

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].

Water Conservation Grant

1. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Donegal is not entitled to the water conservation grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35843/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The eligibility criteria for the Water Conservation Grant are set out in the Water Services Act 2014 (Water Conservation Grant) Regulations. Under regulation 5(1) a person who registers with Irish Water, as required under section 5(2)(a) of the Water Services Act 2014, on or before 30 June 2015 shall be eligible to receive the grant in 2015 if they were normally resident at the principal private residence on that date

Therefore in the case of the person concerned, to be eligible to receive the grant in 2015, they must have been normally resident at the principal private residence on 30 June 2015. From the information provided, it would appear that the property you refer to is a holiday home and not their principal private residence.

Social Welfare Overpayments

2. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 has been billed for a debt arising from a disability allowance payment for a daughter who is receiving foster care. [35848/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a review of the entitlement of the person in question, it was established that the person concerned had failed to disclose to the Department a relevant change to her circumstances as she is required to do. On 9 August 2013 a deciding officer decided that the person concerned was not entitled to an increase for a qualified child on her disability allowance from 21 January 2009 to 23 July 2013 because the child in question was not residing with her.

The person concerned was notified of the decision and the reason for it and was given the right to appeal this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office within 21 days of that notification. No appeal was received in this case.

The Department is currently recovering the debt by weekly deductions from the DA payment of the person in question. If the person in question is having difficulties in making the repayments, she should contact the Department setting out her financial circumstances and asking that the repayment amount be reviewed.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

3. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a status update on an application for a domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35855/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from the person concerned on the 8th September 2015. This application has been forwarded to one of the Department's Medical Assessors for their medical opinion. Following receipt of this opinion, a decision will be made by a Deciding Officer and notified to the person concerned. It can currently take 12 weeks to process an application for DCA.

Carer's Allowance Applications

4. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on an application for a carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35858/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned on 18 August 2015. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

5. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if an increase in rent allowance will be facilitated for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35899/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As previously outlined to the Deputy as recently as last week on the 8th of October 2015 in response to Parliamentary Question No 47, the client concerned should provide the Department with an up to date Rent Supplement application form and lease agreement in order for their entitlement to be re-assessed. This documentation has not, to date, been received by the Department.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

6. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be granted an extension of time on a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35930/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): For persons up to the age of 55, the maximum duration of participation on a Community Employment Scheme is 3 years, as set out by the Departments scheme guidelines. As the person concerned is under 55 years, regrettably an extension cannot be considered.

Unemployment Benefits Payments

7. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will consider amending social welfare rules so that if someone who is receiving unemployment benefits starts a company and draws a salary from it, that person's State support will continue for a period. [35933/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection operates two schemes to assist people on certain social protection payments who wish to become self-employed; namely the Short Term Enterprise Allowance and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance.

The Short Term Enterprise Allowance provides immediate access to a monetary incentive to support jobseekers who qualify for jobseekers' benefit to set up a business. Payment under the scheme is at the same rate and for the same duration as the entitlement to jobseeker's benefit exists.

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 while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years; 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2.

Information on accessing the scheme and supports for people considering starting their own business is available from DSP Intreo centres, local enterprise offices and local development companies. Further information is available on the Department's website www.welfare.ie.

Question No. 8 withdrawn.

Water Conservation Grant

9. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will clarify a matter regarding the water conservation grant for persons (details supplied) in County Dublin who are paying Irish Water by standing order, but whose application for the conservation grant cannot be accepted online due to some error and-or dispute between Irish Water and her Department; if she will examine this issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35941/15]

Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand an officer of my Department has contacted you regarding this matter and is awaiting details from your office. On receipt of the necessary details, the case will be examined and you will be notified of the outcome by my Department.

Tax Relief Application

10. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the differences between the old and new sections 481 for film; the body that administers the new scheme; if he is satisfied that the new scheme is working correctly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35837/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Following an economic impact assessment of the film relief, published in December 2012, and in line with the Programme for Government commitment to 'reduce, cap or eliminate income tax reliefs that benefit high income individuals', I made a number of changes to the film tax relief scheme. Primarily, these changes amended the scheme so that instead of providing for tax relief at an individual's marginal rate

for an investment made in a qualifying company, a corporation tax credit is paid to a film producer company.

A Certificate is issued by the Revenue Commissioners but both the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Revenue Commissioners have specific responsibilities in relation to the certification process. The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has responsibility to ensure that it is appropriate for the Revenue Commissioners to consider the issue of a Certificate for a film, having regard to -

- The categories of film eligible for certification and
- the contribution a film will make to either or both the development of the film industry in the State and the promotion and expression of Irish culture.

The Revenue Commissioners have responsibility to ensure that all other aspects of the project, including the financial aspects, have the potential to satisfy the requirements of the law. The Revenue Commissioners will not issue a Certificate unless they have received an authorisation from the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and they are satisfied with the other aspects of the proposal. Notwithstanding the dual roles, there is a simplified application procedure so that the producer/promoter has to deal with only one body.

The new scheme has been in place since January 2015. The operation of the scheme is monitored by my Department and the Revenue Commissioners, and I am satisfied that the scheme is working correctly and provides better targeted funding for the production of films.

Tax Code

11. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the situation whereby a semi-State employee's travel expenses may be subject to various deductions by the Revenue Commissioners; the number of persons affected by this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35861/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that employers may reimburse, tax-free to office holders and employees, the expenses of travel, and subsistence relating to that travel, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled. The principal conditions are that:

- the office holder or employee must be temporarily away from his/her normal place of work in the performance of the duties of his/her office or employment;
- the travel expenses must be necessarily incurred in the performance of the duties of the office or employment; and
- the expenses of subsistence must attach to travelling necessarily incurred in the performance of the duties of the office or employment.

These conditions are set out in detail on the Revenue website at http://www.revenue.ie/en/practitioner/law/statements-of-practice/sp_it_2_07.pdf

I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the treatment of travel expenses of an employee of a semi-State body should not differ from that of any other employee. If the Deputy has particular circumstances in mind, he may wish to take his query up directly with the Revenue Commissioners at the following contact number (01) - 8589 999.

Tobacco Smuggling

12. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons prosecuted for cigarette and tobacco smuggling at Dublin Port and Dublin Airport in 2014, and in 2015 to date; the number of successful convictions and prosecutions ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35853/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of persons prosecuted in respect of cigarette and tobacco smuggling, arising from detections made by Revenue officers at Dublin Airport, was 40 in 2014 and 23 in the period from 1 January to 9 October 2015. Successful convictions were obtained in 39 cases in 2014 and 22 to date in 2015.

There are 25 prosecution cases ongoing in respect of cigarette and tobacco smuggling detected by Revenue officers at Dublin Airport during 2014 and 2015 (to 9 October).

There were a further 24 prosecutions and convictions in 2014 and 15 to date in 2015 in relation to the illegal selling of smuggled cigarettes and tobacco arising from detections made by Revenue officers based at Dublin Port.

There are 96 prosecution cases ongoing in respect of the illegal selling of smuggled cigarettes and tobacco products detected by Revenue officers based at Dublin Port during 2014 and year to date in 2015.

