66 million in a full year.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

National Advocacy Service

324. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of advocates in the National Advocacy Services for People with Disabilities; the estimated full-year cost of increasing the number of advocates by five, seven, nine and ten staff, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44086/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) provides an independent, confidential and free, issues-based representative advocacy service that works exclusively for the person using the service and adheres to the highest professional standards. NAS has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services or have limited informal or natural supports.

The number of advocates in NAS is 39 (8 senior advocates and 31 advocates).

NAS is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board (CIB), which has a mandate under the Citizens Information Act 2007 to provide advocacy for people with disabilities. The NAS operational grant from the Citizens Information Board for 2019 amounts to € 3,250,952.

Based on 2019 costs, the following table shows the estimated full-year cost of increasing the number of advocates by 5, 7, 9 and 10.

| Number of additional advocates | Minimum Salary (Gross salary, PRSI and Pension) | Estimated provision for overheads including office space, training, insurance, travel and subsistence | Total |
|--------------------------------|---|---|----------|
| 5 | €251,576 | €75,000 | €326,576 |
| 7 | €352,206 | €105,000 | €457,206 |
| 9 | €452,836 | €135,000 | €587,836 |
| 10 | €503,151 | €150,000 | €653,151 |

The figures do not include provision for any additional administrative or managerial costs that may arise from a possible increase in advocate posts as estimated.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Bereavement Leave

325. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of introducing two weeks paid bereavement leave at a rate of €203 per week per parent who has been bereaved of a child under 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44087/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The death of a child is a tragic event for any parent.

According to the CSO data for deaths of those aged less than 19 years in 2016, there were 354 deaths in the year. The statistics also indicate that the majority of these child deaths, 194, occurred during the first year. My Department pays Maternity Benefit for stillborn babies born after 24 weeks of pregnancy or on the death of an infant during the period of maternity, which is 26 weeks.

Under existing social welfare schemes, there are provisions in place for continued payment of welfare schemes or allowances for up to 6 weeks following the death of a child. Similarly, Domiciliary Care Allowance will continue to be paid for 3 months in cases where the child being cared for has died.

Under the Supplementary Allowance scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet from their weekly income. An application can be made for assistance with funeral and burial expenses where there is an inability to pay these costs, in part or in full, by the family of the deceased person without causing hardship. In 2018 some 2,900 ENPs were paid at a cost of €5.5 million following a bereavement.

In terms of providing a specific benefit for two weeks bereavement leave for both parents in respect of a deceased child at the rate of €203 per week could cost would be in the region of €300,000.

Any changes would have to be considered in a budgetary context and alongside existing policies in this area.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Working Family Payment Eligibility

326. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of reducing the hours required to qualify for the working family payment from 19 to 15 hours for lone parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44088/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work support which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings with children. WFP is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependants and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment. Expenditure on WFP in 2018 was approximately €430 million and it is currently paid to almost 53,000 families in respect of some 119,000 children.

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 fortnight or

19 hours per week. A couple may combine their hours of employment to meet the qualification criteria. The applicant must also have at least one qualified child who normally resides with them or is supported by them. Furthermore, the average family income must be below a specified amount which varies according to the number of qualified children in the family.

For low income workers who work fewer than 19 hours per week and work on a casual basis (that is, up to and including 3 days per week) the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) scheme provides in-work income support through daily disregards and tapered withdrawal of payments.

Apart from the Jobseeker schemes if a person cannot meet the 19 hours WFP threshold or if their hours vary significantly from week to week, the Department offers a number of other schemes which can provide income support that can be combined with earnings from employment, subject to each individual's circumstances. These include One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) and the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST), and the Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI) scheme. It is possible to be in receipt of OFP and WFP at the same time.

I believe that the current range of supports available to families, including WFP, works very well for the vast majority of families and facilitates an element of choice which allows them to select the option which best suits their needs.

I am advised that the number of families working between 15-18 hours and are earning below the relevant WFP thresholds is not currently captured in existing data sources which means it is not possible to estimate a full year cost of reducing the hours.

Social Welfare Code

327. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of allowing lone parents in employment whose children are aged between seven and 14 years of age to receive both jobseeker's transition payment and the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44089/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a number of options for income support to lone parents once their entitlement to the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) ceases. These include the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) payment where the youngest child is aged 7-13 years (inclusive), and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) payment which may be paid to lone parents where the youngest child is aged 14 or over. The Working Family Payment (WFP), is also available to lone parents who are working 19 or more hours per week. Lone parents who move to Working Family Payment may also apply for the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD).

The concurrent payment of Jobseeker's Transitional Payment and Working Family Payment may contradict the policy goal of the changes to the One-Parent Family Payment scheme introduced since 2015, which were to tackle long-term social welfare dependency - and its associated poverty risks - through a tapering of income supports and a more active engagement process offering enhanced educational, training and employment supports. Concurrent payment of Jobseeker's Transitional Payment and Working Family Payment would also introduce a steep financial "cliff" for lone parents when their youngest child reaches 14 years of age and they potentially move to Jobseeker's Allowance.

Lone parents currently on Jobseeker's Transitional Payment who increase their working hours to 19 or more per week can transfer from Jobseeker's Transitional Payment to Working Family Payment.

I am advised that it is difficult to estimate the cost of paying Jobseeker's Transitional Payment and Working Family Payment concurrently to lone parents with children aged between 7 and 13 with any accuracy as the potential inflows where lone parents would be incentivised to increase their hours to 19 in order to qualify for both payments would have to be considered and this is not possible to quantify.

Social Welfare Code

328. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost in 2020 of extending the jobseeker's transitional payment for lone parents until their youngest child reaches 18 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44090/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a number of options for income support to lone parents once their entitlement to the One-Parent Family Payment (OPF) ceases. These include the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) payment where the youngest child is aged 7-13 years (inclusive) and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) payment which may be paid to lone parents where the youngest child is aged 14 or over. The Working Family Payment (WFP), is also available to lone parents who are working 19 or more hours per week. Lone parents who move to WFP may also apply for the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD).

I am advised that the cost of increasing the age limit for a qualified child for the jobseeker's transitional payment (JST) until the youngest child reaches 18 is not easily estimated as there are significant barriers to undertaking such an exercise. For example, customers may no longer be within the welfare system, while others could seek to move from alternative payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA), the Working Family Payment (WFP) and the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) back to JST. It would be difficult for my Department to estimate the magnitude of this flow into and between schemes with any degree of accuracy.

Likewise, I am advised that the number of young people who are 18 years of age and over who are still in secondary education, and the proportion of those who are the children of lone parents in receipt of benefits, is not readily available or easily estimated. As these unknown factors are critical to providing a reliable estimate the Department is not in a position to provide an full-year cost as requested by the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

329. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of social welfare appeals lodged in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the percentage of appeals which were successful; the average waiting time in each year in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44091/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Appeals which had a favourable outcome for the appellant consist of appeals which were either allowed in full or in part by an Appeals Officer, or which were resolved by way of a revised decision in favour of the appellant by a Deciding Officer/Designated Person.

In any year about 85% of all claims are awarded by the Department and just 1% are appealed. Nevertheless, the Appeals Office continues to work to ensure that these cases are dealt with as quickly as possible.

There are a number of reasons why a decision which was refused at first instance might be successful on appeal and it is not necessarily the case that the first decision was incorrect. It is often the case that new evidence is provided with an appeal and that, as a result, the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person; this was the case in 37.6% of such successful outcomes in 2017, 31.5% of such outcomes in 2018 and 37.6 % of such outcomes to the end of September 2019.

Where the decision was not revised by the Department in light of the appeal contentions, further evidence is often provided by the appellant as the appeal process proceeds and, in addition, the Appeals Officer may gain insights when they meet the appellant in person at oral hearing which may influence the outcome of the appeal.

Accordingly, significant efforts and resources have been devoted to reforming the appeal process in recent years. As a result, appeal processing times in respect of all schemes improved between 2012 and 2017 from 39.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2012 to 26.4 weeks in 2017, and from 27.8 weeks for a summary decision in 2012 to 19.8 weeks in 2017. The corresponding processing times for the year 2018 were 30 weeks for an oral hearing and 24.8 weeks for a summary decision. There has been some further improvement in 2019; at the end of September, an oral hearing decision took 27.9 weeks and a summary decision took 23.1 weeks.

The time taken to process an appeal reflects a number of factors including that the appeals process is a quasi-judicial process with Appeals Officers being required to decide all appeals on a ‘de-novo’ basis. In addition, appeals decisions are themselves subject to review by the High Court and decisions have to be formally written up to quasi-judicial standards. Other factors that influence appeals processing times include the quality of the initial decision – in this respect the Department has changed the decisions process in respect of medical schemes, in order to provide more information to the claimant. It is expected that this will help to reduce the number of appeals over time.

In addition, a considerable number of new Appeals Officers have joined the Appeals Office over the past 12-18 months to replace staff leaving on retirement. Given the complexity of the appeals process it takes some time for new staff to be trained up and develop expertise and this has led to somewhat longer processing times during this period. The Chief Appeals Officer has advised that appeal processing times continue to be a priority for her Office.

Finally, where a claimant has been refused a social welfare payment, regardless of the scheme involved, and is appealing that decision, if their means are insufficient to meet their needs it is open to them to apply for supplementary welfare allowance in the interim. If their application for supplementary welfare allowance is refused, they can also appeal that decision.

The statistics required by the Deputy are set out in the tables.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appeal Receipts and Percentage of Favourable Decisions of Appeals Finalised 2012 – 2019

| | Appeal Receipts | Appeals Finalised | Favourable Decisions | Appeals Disallowed | Withdrawn |
|------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 2012 | 35,484 | 32,558 | 50.4% | 42.6% | 7.0% |

| | Appeal Receipts | Appeals Finalised | Favourable Decisions | Appeals Disallowed | Withdrawn |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 2013 | 32,777 | 38,421 | 55.0% | 39.0% | 6.0% |
| 2014 | 26,069 | 31,211 | 56.5% | 37.7% | 5.8% |
| 2015 | 24,475 | 25,406 | 58.8% | 36.1% | 5.1% |
| 2016 | 22,461 | 23,220 | 59.2% | 35.9% | 4.9% |
| 2017 | 19,658 | 18,980 | 60.1% | 33.9% | 6.0% |
| 2018 | 18,854 | 18,507 | 58.8% | 36.1% | 5.1% |
| 2019 (to 30/9/2019) | 17,195 | 16,516 | 56.8% | 36.8% | 6.4% |

Appeal Processing Times 2012 – 2019

| | Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions | Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings |
|---------------------|--|--|
| 2012 | 27.8 | 39.5 |
| 2013 | 25.8 | 33.9 |
| 2014 | 21.1 | 28.6 |
| 2015 | 18.1 | 25.5 |
| 2016 | 17.6 | 24.1 |
| 2017 | 19.8 | 26.4 |
| 2018 | 24.8 | 30.0 |
| 2019 (to 30/9/2019) | 23.1 | 27.9 |

Departmental Contracts Data

330. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on external consultancy reports between May 2016 to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44092/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection engages consultants (individuals or organisations) to provide expert analysis over a wide range of areas, which includes the delivery of reports that contribute to decision-making or policy-making. I am advised by my Department that the amount spent on external consultancy reports between May 2016 and to date in 2019 was €1,834,681 for 35 reports. Details of these reports is set out in tabular format.