Income Data

13. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide, based on tables (details supplied), corresponding tables based on the most recent available data. [35898/15]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that Revenue's Statistics webpage (<http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>) has extensive details on the distribution of incomes in Ireland. In particular, linked from the webpage and hosted by the CSO at http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/pssn/rv01/homepage-files/rv01_statbank.asp, under the "Income Tax and Corporation Tax Distribution Statistics", the table RVA04 show numbers (and percentages) of cases by income range for Income Tax and Universal Social Charge combined. In relation to statistics specifically relating to PRSI, the Deputy may wish to contact the Department of Social Protection which would be responsible for these.

Commercial Rates Exemptions

14. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the up-to-date position regarding plans to make provision to exempt preschool providers from commercial rates (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35840/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Inconsistency in the approach to the exemption from rates for childcare and education facilities and calls to exempt all such providers were among the issues raised at a number of stages during the passage of the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015. As a result, I got Government approval for a Seanad Report Stage amendment to insert into Schedule 4 of the Valuation Act 2001 an exemption from rates for properties occupied by parties that provide early childhood care and education

on a not-for-profit basis. This extension of the childcare and education exemption removed an anomaly that existed where those that provided childcare and education on a charitable basis were exempt but those that did so on a not-for-profit basis were not.

The Valuation Office is in the process of updating valuation lists to give effect to this extension of the exemption so that it will be effective for qualifying providers in 2016. The Valuation Office's interpretation of paragraph 10 of Schedule 4 of the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 means that those that only provide the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme are also exempt from rates.

The decision taken by Government to extend the exemption from rates for early childcare and education was taken having considered the views of stakeholders in the sector. As outlined in the Seanad, and subsequently in the Dáil, key valuation principles have to be respected to retain the integrity and equity of a system that is a significant source of funding for Local Authorities. One of those principles is that properties of occupiers that operate with the intention of making a profit are rateable.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

15. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when he expects the public sector recruitment embargo to be completely lifted; the extent to which he expects recruitment to take place across the public sector in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35862/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Deputy will recall that at the time of my Expenditure Statement last October I announced an end to the Moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service, to be replaced with new delegated management arrangements to be phased in during 2015 and 2016. These arrangements, which now apply to most Government departments give public service managers the means to respond to service needs as they arise, including considerable flexibility to make staffing and service level delivery decisions at the front line consistent with the resources allocated to pay budgets.

These new arrangements represent a significant shift away from centralised control and allow for greater flexibility in the management of public service staffing resources. The new approach has also facilitated the introduction of a targeted programme of recruitment into the civil service - my area of direct responsibility in terms of public service employment overall - to address service needs and a shortfall in key skills.

As far as the Civil Service is concerned significant recruitment has already occurred this year. At this stage, in advance of the outcome of various competitions, it is not possible to be definitive about actual numbers that will be recruited to the Civil Service in the course of 2016. These will be determined by a number of factors including workforce planning, retirement rates and Departments' deciding on their optimal grade mix over the period ahead, with reference to their pay budgets.

It is important to note, that the new arrangements remain consistent with the maintenance of appropriate controls on public service numbers consistent with the resources available for the public service pay bill overall. For example, as of end-June 2015, the latest audited numbers available, public service numbers stood at 293,811 in full-time equivalent terms which represents a significant reduction on the 2008 figure of 320,387.

Ombudsman's Reports

16. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 290 of 23 June 2015, his views on concerns that the in-house complaints process results in only 4% of cases being re-examined; the reason for this low level; if he is aware that there are now three judicial reviews pending against decisions made by the Ombudsman; his views on an independent review of the in-house complaints process to ensure that it is robust and fair, and does not lead to unnecessary and expensive court challenges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35895/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Ombudsman is independent of Government and is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas. There is no statutory appeal of the outcome of investigations by the Ombudsman, and, given the independent nature of the Office, it would not be appropriate to have one. The Ombudsman reports to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions which is responsible for receiving and debating the Ombudsman's annual and special reports, and for ensuring that his findings and recommendations are acted upon.

However, the Ombudsman has a voluntary non-statutory internal appeals procedure to cater for persons who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint to the Ombudsman and wish the Office to re-examine their complaint. In 2014, 4% of complainants decided to avail of the appeals procedure. This seems an appropriate figure, particularly as most complainants have previously been through the appeals procedure of the public service provider against whom they are complaining before contacting the Ombudsman. I am not aware of any concerns over the Ombudsman's appeals procedure.

To date the Ombudsman has not been the subject of a judicial review. The website of the Courts Service indicates that there may be four applications recently initiated, all of which appear to have a common subject matter. The Ombudsman has not been formally notified of these applications.

Legal Costs

17. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount in legal fees incurred by the Commission for Public Service Appointments for 2015 to date; and for each of the past four years; if consideration is being given to disputing the amount of any of these legal costs listed before the Taxing Master in the High Court, by taxation on a solicitor; and by a client costs basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35896/15]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) is responsible for overseeing the conduct of appointment processes to a wide range of positions in the Civil and Public Service. In carrying out its independent statutory functions, the CPSA must, on occasions, seek independent legal advice on issues that come to light in the course of its examination of appointment processes. In addition, expenditure has been incurred by the CPSA over the last three years in successfully defending a legal challenge. The legal fees incurred by the Commission for Public Service Appointments for 2015 to date and for each of the past four years are provided in the following table.

Year	Amount
2015 to date	€2,000

Year	Amount
2014	€132,000
2013	€35,000
2012	€1,000
2011	€22,000

When a person incurs costs as a result of litigation, they may have these costs taxed. The taxation of costs is the assessment and measurement of legal costs by an officer known as a Taxing Master. Costs are sent to taxation where there is a disagreement as to the quantity of the costs between the parties to the litigation, as opposed to the legal services tendered.

I am advised that the fees paid to the Legal Advisors engaged by the CPSA highlighted in the above table were in accordance with the schedule of fees submitted in the course of a competitive tendering process and, as such, a review by the Taxing Master was not required. I also understand that the Office of the Ombudsman, which provides the secretariat for the CPSA, gives proper care and attention to its fiduciary responsibilities and has sought to minimise the outlay on legal fees arising from the particular legal challenge referred to above.

Legislative Programme

18. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide an update regarding legislation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35832/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash): The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 came into effect on 1st August 2015.

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/27/enacted/en/pdf>

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/si/329/made/en/pdf>

The enactment marked the fulfilment of the commitment in the Programme for Government to reform the current law on employees' right to engage in collective bargaining in order to ensure compliance by the State with recent judgements of the European Court of Human Rights.

The legislation provides a clear and balanced mechanism by which the fairness of the employment conditions of workers in their totality can be assessed in employments where collective bargaining does not take place and brings clarity and certainty for employers in terms of managing their workplaces in this respect. It also explicitly prohibits the use of inducements by employers to persuade employees forego collective bargaining representation and provides strong protections for workers who invoke the provisions of the 2001-2004 Industrial Relations Acts or who have acted as a witness or a comparator for the purposes of those Acts.

Enactment of the legislation followed a lengthy consultation process involving extensive engagement with stakeholders. The legislation retains Ireland's voluntary system of industrial relations, but it also provides that where an employer chooses not to engage in collective bargaining either with a trade union or an internal 'excepted body', and where the number of employees on whose behalf the matter is being pursued is not insignificant, the trade union may seek to have the remuneration and terms and conditions of its members in that employment assessed against relevant comparators and determined by the Labour Court, if necessary.