Amount spent on external consultancy reports by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection between May 2016 to date in 2019

| External Consultancy Report | Name of Consultant | Amount Spent |
|---|--------------------|--------------|
| Back to Education Allowance Qualitative Study | BMG Research | €50,670 |
| Data Protection – General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Scoping exercise | Grant Thornton | €3,444 |

Questions - Written Answers

| External Consultancy Report | Name of Consultant | Amount Spent |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Development of National Frameworks Qualifications (NFQ) Programme for training in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection | National College of Ireland | €29,900 |
| Measurement and Analysis of Household Income & Living Conditions 2017 Programme:1. Technical paper: examine the feasibility of conducting dynamic analysis to explore poverty and deprivation transitions over time and between different social risk groups2. Research report: examine the poverty and deprivation experience of the different risk groups, both dynamically and across a set of selected EU-countries | ESRI | €94,070 |
| Jobseeker Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016 | W5 Marketing Intelligence Ltd. | €124,550 |
| Joint Research Programme on Retirement | ESRI | €29,500 |
| Research into development of pensions, longer working lives and retirement policy | ESRI | €32,000 |
| Provision of IT Security Partner Services | Grant Thornton | €14,673 |
| Review of the Local Employment Services and Job Club Services | Indecon | €87,232 |
| Review of the Predictive Analytic Modelling Solution | The Analytics Store Ltd. | €9,471 |
| Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) – Expert Advice | Consult Hyperion | €61,194 |
| Social Inclusion Forum 2016 – Conference Report | Aidan Lloyd | €1,650 |
| Social Protection Research Innovation Rewards | Irish Research Council | €10,558 |
| Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund as at 31st December 2015 | KPMG | €281,670 |

| External Consultancy Report | Name of Consultant | Amount Spent |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Assessment of Indoor Air Quality - Longford Headquarters | Shorcontrol Ltd. | €1,913 |
| Assistance with compliance by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 | Mazars | €301,350 |
| Consultancy on Procurement Contract (OGP Framework tenders) | Empirica Consultants | €4,244 |
| External review of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's website | Clickworks and iReach | €59,100 |
| Health and Safety Risk Audit – Longford Headquarters and Intreo Office | Healthy Build Environment | €1,244 |
| Independent Review of the Amendments to the One-Parent Family payment since January 2012 | Indecon | €104,944 |
| Jobseeker Customer Satisfaction Survey 2017 | W5 Marketing Intelligence Ltd | €167,674 |
| Social Inclusion Forum 2017 – Conference Report | Lisa Costello | €1,750 |
| Study to Explore the drivers of negative employment outcomes on participants of the Back to Education Scheme | BMG Research | €41,228 |
| Survey of Employers (including JobsPlus employers) | W5 Marketing Intelligence Ltd | €30,750 |
| Treatment Benefit Privacy Impact Assessment | Grant Thornton | €7,749 |
| Economic Analysis of Auto-Enrolment Options | ESRI | €25,000 |
| Fire Safety Audit on Con Colbert House | LNB Fire Risk Management Ltd. | €1,500 |
| Joint Research Programme on Gender and Pensions | ESRI | €80,000 |
| Jobseeker Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018 | W5 Marketing Intelligence Ltd. | €121,228 |
| Pension Accounting Advice on Post-Employment Benefits | Mazars | €4,428 |
| Social Inclusion Forum 2018 – Conference Report | Peigín Doyle | €1,443 |

| External Consultancy Report | Name of Consultant | Amount Spent |
|--|--------------------|--------------|
| Social Inclusion Forum 2019 - Conference Report | Elizabeth Costello | €2,600 |
| Review of National Action Plan for Social Inclusion | Indecon | €30,275 |
| Access to Childcare and Home Care Services across Europe | ESRI | €15,679 |
| Overall Total | | €1,834,681 |

Free Travel Scheme Data

331. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of extending the free travel scheme to children in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44094/19]

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. In Budget 2019 the funding for the free travel scheme was increased by €5 million to a total of €95 million.

Providing an accurate projection of the cost of extending the free travel scheme to all children in receipt of domiciliary care allowance, taking into account increases announced in Budget 2019 is very difficult as the cost is determined by the usage of the extra passes provided and not by the number of newly qualified people. The fact that many operators have reduced fares for children and that in some cases children under five years of age can travel for free would also have to be taken into account. Taking all of this into consideration I am advised that the yearly cost of the measure suggested by the Deputy could be as high as €5.25 million.

Any decision to extend the free travel scheme to all children that are in receipt of a domiciliary care allowance would require additional funding for the free travel scheme and would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

Domiciliary care allowance is a monthly payment of €309.50 to the carer of a child with a disability. The allowance may be used for the additional costs involved in caring for the child and this may include additional transport costs.

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 person’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.

Carer’s Support Grant

332. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the carer’s support grant by €100, €200 and €300, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44095/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The estimated full year cost of increasing the carer’s support grant by €100, €200 and €300 is as follows:

| Annual Increase | Cost of Increase |
|-----------------|------------------|
| €100.00 | €13.3m |
| €200.00 | €26.7m |
| €300.00 | €39.9m |

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of beneficiaries for 2020.

Carer’s Allowance Eligibility

333. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the income disregard for carer’s allowance from €332.50 single and €665 for a couple to €450 and €900, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44096/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In Budget 2020, I announced that recipients of Carer’s Allowance (CA) would be allowed to increase the number of hours they can work, study or attend a training course, outside the home, from 15 to 18.5 hours per week. Over 1,200 additional family carers are expected to qualify for payment as a result of this change at an estimated cost of €11.6 million. Also, any carer currently working less than 18.5 hours per week can avail of the additional hours.

The means test for Carer’s Allowance is the most generous within the social welfare system in that €332.50 of gross weekly income is disregarded in the calculation of means for a single person; the equivalent for someone who is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting is €665 of combined gross weekly income. A married couple with 2 children could have weekly earnings of €734 net of PRSI, superannuation and union subscription costs and still qualify for the full rate of Carer’s Allowance. This is equivalent to over €38,000 per annum.