Specifically, the legislation includes:

- a definition of what constitutes “collective bargaining”;
- provisions to help the Labour Court identify if internal collective bargaining bodies are genuinely independent of their employer;
- clarification as to the requirements to be met by a Trade Union advancing a claim under the Act;
- the policies and principles for the Labour Court to follow when assessing those workers’ terms and conditions, including the sustainability of the employers business in the long-term;
- new provisions to ensure cases dealt with are ones where the numbers of workers are not insignificant;
- provisions to ensure remuneration, terms and conditions are looked at in their totality;
- provisions to ensure that there is management of the permitted frequency of reassessment of the same issues;
- enhanced protection by way of interim relief in the case of dismissal for workers who may feel that they are being victimised for exercising their rights under the proposed legislation.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

19. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal in relation to a headage payment for 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35818/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 16 March 2015. Processing of the application has recently been finalised. Payment will issue shortly directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

20. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive payments under the disadvantaged areas scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35823/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 5 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue. The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payment due under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence issuing from 16 October 2015 to eligible applicants whose applications are fully processed.

GLAS Applications

21. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of putative applicants for the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme who were advised by Teagasc, the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority, that it did not have the administrative capacity to develop their applications in advance of the May 2015 deadline. [35829/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware that Teagasc wrote to some of their clients advising that they did not have the capacity to submit their GLAS plans by 15 May 2015. This is a matter between Teagasc and their client base and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the issue or indeed to become involved in matters which are of a contractual nature between the parties involved.

While Teagasc indicated to some of their clients that they could not submit applications for them, it is always open to farmers to approach another adviser to do so on their behalf and I know that many did so.

GLAS Applications

22. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures that will be put in place for putative applicants for the green low-carbon agri-environment scheme in May 2015 who were advised by Teagasc, the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority, that it did not have the administrative capacity to develop their applications and who, as a result, waited to apply in October 2015 and are now facing reductions due to changes in criteria. [35830/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware that Teagasc wrote to some of their clients advising that they did not have the capacity to submit their GLAS plans by 15 May 2015. This is a matter between Teagasc and their client base and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the issue or indeed to become involved in matters which are of a contractual nature between the parties involved. While Teagasc indicated to some of their clients that they could not submit applications for them, it is always open to farmers to approach another adviser to do so on their behalf and I know that many did so.

In relation to those who did not, and who are now proposing to apply under Tranche 2, they will be able to do so in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the new scheme, which for many farmers will prove more beneficial, particularly those with farmland birds or Natura land.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

23. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a headage payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35831/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 13 March 2015. Processing of the application has recently been finalised. Payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

24. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35850/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 16 April 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

25. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a single payment; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35857/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payments / Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Scheme was received from the person named on 8 May 2015. Processing the ANC Scheme application has recently been finalised. Payment has now issued directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

In relation to the Basic Payment Scheme and Greening Payment, I am pleased to confirm that advance payments will commence in Ireland on 16 October 2015, which is the earliest that payments can commence under the governing EU Regulations. In addition, I can confirm that the level of the advance payment is set at 70% for 2015 rather than the normal 50%. The increase in the advance payment for 2015 is, in particular, due to the difficulties encountered in the dairying and pigmeat sectors. Payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence in respect of applicants whose applications are fully processed and who have no outstanding errors from 16 October 2015.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

26. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the next tranche of payments are due under the agri-environment options schemes, AEOS 1, AEOS 2 and AEOS 3; if these payments are due to issue to farmers before Christmas 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35859/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue.

The cross-checks for the 2015 AEOS scheme year can only take place following the finalisation of the BPS applications for 2015 and the issuing of BPS payments, which will commence this week.

I anticipate that payments for the 2015 scheme year will then commence towards the end of November, for all three schemes mentioned.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

27. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35876/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 18 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payment due under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence issuing from 16 October 2015 to eligible applicants whose applications are fully processed.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

28. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35880/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 14 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payment due under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence issuing from 16 October 2015 to eligible applicants whose applications are fully processed.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

29. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of an application under the natural constraints scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35888/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 4 May 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and

comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payment due under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence issuing from 16 October 2015 to eligible applicants whose applications are fully processed.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

30. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of an application under the natural constraints scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35889/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme application on 7 April 2015. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases Remote Sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payment due under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Advance payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence issuing from 16 October 2015 to eligible applicants whose applications are fully processed.

Agriculture Scheme Data

31. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who applied for payments under the areas of natural constraint scheme in 2015; the numbers who have received a first payment; the number of files that are being queried at present; the number of cases where payment is held up at present due to not having the required stocking density; the way this compares to figures for the disadvantaged areas scheme this time last year; if he will provide this information, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35901/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 23 September 2015. To date, payments worth €156,239,607 have issued nationally to some 73,813 applicants. Payment will continue to issue on a twice weekly basis, as individual cases are confirmed eligible. At this date last year, 77,260 farmers had been paid €162,298,829. Given the two week extension to this year's application date and reduced processing time, the payment levels are broadly similar.

The further detail requested on a county basis by the Deputy is currently being collated and will be forwarded when available.

Beef Data Programme

32. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of active applicants in the beef data and genomics scheme; the number who have submitted samples; the number of samples submitted; the number who have returned the survey online or by post; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35903/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Beef Data and Genomics Programme forms part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme, and will involve a budget of some €300m over a six year period. It is intended to improve the quality of the national suckler herd and deliver an accelerated improvement in the environmental sustainability of the beef herd through the application of genomics technology.

A total of 27,790 applicants continue to participate in the Beef Data Genomics Programme. The ICBF are continuing to issue genotype sample kits to participating herds. To date genotype samples have been submitted to the laboratory by 10,542 herds for some 107,000 animals. Of this number more than 9,400 herds have submitted all their samples.

A total of 8,165 applicants have returned their survey forms through the post with a further 2,000 applicants recording data online.

GLAS Administration

33. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will justify the removal of the most popular measures under green low-carbon agri-environment scheme, low input permanent pasture, which has been criticised by the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers' Association for unfairly penalising low-income cattle and sheep farmers. [35905/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): On the basis of the plans submitted for the 27,000 applications received to date under Tranche 1 of GLAS, it is clear that we have already met or exceeded our targets for the entire RDP period for the Low Input Permanent Pasture action.

For this reason, it is proposed to adjust the provision for the Low Input Permanent Pasture (LIPP) action under the second tranche of GLAS, given that we have already met all our targets. As things stand, over 20% of the entire budget for GLAS will be directed towards payments of this one action. However, it will still be possible to take a combination of up to 10 hectares of LIPP or Traditional Hay Meadow as before, but for Tranche 2 the LIPP component will be limited to 5 hectares. Instead, I would like to see more farmers avail of the Traditional Hay Meadow option, which attracts the same rate of payment.

Beef Data Programme

34. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there is leeway under the beef data and technology programme for farmers where the land on their holding decreases by more than 20% of the amount set in 2014, as many farmers are renting significant portions of land but cannot be sure that the land will be available for the full duration of the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35906/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The vast majority of farmers applying for the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) will have

significantly more land than is required in order to receive full payment. It is important to note that the requirement to retain 80% of land refers to 80% of the reference hectares submitted under the scheme and not 80% of his overall holding.