At the end of December 2018, there were 79,914 people in receipt of CA. The projected expenditure on CA in 2019 is almost €840 million.

The cost to increase the disregard for CA from €332.50 single and €665 for a couple to €450 and €900 respectively using the ESRI SWITCH model. Allowing for income tax and Working Family Payment offsets, net expenditure is estimated to be around €55 million per year.

Changes to schemes are considered in an overall budgetary and policy context and from an evidence based perspective. Some 86% of the current recipients of Carer’s Allowance have no means or means of less than €7.60 per week and would not benefit by an increase in the disregard.

Carers who would benefit from an increased disregard would be in higher income households. Given the need to target available resources fairly and equitably to those in most need, allowing an increase in the number of hours was the best use of the limited resources available. In this context I have no plans to change the means conditions for Carer’s Allowance at this

junction.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Data

334. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of increasing the back to school clothing and footwear allowance by €10, €20, €25, €30, €35, €40, €45 and €50, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44097/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): 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.

The Scheme opened on 1 June and closed on 30 September 2019.

The rate of payment for the 2019 scheme was increased by €25 to €150 in respect of children aged 4 to 11 and to €275 for children aged 12 years and over in second level education.

Based on the total number of children (263,000) covered by the scheme in 2019, the estimated full year cost to increase the BSCFA rates by €10, €20, €25, €30, €35, €40 and €50 is set out in the Tabular Statement.

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.

| Amount of increase (per child) | Estimated Full Year Cost |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| €10.00 | €58.9 million |
| €20.00 | €61.6 million |
| €25.00 | €62.9 million |
| €30.00 | €64.2 million |
| €35.00 | €65.5 million |
| €40.00 | €66.8 million |
| €50.00 | €69.5 million |

Questions Nos. 335 to 337, inclusive, answered with Question No. 310.

Wage Subsidy Scheme

338. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost of extending the wage subsidy scheme to those in receipt of partial capacity benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44101/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) and the Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) schemes seek to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. However, they operate in different ways and with different qualifying conditions. In particular, the WSS is a support to employers while

the PCB is a support provided to individuals.

The Partial Capacity Benefit (PCB) scheme is designed for people who are on Illness Benefit, for at least six months, or on Invalidity Pension and who have retained some capacity for work and wish to work. If awarded, PCB will allow them to continue to receive, in addition to their earnings from employment, a percentage of their Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension payment while working. The personal rate of payment of PCB is based on a medical assessment of a person's restriction, regarding their capacity for work, whether the person was in receipt of Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension and their current rate of payment. After the medical assessment, if a person's disability is rated as moderate, severe or profound their previous payment continues at 50, 75 or 100 per cent, respectively.

The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) is an employment support to private sector employers, the objective of which is to encourage employers to employ people with disabilities and thereby increase the numbers of people with disabilities participating in the open labour market. The scheme provides financial incentives to private sector employers to hire people with a disability for between 21 and 39 hours per week under a minimum 6 month contract of employment.

WSS and PCB are not currently payable in respect of the same employment.

The estimated full-year cost of extending WSS to those in receipt of PCB is estimated to cost approximately €30 million in a full year. There are currently 2,820 recipients of PCB. The basic rate of WSS subsidy to an employer is €5.30 per hour giving a total annual subsidy available of €10,748 per annum based on a 39 hour week.

The above does not take account of any additional spend that might arise under Strand 2 and Strand 3 of WSS as a result of the additional employments.

My Department continually reviews its supports and schemes however it is not intended to change the criteria for the above supports.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Benefit

339. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full-year cost in 2020 of the new jobseeker's benefit payment for the self-employed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44102/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is my intention that the new scheme of job-seeker's benefit for the self-employed, which I announced as part of the Budget 2019, will be introduced from November this year. This scheme will provide a social insurance contribution-based benefit to the self-employed who lose their self-employment and consequently are not engaged in self-employment.

As with any new demand led scheme it is difficult to forecast the numbers that will apply and qualify for this benefit. Labour market conditions and the prevailing economic conditions will affect the take up of this scheme and as a consequence the costs. My Department has provided €0.7 million for 2019 in the estimates and €13.7m for 2020 which will be the first full year of the scheme.

This measure is part of the Government's stated aim of creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, including providing an income safety net to both employees and self-

employed people. The addition of this new scheme builds on other significant improvements for self-employed people in recent years such as access to invalidity pension and treatment benefits in 2017. All these improvements to entitlements are a real advance in the level of cover available to the self-employed.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Training

340. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if staff in Intreo offices have received disability awareness training; if not, the estimated full-year cost of training all staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44103/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection fully recognises the need to support staff and promote disability awareness and has been very proactive in the provision of training and support in this area in recent years, with a very proactive response from staff.

The Department supports its staff by offering a suite of disability awareness training, including Mental Health and Deaf Awareness, Dealing with Blind Customers as well as general Disability Awareness. The Department also offers courses to staff in Suicide Awareness via Safe Talk, Suicide Prevention via ASIST along with courses in Personal Resilience. These courses are available to all staff in the Department, including staff in Intreo Centres. Since 2013, over 4,000 staff have attended training courses in these areas.

In addition, e-learning courses developed for front line public servants by the National Disability Authority (NDA) and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) are freely available to all staff via the Department’s Staff Development Unit’s intranet site. Bespoke, ad hoc training is also be procured where required.

In conjunction with the Mental Health Ireland (MHI), the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) and the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS), Mental Health Awareness Workshops have been held in a variety of locations. These workshops provide tools and strategies to enhance mental health and well-being, increase awareness and understanding and promote the range of formal and informal supports and resources available.

My Department has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer to support staff with disabilities together with their managers. The Officer offers support and promotes awareness of disability issues and services amongst staff while also facilitating the Department’s active participation in the Irish Association for Supported Employment’s Job Shadow Initiative and AHEAD’s Willing Able Mentoring Programme. The Department also provides translation, interpretive and Irish Sign Language services as required and is committed to the provision of information in alternative formats where feasible, as outlined in the Department’s Customer Charter.