As an example, a farmer with 10 calved cows and a stocking density of 0.5, will have access to 20 hectares but will only require 6.66 hectares for the purposes of payment under the BDGP. This herdowner would then have to ensure that he submitted each year, on his SPS form, eligible forage hectares to cover at least 80% of 6.66 hectares (5.33) to ensure that he was compliant with the land requirement of the BDGP and remained within the scheme. Even if this farmer had a stocking density of 1 calved cow per hectare, he would have 50% more land than he requires.

Based on participants in the 2014 Beef Genomics Scheme, nearly half of farmers (46%) will have a stocking density of less than 0.5 calved cows/hectare whereas 90% of farmers have a stocking density below 1 calved cow per hectare. The vast majority of farmers come under a stocking density of 1 calved cow per hectare and I believe the relatively high stocking density of 1.5 established under the BDGP should provide a sufficient buffer for situations arising on most farms.

The Department has procedures in place with regards to appeals and force majeure for the BDGP and each farmer that may fall into difficulty in renting the required hectareage can rest assured that their situation will be examined on a case by case basis.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

35. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a penalty revision for 2014 in respect of the rural environment protection scheme was issued to a person (details supplied) in County Galway when the person understood that he had successfully appealed the matter as a result of force majeure circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35907/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was paid his 75% 2014 REPS4 payment in the amount of €1,137.07 in June 2015. A deduction in the amount of €2,021.29 had been made to his gross payment and the person named was notified of the reason for the penalties by letter from the Department.

The balancing 25% 2014 payment due in the amount of €1,052.79 was made in early July 2015 and unfortunately the penalties previously deducted were inadvertently refunded at the same time. The penalty amount of €2,021.29 was subsequently re-imposed on the person named, pending a full review of the file.

Department officials have since reviewed the file and as a result the penalties imposed are being reduced from a rate of 48% to 21%, which in turn will significantly decrease what falls to be recovered. The person named was notified of this review in writing from the Department on 29 September 2015 and arrangements are currently being made to refund on the basis of the reduced penalty amount as soon as possible. My Department very much regrets the inconvenience and confusion caused in this case.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

36. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

when payment under the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35908/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received from the person named on 21 April 2015. Processing of the application is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

37. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the areas of natural constraint scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Offaly; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35910/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): No application for the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme has been received to date from the person named. An official from my department has been in contact with the Agricultural Advisor who represents the individual concerned, and the application is in the process of being submitted to the relevant unit.

Upon receipt of the application, it will be processed at the earliest possible date.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

38. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments under the areas of natural constraint scheme and the basic payment scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35917/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payments/Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) Scheme was received from the person named on 30 March 2015. Processing of the application under the ANC Scheme is currently in progress. On completion of this process, the ANC application will be further reviewed with a view to payment issuing directly to the nominated bank account of the person named at the earliest possible date.

In relation to the Basic Payment Scheme and Greening Payment, I am pleased to confirm that advance payments will commence in Ireland on 16 October 2015, which is the earliest that payments can commence under the governing EU Regulations. In addition, I can confirm that the level of the advance payment is set at 70% for 2015 rather than the normal 50%. The increase in the advance payment for 2015 is, in particular, due to the difficulties encountered in the dairying and pigmeat sectors. Payments under the Basic Payment Scheme will commence in respect of applicants whose applications are fully processed and who have no outstanding errors from 16 October 2015.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

39. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made in relation to an appeal lodged under the 2015 basic payment scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35918/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2015 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme was received in my Department from the person named on 19 May 2015. During processing of his application, dual claim errors arose in respect of two of the parcels declared. Subsequently, confirmation was received that the person named was not entitled to declare these parcels.

The person named requested the case be reviewed under Force Majeure provisions and supplied documentary evidence in support of his claim. In finalising this application consideration has been given to the particular circumstances of the case. Payment will not issue in respect of the dual claimed parcels. However, a dual claim penalty will not apply in this case.

Agriculture Schemes

40. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made in relation to an application under the national reserve and young farmers scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35919/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named has submitted an application under the 2015 National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme. Processing of applications is underway which involves administrative and on farm checks and verification of land details submitted under the 2015 Basic Payment Scheme application. These checks are required under EU Regulations. In cases where additional information is required as part of these checks my Department will correspond directly with the applicant concerned.

When all checks have been completed and processing of applications has been finalised, my Department will correspond directly with each applicant to advise them of the outcome of their application.

Payments to successful applicants under the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme will commence early in December 2015.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

41. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the agri-environment options scheme will be made to a person (details supplied) in county Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35929/15]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is currently examining approximately 400 cases that submitted invoices from one particular company to verify and support claims under the non-productive capital investment action of AEOS. It is known that in some cases the invoices submitted were for greater amounts than actually paid by the participants.

Funding provided under the scheme comes partly from the EU and partly from the National Exchequer. There is a requirement and obligation to ensure that the expenditure claimed by

scheme participants reflects the reality of what took place. For that reason my Department wrote to participants requesting alternative proof that the amounts claimed were in fact the amounts paid.

The person named was written to on 11 June 2015 regarding the non-productive capital investment claim that he had submitted. This letter requested the submission of alternative verifiable proof to support one of the invoices that was included in the claim. A reply to this letter was received on 30 June last. My Department officials are now examining this case and a decision will issue to the person-named very soon.

Defence Forces Properties

42. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence the staffing structure his Department has in place to oversee and manage the Curragh Plains in County Kildare; the annual cost of such management; his plans to further improve the management system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35856/15]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney): The management and protection of the Curragh plains is an on-going process. The Curragh provides a working environment for the Defence Forces, the horse-racing and training industry and sheep owners. In addition, in recent years there has also been a marked increase in the level of use as a leisure facility mainly because of the population growth in the area.

Officials from my Department have regular contact with the various parties involved in the use and management of the Curragh to discuss a wide range of issues including the development and protection of the Curragh plains and how best to deal with the day to day issues of illegal parking, dumping etc. Also as part of the on-going management of the Curragh my Department officials liaise with various Departments and State Agencies including the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the Chief State Solicitors Office to ensure that best practice is adhered to in relation to the development and up keep of the Curragh Plains.

My Department currently employs a staff of three full time civilian employees at the Curragh to look after day to day affairs of the Curragh Plains and to ensure that the Curragh Bye-Laws are being complied with. These staff carry out functions such as branding of sheep, maintenance of lands, removal of litter etc.,. In addition to the three full time employees the Department also has in place an environmental maintenance contract which provides additional assistance in the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Curragh Plains. The total cost of staff and the environmental maintenance contract is approximately €343,000 per annum.

Also, within the Department of Defence a number of staff in the Property Management Branch are responsible for the administrative tasks associated with the management of the Curragh Plains. These tasks include the administration of the sheep grazing on the Plains, dealing with issues of illegal encampments and dumping, management of the various leases/licences, requests by the public to use the Plains, management of the maintenance contracts and many other issues relating to the Curragh which regularly arise.

Crime Levels

43. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the recorded annualised crime statistics (details supplied) for the Cork city Garda district for the second quarter

of 2015; and the second quarter of 2014, in tabular form. [35849/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the publication of recorded crime statistics.

In relation to the matters referred to, I have requested the CSO to provide the available statistics directly to the Deputy.

Garda Civilian Staff Data

44. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she is considering proposals to recruit civilian personnel to work in Garda Síochána stations with a view to reserving trained gardaí for specific police work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35871/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): At present civilians make up 14% of the overall Garda workforce. They are employed in a wide range of management, administrative, technical and operational roles where they make an invaluable contribution to the delivery of effective policing services throughout the country. The increased budget allocation for An Garda Síochána in 2016 which I announced yesterday, in addition to providing for the recruitment of 600 new Gardaí, provides for the recruitment of additional civilian experts, in particular to develop the Garda ICT investment programme.

I am committed to ensuring that the overall composition of the Garda workforce achieves the right balance between highly trained Gardaí and professional, skilled civilian staff. Having regard to international experience, there is undoubtedly value in exploring further opportunities for increasing the ratio of civilians to Gardaí, and for releasing Gardaí from administrative and other positions to front-line duties. The process which is currently ongoing to civilianise border control functions at Dublin airport and the transfer of these responsibilities from An Garda Síochána to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department is an excellent example of this. The first phase of that project is now completed with civilian staff of INIS operating all passport controls in Terminal 1 on a 24/7 basis from 22 June, 2015. The project is on schedule to be completed by the end of the year when civilian staff will be operating on a 24/7 basis in both Terminals of Dublin Airport. I am also looking at deploying civilian officers to other major ports of entry to the State where this makes sense from a cost and efficiency perspective.

Further work in this area will be progressed in conjunction with the Garda Commissioner in the context of the forthcoming report of the Garda Inspectorate of its review under the Haddington Road Agreement. The terms of reference of that review include all aspects of the operation and administration of An Garda Síochána including the structure, organisation and staffing of An Garda Síochána and the deployment of members and civilian staff to relevant and appropriate roles.

Seirbhísí Aistriúcháin

45. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais cad iad na socrúithe atá déanta chun a chinntiú go mbeidh na foirmeacha dá dtagraítear in Ionstraim Reachtúil 398 de 2015 ar fáil i nGaeilge, ar iad a éileamh, de bhun an bhreithiúnais in Ó Beoláin v Fahy sa Chúirt Uachtarach; an bhfuil socrú déanta chun gur féidir na gairis anála

agus na hIonstraimí Reachtúla a ghabhann leis an leagan Gaeilge den fhoirm a chur ar fáil, ar iad a éileamh; cad iad na socruithe atá déanta chun freastal ar dhuine a dhiúltaíonn an leagan Béarla a shíniú de réir a gceart bunúsach, mar a sonraíodh sa Chúirt Uachtarach iad, agus chun a chinntiú go mbeidh leagan Gaeilge den fhoirm ar fáil i gcónaí; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [35885/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Mar a thuigfidh an Teachta, ní feidhm de mo chuid mar Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais é comhairle nó léirmhíniú a chur ar fáil i ndáil le haon bhreithiúnas cúirte ar leith. Táim tar éis tuarascáil a lorg ó údaráis an Gharda Síochána maidir leis na saincheisteanna oibríochta a ardaíodh i dtaca le cur i ngníomh Ionstraim Reachtúil Uimh. 398, na Rialacháin fán Acht um Thrácht ar Bhóithre, 2010 (Alt 13) (An Fhoirm Fhorordaithe agus an Modh Forordaithe maidir le Ráitis), 2015, arna síniú ina dlí le gairid ag mo chomhghleacaí, an tAire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt. Rachaidh mé i dteagmháil leis an Teachta arís a luaithe a bheidh an tuarascáil sin ar fáil.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

46. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if her Department recently held competitions for staff for various overseas visa offices; the number of male and female applicants who applied; who were short-listed for interview; who were successfully placed on a panel for possible appointment, by grade in each case; if there is any review channel for candidates who are dissatisfied with decisions made during the recruitment process; if so, the number of complaints received, by grade; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35893/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can confirm that my Department recently invited expressions of interest among staff at Clerical Officer, Executive Officer and Higher Executive/Administrative Officer level for assignment in their current grade to posts at Irish Embassies Abroad. All persons who responded to the expressions of interest were invited for interview.

The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in tabular form.

Higher Executive/Administrative Officer/Head of Visa Section

	Male	Female	Total
Applications received	8	12	20

The interviews for the Higher Executive/Administrative Officer posts have not yet been conducted. It is anticipated that interviews for these posts will be held in the coming weeks.

Executive Officer/Visa Officer

	Male	Female	Total
Applications received	11	10	21
Placed on panel	8	8	16

Clerical Officer/Assistant Visa Officer

	Male	Female	Total
Applications received	15	11	26

	Male	Female	Total
Placed on Panel	11	8	19

As assignment to above the posts do not involve promotion to a higher grade the terms of the Code of Practice titled *Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service* published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments do not apply. No complaints have been received by the Human Resources Division of my Department under these expressions of interest. If, however, the Deputy is aware of specific concerns being raised by an applicant it is suggested that the individual should bring these to the attention of my Department's Personnel Officer.

Departmental Staff Promotions

47. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if her Department recently held promotional competitions for appointment at higher executive officer level; the number of male and female applicants who applied; the number short-listed for interview; the number successfully placed on a panel for possible appointment, by grade, in each case; if there is any review channel for candidates who are unsatisfied at decisions made during the recruitment process; if so, the number of complaints received, by grade; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35894/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can confirm that my Department recently held an internal promotion competition for appointment to the grade of Higher Executive Officer. This competition was held in accordance with the provisions of revised eligibility criteria for promotion arising from General Council Report 1526. This means that this competition was open to all staff (below the rank of Higher Executive Officer) across my Department.

The information requested by the Deputy regarding this competition is outlined in tabular form.

Applications received by grade and gender

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Clerical Officer	18	35	53
Staff Officer	3	4	7
Executive Officer and analogous grades	98	118	216
Total	119	157	276

Short-listed to second stage interview by grade and gender

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Clerical Officer	0	4	4
Staff Officer	0	1	1
Executive Officer	26	29	55
Total	26	34	60

Placed on panel by grade and gender

Grade	Male	Female	Total
Clerical Officer	0	1	1
Executive Officer	5	14	19
Total	5	15	20

This competition was conducted in accordance with the Code of Practice titled *Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service* published by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA). This Code can be consulted at www.cpsa.ie. Where an applicant was dissatisfied with an action or decision in relation to their application, s/he could seek a review under Section 7 of the Code of Practice. Where an applicant believed that an aspect of the process breached the CPSA's code of practice, s/he could have it investigated under Section 8 of the code. The Human Resources Division of my Department received one such complaint under Section 8 of the code.

Garda Data

48. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of members of An Garda Síochána who have retired or transferred from the Tipperary division, by grade, for each of the past six years, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35900/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information sought from the Garda Commissioner and I will write directly to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Visa Applications

49. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) has ever applied for a holiday or work visa; when that application was made; if it has been determined, the outcome of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35909/15]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that no record of a visa application can be found based on the details supplied by the Deputy. If the Deputy is willing to provide further details, INIS will advise him further of the position.