Induction and Orientation training for newly appointed staff outlines the range of Departmental supports and grant-aid available to both staff and clients with disabilities. These include employment supports for jobseekers with disabilities such as the Wage Subsidy Scheme, EmployAbility Services and the Reasonable Accommodation Fund, in addition to the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service.

Ongoing liaison with the National Disability Authority and the Disability Federation of Ireland ensures that information on relevant events and seminars is communicated to Departmental staff.

The Department continues with its extensive training, development and awareness in this area. It is estimated that the annual cost of providing disability awareness training to all staff in Intreo Centres is approximately €90,000.

Services for People with Disabilities

341. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department provides funding or financial aid towards purchasing assistive technologies for persons with a disability; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44104/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In addition to providing income supports, the Department has a wide range of schemes in place which have been designed to assist people with disabilities to enter, re-enter or sustain employment. One of these supports is the Reasonable Accommodation Fund (RAF). This fund is comprised of four elements namely:

1. Employee Retention Grant: The purpose of the Employee Retention Grant Scheme is to assist employers to retain employees who acquire an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on their ability to carry out their job.

2. Personal Reader Grant: If a person is blind or visually impaired and needs assistance with job-related reading, a grant can be made available to allow him/her to have access to a Personal Reader.

3. Job Interview Interpreter Grant: A jobseeker who is deaf, or has a hearing loss or speech impairment and who is attending job interviews, may apply for funding to have a sign language interpreter or other interpreter to attend the interview with him/her. Funding can also be provided to cover the costs of an interpreter during an induction period when starting work.

4. Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant: Where a person with a disability has been offered employment or is in employment, and requires a more accessible workplace or adapted equipment to do the job, funding/a grant can be provided by the Department.

The Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant seeks to increase job opportunities for people with a disability by supporting additional costs, related to the disability, incurred by private sector employers employing or retaining an employee with a disability. For example a person with a disability may avail of the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant if they are about to take up employment with a private sector employer, change job as a result of re-deployment or promotion, or become self-employed, and require assistive technology (or an adaptation to the workplace) in order to undertake the duties of the role.

Subject to some conditionality, funding of up to €6,350 is available under the Workplace Equipment/Adaptation Grant. Applications in excess of this sum may be considered on an individual basis, up to a maximum of €9,523, if specialist training for the assistive technology is required.

By way of additional information, the Department of Education and Skills provides an ‘Assistive Technology Grant’. Full details in relation to this scheme are available on the DES website at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Grants-and-Additional-Support/Assistive-Technology-Grant/>

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Data

342. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure on the exceptional needs payments in each of the years 2012 to 2018 and to date in 2019; the percentage of persons refused an exceptional needs payment to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44105/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. An urgent needs payment (UNP) may be made to persons who may not normally qualify for SWA but who have an urgent need which they cannot meet from their own resources or where an alternative is not available at that time.

In total €38.8 million has been provided for ENPs and UNPs in 2019. The tabular statement shows the expenditure on ENPs and UNPs each year since 2012.

Statistics are maintained relating to payments made under the ENP and UNP schemes, however I am advised that they are not maintained on the number of applications or the outcomes of those applications.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Tabular Statement: Expenditure on ENPs and UNPs, 2012-2019

| Year | Expenditure |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 2012 | €52.7m |
| 2013 | €35.7m |
| 2014 | €30.1m |
| 2015 | €31.0m |
| 2016 | €32.2m |
| 2017 | €38.1m |
| 2018 | €42.3m |
| 2019 (End of September) | €31.6m |

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

343. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an emergency or exceptional needs payment and a rent support payment will be made available in the case of a person (details supplied); if the matter could be dealt with by a different deciding officer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44116/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised that the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) dealing with this case issued an application form for an exceptional needs payment (ENP) to the person concerned on 16/4/19 which was returned to the Department on 20/5/19.

I understand that the CWO telephoned the person concerned on 20/5/19 to clarify the outstanding documentation necessary to progress her ENP application. A letter subsequently issued to the person concerned on 23/5/19 advising her that the household means were in excess of the supplementary welfare allowance rate appropriate to the family size due to spousal em-

ployment.

As the person concerned did not meet the qualifying criteria for receipt of an ENP, the application was disallowed and details of the Review Officer were provided to the person concerned in the event that she wished to seek a review of the decision on her application.

The relevant CWO advises that no further application for an exceptional needs payment has been received from the person concerned since May 2019. An application form has been issued again to the person concerned on 22/10/19. The CWO has also advised the person concerned of the housing assistance payment (HAP) administered by the local County Council.

On receipt of the completed application from the person concerned, with details of any change in circumstances since May 2019, the application for an ENP will be assessed in line with current legislation and rules governing social assistance entitlements and a decision will issue accordingly. It remains open to the person concerned to request a review of her case by the SWA Review Officer if she is not happy with a decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Code

344. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department will desist from persons on jobseeker's allowance for various courses as in the case of a person (details supplied); if other requirements might be deferred until they can achieve housing accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44117/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised that this customer's Jobseeker's Allowance claim was closed on 28th September 2019 when, with her agreement, she commenced on the TÚS Programme on 30th September 2019 for 19.5 hours per week. She subsequently requested, and was granted, permission to commence a part time course. As the customer's chosen course is for 4 hours per week, this will not impact her placement on the TÚS Programme and her employment can be arranged to accommodate the requirements of the course.

It is the policy of the Department that customers experiencing homelessness can be excused from activation for at least 3 months, unless they choose to take part. The requirement for activation can be reviewed after 3 months on a case by case basis.