Queries in relation to general immigration matters may be made directly to INIS 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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to visamail@justice.ie.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

50. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to explain the reason that a centre (details supplied) in County Offaly has sustained 34% cuts to funding from the Health Service Executive-Tusla, Child and Family Agency, which is above cuts to similar providers; the reason for the delay in reimbursing a shortfall of €4,047 due to an error when transferring their funds in 2014, despite the fact that the funding level was confirmed to the centre in writing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35819/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has taken on statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual or gender based violence whether in the context of the family or otherwise.

Funding of approximately €17.0 m transferred to Tusla from the HSE on 1 January 2014 in respect of these services. Additional funding of €2.541 m subsequently transferred to Tusla from the Department of Environment and Local Government, in respect of domestic violence refuges and services. Tusla funds 60 specialist domestic violence and sexual violence services mainly through service arrangements with non-governmental organisations. This year from the available resources it will support:

- 44 Domestic Violence services
- 16 Sexual Violence/Rape Crisis services

Sexual violence services are being developed by Tusla, as a national specialist service, so as to enable better outcomes for both children and adults who are survivors of sexual violence.

Tusla has undertaken a comprehensive review of sexual violence and domestic violence services. The purpose was to identify strategic priorities and set out a roadmap for the delivery of these services. The ultimate goal is to enable better outcomes for those who have experienced sexual violence. The important role of Rape Crisis/Sexual Violence services is recognised.

In my discussions with Tusla earlier this year, I requested that particular priority be given to protecting frontline services. In that context, funding for the 16 Rape Crisis Centres nationwide, which provide services directly to rape survivors, has been protected in 2015. Almost €4.0 m in funding is dedicated to Rape Crisis Centres in 2015, with funding maintained at 2014 levels.

The Regional Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre, Tullamore has been allocated funding of €81,300 in 2015.

Some anomalies emerged in the transfer of funding from HSE to Tusla due to the complexity of previous funding structures and arrangements. Tusla is seeking to address this issue in the context of the Regional Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre, Tullamore. Tusla will continue to engage with the Regional Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre, Tullamore and I have asked Tusla to report to me on this matter.

Tusla has established a structure for the national oversight of domestic violence and sexual violence services with a consolidated national budget and a single line of accountability for these services. This will provide greater clarity and support for service provider organisations. A dedicated team to support the delivery of these services is being put in place. This approach will facilitate the provision of effective, high quality services with more equitable availability of services across different geographical areas and different population groups.

At all times the Agency's key priority will be to ensure that the needs of victims of sexual violence and domestic violence are being met in the best way possible.

Commercial Rates Valuation Process

51. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the up-to-date position regarding plans to exempt pre-school providers from commercial rates (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35841/15]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly): The issue of local authority commercial rates comes within the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which has responsibility for fiscal policy, and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, which has responsibility for the local authorities.

The Valuation Office, which comes under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, is responsible for the implementation and interpretation of the Valuation Act 2001 under which commercial rates are levied by the local authorities. The Valuation Office prepares valuation lists of commercial properties, as required by the Act, and local authorities are obliged to collect rates on properties which are listed.

Following concerns expressed by childcare providers throughout the country, the issue of commercial rates on pre-school services was raised with the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government Phil Hogan T.D. who confirmed that, in line with existing legislative framework, local authorities have no discretion in the collection of commercial rates on properties which are on the Valuation List. The concerns of childcare providers in relation to commercial rates were also brought to the attention of officials in the Department of Finance.

The Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015 exempts community not-for-profit childcare providers from commercial rates. However, private commercial childcare providers continue to be subject to commercial rates except those whose funding is derived only through capitation provided under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

Primary Care Services Provision

52. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend free primary care to those who require long-term mental health treatment, and to exempt them from the prescription levy, as recommended by Mental Health Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35816/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Under the Health Act, 1970, eligibility for a medical card is founded primarily on the undue financial hardship test and every application must be assessed on that basis. In accordance with the Act, the assessment for a medical card is determined primarily by reference to the means, including the income and expenditure, of the applicant and his or her partner and dependants. Where deemed appropriate in particular circumstances, the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card even though an applicant exceeds the income guidelines but where they face difficult financial circumstances, such as extra costs arising from an illness.

At 1st September 2015, over 45% of the national population had free access to GP services under Universal GP Care and the GMS Scheme: 37.3% of the population had medical cards and 7.9% had GP visit cards.

The Government's Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016 reiterated the commitment to the introduction of a universal GP service for the entire population, in line with the Programme for Government. This Government is the first in the history of the State to commit

itself to implementing a universal GP service for the entire population. The roll-out of a universal GP service for the under 6s began in July and for the over 70s began in August. Budget 2016 includes a commitment to the extension of GP care without fees to all children aged 11 years and under.

Work is continuing on the development of a scheme for the provision of a GP service without fees to the entire population. This includes consideration of approaches, timing, administrative and financial implications of a range of options with a view to bringing developed proposals to Government and a decision will be made by the Government in due course. The extension of GP services without fees will have full regard to and ensure compatibility with future developments in relation to Universal Health Insurance.

Prescription charges are part of a set of measures introduced by Government in recent years to reduce pharmaceutical drugs expenditure. Medical card holders are required to pay a prescription charge of €2.50 per item for medicines and other prescription items supplied to them by community pharmacists, subject to a cap of €25 per month for each person or family. Prescription charges do not apply to children in the care of the Health Service Executive, asylum seekers living in direct provision, or to methadone supplied to patients participating in the Methadone Treatment Scheme. There are no plans to introduce exemptions for specific medical conditions.

Home Care Packages Provision

53. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a Health Service Executive report into inadequate and inconsistent home care provision for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal has been initiated; the expected timeframe for completing the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35820/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Health Services Provision

54. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health if the proposed community nursing unit (details supplied) in County Galway is included in the list of community nursing units to be constructed under the financial package he recently announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35825/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): On 29 September Minister Varadkar and I announced a €3bn investment package for health services over six years. The overall plan includes the development of Community Nursing Units for older people and new improved models of accommodation for people with a disability. The additional funding will, building upon the existing projects, allow for an enhanced programme to replace, upgrade and refurbish long term care facilities. This will significantly improve the standard of residential facilities and facilitate person centred care. The Department will work with the HSE to prioritise the available funding.

Hospitals Inspections

55. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health in relation to the report of the unannounced inspection at Letterkenny General Hospital by the Health Information and Quality Authority published on 8 October 2015 which found evidence of a number of high risk hygiene, infrastructural and maintenance issues at the hospital, his plans to provide assistance to the hospital to address the issues detailed in the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35827/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Health Services

56. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding funding for persons using a service (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35828/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Health Services Funding

57. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a payment is restored to trainees at training centres (details supplied) which are funded by the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35834/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Ministerial Correspondence

58. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of representations his office and the office of his Minister of State have received regarding the allocation of staff and ambulances to the Tuam, Mulranny, and Loughglynn bases in 2013; 2014; and 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35835/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Representations to Ministers are logged in a representations database in the various Ministers' Offices.

Using search terms of Ambulance and at least one of the following words Mayo, Roscommon, Tuam, Mulranny and Loughglynn in the Representations databases for each of the years requested, the following results were obtained.

Year	Minister Varadkar Representations	Minister Lynch Representations
2013	3	0
2014	6	0
2015	6	2

The search terms yielded no results in the Representations Database for Minister White.

Hospital Services

59. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend the hours of opening for the minor injuries unit at Monaghan general hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35836/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my private office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

60. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive an appointment for an orthodontic procedure at Merlin Park Hospital in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35851/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Waiting Lists

61. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list to see a consultant neurologist at Beaumont Hospital in Dublin 9; the average waiting times; the steps being taken to reduce these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35852/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Procedures

62. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive an appointment for an ophthalmic procedure at Galway University Hospital; the reason this person cannot be given a date for an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35860/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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, 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 Health Service Executive, 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 you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

HSE Staff Remuneration

63. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if home support workers in County Donegal are being deprived of their legal entitlements to premium payments by the Health Service Executive. [35863/15]

64. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support workers employed by the Health Service Executive in County Donegal who are being deprived of their legal entitlements to premium payments. [35864/15]

65. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health the moneys owed to home support workers in County Donegal as a result of the Health Service Executive's refusal to honour its legal obligations regarding premium payments. [35865/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 63 to 65, inclusive, together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on these matters. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

HSE Staff

66. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to employ more dental nurses for the Health Service Executive midland region. [35866/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on the matter. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

National Dementia Strategy

67. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding dementia; his plans to address the concerns raised; if he has provided funding for it under any of the headings of the 2016 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35867/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014. This delivers on a commitment in the Programme for Government to develop a national Alzheimer's and other dementia's strategy to increase awareness, ensure early diagnosis and intervention and develop enhanced community based services.

The Department of Health and the HSE have agreed a joint initiative with the Atlantic Philanthropies to implement significant elements of the Strategy over the period 2014-2017. This National Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme will represent a combined investment of €27.5m, with Atlantic Philanthropies contributing €12m, and the HSE contributing €15.5m.

This Programme will promote a greater focus on timely diagnosis of dementia and on the value of early intervention, along with the long-term objective of making people in Ireland generally more aware and understanding of the needs of people with dementia, and of the contribution that those with dementia continue to make to our society.

Key elements of the initiative include:

- the roll-out of a programme of Intensive Home Supports and Home Care Packages for people with dementia;
- the provision of additional dementia-specific resources for GP's, who are the critical and initial point of contact with the health system for those with dementia. The resource material will include training materials and guidance on local services and contact points etc;
- measures to raise public awareness, address stigma and promote the inclusion and involvement in society of those with dementia.

A Monitoring Group, chaired by the Department of Health, has been established to assist with and advise on implementation of the National Dementia Strategy, including the National Dementia Strategy Implementation Programme. This Group includes health professionals, administrators, researchers and advocates. The Group also includes a person living with dementia and a representative of those who care for people with dementia. The most recent meeting of this Monitoring Group was held on 24 September 2015.

As the delivery of dementia services is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Hospital Procedures

68. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he is aware of the serious concerns being expressed by the community throughout the Tallaght area of Dublin 24 regarding reports that over 1,000 operations were cancelled at Tallaght Hospital over the past six months; his plans to order an immediate investigation into this matter; if he will provide assurances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35868/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Services

69. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) was one of the patients who had a delayed diagnosis in Bantry Hospital in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35873/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointments Status

70. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35882/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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, 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 Health Service Executive, 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 you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Hospital Appointment Delays

71. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35887/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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, 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 Health Service Executive, 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 you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

HSE Funding

72. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a supplementary budget to provide money to the Health Service Executive to enable arrears due to social care workers in the Brothers of Charity and Ability West - twilight premium time payments - to receive their payments; when this estimate is likely to be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35902/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Whilst it is too early to be definitive on the requirement for Vote 38 in 2015, it is clear that the health sector will require a Supplementary Estimate. The HSE is pro-actively engaged in internal efforts to maximise savings and to ensure that additional measures are identified and safely implemented to mitigate any projected deficits which are within HSE direct control. My Department continues to work closely with the HSE to ensure that the greatest degree of budgetary control is exercised.

The amount of supplementary funding required is currently under discussion between my Department, the HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

73. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if additional staff will be provided at a health centre (details supplied) in County Westmeath in order to relieve pressure on existing staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35911/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, she can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with the HSE.

Hospital Appointments Status

74. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment from Letterkenny General Hospital in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35913/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): 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 scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Vaccination Programme

75. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his views on the hundreds of complaints that have been received by the Health Service Executive regarding the Gardasil vaccine; and the steps he will take to address the matter. [35914/15]

76. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to meet with members of a group (details supplied) who are concerned at the side effects of the Gardasil vaccine, and the need to initiate a formal review, given that such examinations are taking place in other countries. [35915/15]

77. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to put in place a process to support girls who have suffered serious disabling side effects from the Gardasil vaccination. [35916/15]

Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 to 77, inclusive, together.

The immunisation programme in Ireland is based on the advice of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC). NIAC is a committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland comprising of experts in a number of specialties including infectious diseases, paediatrics and public health. The committee's recommendations are informed by public health advice and international best practice.

Immunisation is regarded as one of the safest and most cost-effective of health care interventions. The HPV vaccine protects girls from developing cervical cancer when they are adults. The vaccine is available free of charge from the HSE for all girls in 1st year of secondary school. This is in accordance with the recommendation received from the NIAC which indicated that the HPV vaccine should be offered on an annual basis to all girls aged 12. The advice, based on public health considerations and supported by the cost-effectiveness analysis, is that HPV vaccines confer maximum benefit both individually and on a population basis if administered prior to HPV exposure. The vaccine protects against two high risk types of HPV (16 & 18) that cause 73% of all cervical cancers. Vaccinated women and girls will still be at risk from other high risk types of HPV that can cause cervical cancer and will therefore need to continue to have regular cervical smear tests.

In Ireland, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the regulatory authority for medicines in Ireland. Gardasil® is a medicinal product which has been authorised for use across the European Union since September 2006 following a positive opinion from the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) at the European Medicines Agency (EMA). With this authorisation, the vaccine can be marketed in all EU Member States. Since first authorisation the HPRA has continuously monitored the safety of Gardasil®.

While no medicine (including vaccines) is entirely without risk, the safety profile of Gardasil® has been continuously monitored since it was first authorised both nationally and at EU level. This is done by both monitoring of individual adverse reaction reports received by competent authorities across Europe (including the HPRA) and Periodic Safety Update Reports (PSURs) submitted by the Marketing Authorisation Holder (i.e. license holder) for the vaccine on a regular basis. The most recent EU review of cumulative global safety update data completed in December 2014 concluded that the benefit/risk profile for Gardasil® remains positive.

Up to the 11 September 2015, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) has received 901 reports of suspected adverse reactions/events notified in association with the use of HPV vaccines (Gardasil® 899 and Cervarix® 2). The vast majority of reports received by the HPRA regarding both Gardasil® and Cervarix vaccines to date have been consistent with the expected pattern of adverse effects for the vaccines, as described in the product information. Vaccination related events, occurring at the time of vaccine administration, such as syncope (faints) has been among the most commonly reported effects. Other commonly reported symptoms include gastrointestinal symptoms, malaise, headache, dizziness and injection site reactions. Reports of allergic-type reactions including skin rashes, urticaria and flushing have also been received, including isolated reports of more severe hypersensitivity-type reactions.