If the customer's circumstances have changed she should discuss same with her TÚS supervisor.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Non-Contributory) Eligibility

345. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the pension entitlement in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44118/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): State pension non-contributory is a means-tested payment for people aged 66 and over, ha-

bitually residing in the State, who do not qualify for a state pension contributory, or who only qualify for a reduced rate contributory pension based on their social insurance record.

I am advised that the Department has no record of receiving an application for state pension non-contributory from the person concerned. If the person wishes to claim this pension, they should complete and submit an application form (Form SPNC1), together with any necessary supporting documentation. Their application will be decided based on the eligibility conditions for the scheme and they will be notified of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Payments

346. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason payment of disability allowance and rent support was terminated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44119/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a statutory means-tested payment and is subject to periodic reviews. This lady's entitlement to DA was recently reviewed. The review regarding periods of absence from the state and a change of address is now complete.

This lady's payment has been re-instated to full amount from 10 July 2019. Arrears of DA payment due less any necessary adjustment have issued to the person concerned on 21 October 2019.

This Rent Allowance claim was closed as the person concerned moved address.

The person concerned was sent a new application form and has yet to return completed application and supporting documentation. The person concerned was also advised to apply for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) with Kildare County Council.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

347. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a carer's allowance will be made available in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44120/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance 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.

The department informs me that there is no application by the person concerned for CA registered. If the person in question wishes to make an application, she should complete and return an application form (CR1) to carer's allowance section in the social welfare services office, Longford, as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Insurance Data

348. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount each county and city council paid out in insurance claims in each of the years 2016 to 2018. [43874/19]

349. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of active insurance claim cases each county and city council is currently involved in. [43875/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 348 and 349 together.

I have no function in relation to the matter raised in the questions and the specific detailed information requested is not available in my Department. Local authorities are independent in the execution of their functions and the elected members are democratically accountable for all expenditure of the authority. Insurance claims and associated details a matters for individual local authorities.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

350. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the projects to which LIHAF funding has been allocated and not drawn down, in full or in part, in addition to the amount involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43924/19]

351. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to reallocate LIHAF funding not drawn down; and if so, the details of same. [43925/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 350 and 351 together.

The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) was designed to activate housing supply by putting in place the enabling public infrastructure necessary to ensure that large scale development could take place on key sites in urban areas of high housing demand. Approval was given for 30 projects under LIHAF in 2017 and these projects will stimulate the development of approximately 20,000 housing units across 14 local authorities.

Funding of €200 million was originally made available under LIHAF, of which €150 million would be funded by the Exchequer with local authorities to match fund €50 million. 30 projects received final approval, at a total cost of €195.71 million, of which €146.69 million will be funded by the Exchequer with local authorities funding the balance.

In terms of LIHAF expenditure, most projects have been at the design and planning stages, and this is reflected in the level of expenditure to date. However, projects are now progressing to construction stage and it is expected that the expenditure will increase significantly towards the end of 2019 and into 2020. Almost €24.5 million has been drawn down to date in relation to LIHAF Project costs by all 14 local authorities granted funding in respect of 28 of the 30 projects. To date, no local authority has confirmed to my Department that it will not be availing of the funding made available for the project proposals submitted.

Details on all of the LIHAF projects by local authority area, budget allocation, project de-

scription, and housing delivery have been published on the Rebuilding Ireland website and are available at the following link: www.rebuildingireland.ie/LIHAF

It is not envisaged that LIHAF funding will be reallocated. Additional alternative infrastructure funding mechanisms are now available under my Department since LIHAF was announced. This includes the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) under which a budget of €310 million has been made available to local authorities and the €2 billion funding through the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF). In addition there is the €1 billion Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Social and Affordable Housing Funding

352. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the establishment of a review group of a special purpose vehicle for credit unions to invest in social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44017/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Programme for a Partnership Government recognises the potential role that credit unions can play in housing finance and supported the efforts of the Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank to gradually lift current lending restrictions as appropriate, including for housing.

Credit Union bodies have set out proposed means by which funding could be provided by Credit Unions to Approved Housing Bodies for the development of social housing. This follows on from the amendments introduced by the Central Bank to the regulatory regime within which Credit Unions operate.

Along with my colleague, Minister English, and officials from my Department and the Department of Finance, I have met with the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) and the Credit Union Development Association (CUDA) to examine how their sector can assist in the area of financing social housing delivery. Throughout the discussions with the Credit Unions' representative bodies, my Department has emphasised that while it can provide technical assistance regarding the mechanisms for funding social housing, which it has provided, it is a matter for the Credit Unions themselves to set up special purpose vehicles to enable them to invest in the sector. For this reason, my Department referred the Credit Unions' representative bodies to the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) with a view to both sectors sharing, as far as practical, the benefits of their respective work in this area, including the work being undertaken by the ICSH on the development of special purpose vehicles for social housing financing purposes, supported by grant funding from my Department.

It is a matter for both parties to progress these engagements, which I hope can lead to a workable, mutually acceptable approach to moving forward on this issue.

Approved Housing Bodies

353. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of his plans for getting approved housing bodies off-balance sheet following the EUROSTAT decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44018/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is currently engaging with Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector representatives and examining, in detail, proposals which were put forward as a possible means to achieve

reclassification. In this regard, my Department met with the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) on 16 October and is scheduled to meet with the Housing Alliance on 7 November.

The proposals are complex as they cut across a wide range of social housing policy issues and will require extensive analysis. These engagements are helping to establish a pathway to consider the range of issues involved.

As part of the process, my Department will also liaise with the Department of Finance and the CSO to ensure any new or additional information can be brought forward for consideration.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

354. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the impact the spending overruns on the national children's hospital have had on the capital expenditure on housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44019/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The overall capital provision for my Department next year as set out in Budget 2020 is €2.226 billion, an increase of €102 million on the 2019 provision. The capital provision for the Housing Programme will increase to €1.529 billion in 2020 (including Local Property Tax receipts of €76 million), an increase of €118 million on the comparable 2019 provision.

In 2019, an updated profiling of expenditure under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund indicated that €13 million could be re-profiled from 2019 to future years, without causing delays to projects, in order to help meet the increased costs of the National Children's Hospital. Some €130 million (including €33.5 million in capital carryover from 2019) has been provided for the Fund in Budget 2020 to support transformative regeneration and rejuvenation projects in the cities and larger towns.

Legislative Programme

355. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the timescale to which he is working for the publication of the Land Development Agency Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44029/19]

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 was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny which has been ongoing since the beginning of October. I will consider the Pre-Legislative Scrutiny Report of the Committee in finalising the LDA Bill, which I intend to bring before the Oireachtas in the coming months.

Housing Assistance Payment

356. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details regarding eligibility for landlords to enter under the HAP scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44046/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme is deemed to be a social housing support under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. As a long term housing support, an assessment of housing need must be completed in order for a household to qualify for HAP. Any household with an identified housing need is eligible for HAP.

In order for housing assistance to be provided under the Act the housing authority must be satisfied that the tenancy concerned is or would be a tenancy in good faith. Where there is a family relationship between the tenant and the landlord, the housing authority may seek evidence of a previous landlord and tenant relationship between a landlord and HAP applicant. This evidence may include:

- Proof of rent payments;
- A lease or tenancy agreement for the property; and
- Registration of the tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board.

HAP support is available to tenants in rent a room scheme arrangements; however, the rental of a room to a civil partner, son or daughter are excluded from this scheme. HAP cannot be paid where the tenant is seeking to rent within the family home.

In order for a housing authority to be satisfied that a tenancy is or would be in good faith; the onus is on the applicant and landlord to prove that what is being proposed is a bona fide tenancy. Ultimately, it is up to the local authority to make a decision in each individual case.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

357. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of financial settlements reached by his Department and statutory bodies within his remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44065/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In the past five years a financial settlement was reached in one case involving my Department. That case included a confidentiality agreement.

Information in relation to financial settlements reached by agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each agency. Arrangements have been put in place by each agency to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is in the table.

| Agency | Email address |
|--|-------------------------------|
| An Bord Pleanála | Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie |
| Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland | oireachtas@ervia.ie |
| Housing Sustainable Communities Agency | publicreps@housingagency.ie |
| Housing Finance Agency | oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie |
| Irish Water | oireachtasmembers@water.ie |
| Land Development Agency | info@lda.ie |
| Local Government Management Agency | corporate@lgma.ie |
| Ordnance Survey Ireland | Oireachtas@osi.ie |
| Property Registration Authority | reps@prai.ie |

| Agency | Email address |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Pyrite Resolution Board | oireachtasinfo@pyriteboard.ie |
| Residential Tenancies Board | OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie |
| Valuation Office | oireachtas.enquiries@VALOFF.ie |
| Office of the Planning Regulator | info@opr.ie |

Housing Adaptation Grant Expenditure

358. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the current expenditure on the housing adaptation grant taking into account changes announced in budget 2020; the full-year cost of increasing expenditure by 10% and 20%, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [44106/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In 2019, a total of €71.25 million is available for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme, in respect of private houses. This is made up of €57 million Exchequer funding, with the balance of €14.25 million being contributed by the local authorities. A total of €45.9 million has been spent to date.

For 2020, I am pleased that an increased funding total of €73.75 million has been secured for the scheme. This will be made up of €59 million Exchequer funding, with the balance of €14.75 million being contributed by the local authorities.

Increasing funding by 10% would cost an additional €5.9 million to the Exchequer, with a further €1.475 million to be contributed by the local authorities, while an increase of 20% would cost an additional €11.8 million to the Exchequer, with a further €2.95 million to be contributed by the local authorities.

Further consideration will be given to increasing funding over the coming years in the context of the range of housing supports and provision being made under Rebuilding Ireland and also considering the commitments under the Government’s Housing Options for Our Ageing Population - Policy Statement (Actions 4.1/4.2), which is available on my Department’s website at the following link: https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/housingoptionsforanageingpopulationeng_web.pdf.

Environmental Policy

359. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to support nature and biodiversity on a whole-of-Government basis; her plans for future funding of the national biodiversity data centre; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43885/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department is responsible for implementing the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018, the primary legislation underpinning the protection of biodiversity and nature in Ireland. The Wildlife Acts afford protection to a range of habitats and species and provide for regulation and control of activities that impinge on biodiversity, such as hunting and trade.

The legislative framework in place to protect biodiversity is further strengthened by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 SI No 477/2011, which also fall under the remit of my Department. These Regulations transpose the EU Birds Direc-

tive and the EU Habitats Directive into national law, and provide for protection of certain habitats and species across the European Union, giving a framework for specific measures to be taken to target areas of concern in each Member State. The main instruments provided for are the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPA), aimed at the protection of threatened species of birds, and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), aimed at protecting other animal species and habitats.

My Department is also responsible for developing and publishing Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan. To further the implementation of the Plan, and to mainstream biodiversity within national policy, an interdepartmental Biodiversity Working Group was established in 2012, drawn from 18 Government Departments and Agencies. Members have responsibilities for sectors where activities can have a direct impact on biodiversity or where there are opportunities for changes in the management of environmental resources that can support biodiversity policy formation. These sectors include strategic and land use planning, agriculture and forestry, marine and freshwater fisheries, the management and monitoring of water and environmental quality, and the provision of transport and energy infrastructure. In addition, there are Government Departments or Agencies with responsibility for sectors where there are opportunities for synergies between biodiversity protection and community development, education or health.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) is the name given to a programme established by the Heritage Council in 2006. It addresses the need identified by the Council that data on Ireland's biodiversity be collected recorded and fully accessible to the public. The programme has been operated under two publically tendered contracts entered into between the Council and Compass Informatics - a private company. The team working on biodiversity data collection are employees of Compass Informatics a wholly owned subsidiary of Tracsis plc. The Heritage Council is currently finalising a contract extension with Compass Informatics to collect biodiversity data into 2020. Concurrently, a review is being undertaken by the Council. This is examining the governance, operating and financial models underpinning this important work. The outcome of that review will inform the next request for tender. Like all public contracts, this work is subject to public procurement rules. The Heritage Council's contract with Compass Informatics has been very important in the collection of biodiversity data for public policymaking and decision making.

National Parks Projects

360. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans with respect to the creation of a Liffey valley national park; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43927/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department manages an extensive conservation and recreational property portfolio of some 87,000 hectares. Our 6 National Parks account for circa 65,000 hectares with another almost 22,000 hectares of nature reserves and other heritage sites. The existing National Parks are managed from a conservation perspective, and attract in excess of 4 million visitors annually.

Given the resources available for capital investment within our National Parks and Nature Reserves, I am ever mindful of the need to focus on the core responsibilities relating to the management of the existing Parks and Reserves lands and have no plans at present to increase the number of National Parks in the country.

However, as part of my Department's continuing commitment and contribution to protect-

ing our heritage and improving our tourism and recreation product, we have been exploring ways to optimise the sustainable potential of heritage sites under our control in a way that is compatible with conservation objectives.

In this context, it should be noted that in late 2016 my Department negotiated the extension of Wicklow Mountains National Park by purchasing almost 4,900 acres of Dublin Uplands at Glenasmole in 2016 at a cost of €800,000. The purchase underpins the Government's ongoing commitment to the preservation of our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and visitors alike to enjoy.

In 2017 the entire Wild Nephin area was consolidated into the ownership of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This creates a State – Owned wilderness project of over 11,000 hectares and aims to provide increased nature conservation benefits and biodiversity as well as enhanced recreational and social benefits through the 're-wilding' of the forest which adjoins the National Park. Thanks to the acquisition, we will be returning the area to a natural wilderness state.

My Department, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, launched a strategic partnership in 2017 with a view to growing tourism revenues in the rural areas where the parks are located and increasing Ireland's appeal as a recreation destination. One of the outputs from the partnership with Fáilte was "Experiencing the Wild Heart of Ireland"; an interpretative masterplan for the development of our National Parks and Reserves, which was published last year and sets out a road map for investment at these important nature conservation, public amenity and tourism sites and underpins the objectives of Project 2040.

The investment in our National Parks will create memorable and meaningful experiences of Ireland's landscapes, wildlife and culture. This will be done through sensitive design and the development of authentic experiences, providing better access to nature and an increased understanding of society's conservation responsibilities, as well as supporting significant investment in recreational facilities including upgrading and development of the trails network, increased visitor facilities and improved signage and branding. These will be designed and delivered with a strong emphasis on conservation and allow us protect and preserve our most fragile environments and investing in our culture, language & heritage provide a well-being benefit for all.

In this regard, a provision of some €5million in funding, for 32 individual projects across the network of NPWS sites, was announced earlier this year as part of the Rural Regeneration Development Fund. So while I have no plans to expand the Park network at present, my Department is actively ensuring the preservation, protection and presentation of the assets we already own.

Feabhsú Céibheanna

361. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir le hathfhorbairt na cé in Inis Oírr; cén staid ag a bhfuil an togra seo faoi láthair; cén uair a bhfuil súil aici go mbeifear in ann tairiscintí a lorg don togra; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44006/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar is eol don Teachta, tá forbairt Ché Inis Oírr san áireamh ar liosta na dtograí atá le forbairt faoi Thionscadail Éire 2040.

Tá oifigigh mo Roinne agus Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe ag obair i dtreo leagan críochnúil den chás gnó i leith an togra a fhorbairt faoi réir théarmaí an Chód Chaiteachais Phoiblí

faoi láthair. Táthar ag súil go mbeidh críoch leis an bpróiseas sin go luath. Agus an cás gnó a bheith faofa, is í an céad céim eile sa phróiseas ná tairiscintí a lorg don obair. Beidh gach céim d'fhorbairt na cé seo le meas i gcomhthéacs an tsoláthair airgid atá ar fáil do mo Roinn agus faoi réir na bhforálacha atá san áireamh i gCód Caiteachais Phoiblí an Rialtais.

Deontais faoi Údarás na Gaeltachta

362. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta céard iad na heagraíochtaí a fuair airgead ó Údarás na Gaeltachta le ceithre bliana anuas as an gciste a chuireann sí ar fáil do Chomharchumainn agus d'Eagraíochtaí Pobalbhunaithe; cé mhéad a fuair gach eagraíocht gach bliain; cén uair a mbeidh a fhios acu cén deontas a bheidh ar fáil do 2020; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [44012/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): Mar go bhfuil réimse leathan faisnéise iarrtha ag an Teachta, tuigfidh sé nach féidir í a chur le chéile laistigh den amscála atá ar fáil. Cuirfear freagra cuimsitheach díreach chuig an Teachta chomh luath agus is féidir agus i gcomhréir leis na Buan-Orduithe Dála.

Official Languages Act

363. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position regarding the Official Languages Act 2003 and its amendments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [44024/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): The position regarding the preparation of the Official Languages (Amendment) Bill, the Heads of which were published in 2017, is that further consultation with stakeholders has taken place and officials from my Department are continuing to work closely with officials from the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to finalise the draft Bill. I am happy to confirm that substantial progress has been made with the drafting of the Bill over the past number of months and that it has been listed on the Government's Legislative Programme to be published during the current session.

Departmental Legal Cases Data

364. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of financial settlements reached by her Department and statutory bodies within her remit nationally; and the number which included confidentiality clauses in each of the past five years by organisation. [44058/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In light of the volume and complexity of the information requested by the Deputy, arrangements are being made for this information to be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy, in accordance with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.

24 October 2019