As part of its monitoring of the safety of medicines, the HPRA operates an adverse reaction reporting system, where healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to report adverse reactions they consider may be associated with their treatment, through the range of options in place for reporting (<https://www.hpra.ie/homepage/about-us/report-an-issue>). All reports received are evaluated and considered in the context of the safety profile of the product concerned, with reports followed up as necessary for further information, that may assist in the assessment of the case. All reports received through the online reporting options receive an acknowledgement and case record number on successful submission of a report. Further information is provided to reporters in respect of any questions/concerns reflected in their reports, in the context of report follow up. In accordance with its reporting obligations, the HPRA provides anonymised details of reports received to the EMA, the World Health Organisation and to the marketing authorisation (i.e. licence) holder for the medicine.

The EMA has commenced a review of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine “*to further clarify aspects of their safety profile,*” although the agency points out that this review “*does not question that the benefits of HPV vaccines outweigh their risks.*” The review is specifically focusing on rare reports of two conditions, complex regional pain syndrome and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome associated with heart rate increase. Recommendations from the first stage of this review are expected in November. The agency also notes that while the review is being carried out, no change in the use of these products is recommended.

In addition the EMA is currently evaluating data from a new epidemiological study on the safety of human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines, Gardasil® and Cervarix®. The study conducted jointly by the French medicines agency (ANSM) and the French national health insurance fund (CNAMTS) compared the incidence of autoimmune conditions in girls given HPV vaccines with the incidence in girls not given the vaccines. In the meantime, the EMA have advised healthcare professionals that available data does not warrant any change to the use of these vaccines. Healthcare professionals should therefore continue using Gardasil® and Cervarix® in accordance with the current product information.

As Minister for Health I consider meeting any organisation in the health area that requests to do so. However due to scheduling commitments I am not always available to meet all who request a meeting.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

78. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the Cottage Hospital in Drogheda in County Louth; if it is a transitional care unit exclusively; and the number and type of beds and places it currently provides. [35921/15]

79. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number and type of beds and places provided by the Cottage Hospital in County Louth, for each year since 2010. [35922/15]

80. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if the Cottage Hospital in County Louth has achieved the Health Information and Quality Authority 2015 standards. [35923/15]

81. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of Saint Joseph's Hospital in Ardee in County Louth; if it is exclusively a long-stay facility; and the number and type of beds and places it currently provides. [35924/15]

82. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number and type of beds and places provided by Saint Joseph's Hospital in Ardee in County Louth, in each year since 2010. [35925/15]

83. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if Saint Joseph's Hospital in Ardee in County Louth has received its full €750,000 capital investment funding to meet Health Information and Quality Authority 2015 standards. [35926/15]

84. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding Saint Mary's Nursing Home and Boyne View Nursing Home; with regard to each, the number of beds that are currently provided; the type of accommodation currently available; the number of additional beds they will provide if and when the refurbishment-rebuilding project goes ahead; if the design plan is for a new build or for a refurbishment; the position regarding the capital funding request for the new 100 bed unit; when he expects work to commence on the construction of the new 100 bed unit; and when he expects its completion. [35927/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 78 to 84, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

Nursing Home Beds Data

85. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of public and private nursing home beds that currently exist in county Louth, for each year from 2010 [35928/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Since 2009 all designated centres for older people must be registered with the Health Information and Quality Authority. A register of all designated centres is available on the HIQA website with a breakdown available by county. Further details of each of the 13 designated centres that are currently registered in Louth, including the maximum number of residents who can be accommodated at each can be found at www.hiqa.ie.

The Department of Health carries out a survey of long-stay units each year. Each long-stay unit (public, private and voluntary) is sent a questionnaire and the responses are collated by the

Department. The aim of the survey is to provide statistics on the number of beds available for long-term care, how these beds are used and the types of residents who occupy these beds.

The results of the surveys are used to prepare the Long-Stay Activity Statistics Reports which are published on the Department's website. The Long-Stay Activity Statistics from 2010 to 2013, the most recent year available, can be accessed at www.doh.ie. Each report provides a breakdown of the data by Local Health Office and Category of Unit. The Deputy should be mindful that these are self-reported survey results.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

86. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health his plans to change the means assessment of business and farm assets for the nursing home subvention scheme, so that there would be a cap of three years on the contribution to be made, in lieu of assets of this type; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35931/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): When the Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published on 20th July 2015. The Review included a general examination of the operation of the Scheme, as well as the balance between residential care and care in the community, and a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies, including the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme.

An Interdepartmental/Agency Working Group is currently being established to progress the recommendations contained in the Report. This Group will be chaired by the Department of Health and will comprise relevant officials from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the HSE, the Revenue Commissioners and, when required, the National Treatment Purchase Fund. This Group is due to report to the Cabinet Committee on Health in June 2016.

Passport Applications

87. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to change the law concerning the examination of applicants for passports, whereby the requirement to have the application stamped by members of An Garda Síochána could be eliminated, thereby relieving gardaí for other duties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35881/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The 2008 Passports Act provides that the Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be satisfied as to the identity of each applicant before a passport is issued. This serves to maintain the good reputation and integrity of the Irish passport worldwide which in turn protects Irish citizens as they travel abroad. The witnessing of applications by An Garda Síochána in the state has been a vital element of this identity verification and in combatting fraud.

However, recognising the additional workload which the significant increase in passport applications (from 250,000 in 1995 to over 630,000 last year) has put on An Garda Síochána, the Passport Service is reviewing the witnessing process. The process used to apply for a passport card is serving as a pilot for an online application form. It is anticipated that the Garda witnessing requirement for adults renewing their passports will be reviewed in tandem with a number

of new identity verification and anti-fraud measures including increased reliance on the public services card as the core identity verification mechanism for all passport applicants in the State.

Election Monitoring Missions

88. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the name of each person who took part in Ireland's international election monitoring since the beginning of 2014, in tabular form; the cost of each trip involved, detailing the qualification and background of each person selected, and if they were appointed to the election roster; the appeals and review processes that exist for roster members who are unhappy at not being selected for missions; when the next intake to the roster is expected to take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35890/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Sean Sherlock): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of individuals who are available to participate in election observation missions organised in the main by the OSCE and the EU. The roster was established following a call for applications in May 2013, and it will operate until 2018.

A full list of the observers who have served on election missions in 2014 and to date in 2015, together with the costs arising, is set out in the tables below. Consistent with standard practice on data protection, the personal details of election observers are not being released.

As stated in my reply to Parliamentary Question 24669/15 on this matter in June 2015, the European Commission covers all costs associated with EU election observation missions. For OSCE missions, the Department covers all costs incurred by the individual Irish election observers. This includes a daily allowance, based on OSCE guidance, to cover the cost of food, accommodation and local transport incurred in country. A return air fare is also provided. In addition, all Irish election observers receive a once-off grant annually of €600 from the Department to cover pre-departure mission expenses. Insurance cover is also provided by the Department for all observers.

For each election observation mission, the EU or OSCE set out their specific requirements and, on the basis of the expressions of interest and application form submitted by roster members, the Department draws up a list of observers. In selecting nominees to be put forward, the specific criteria set by the EU or OSCE, including relevant local and regional experience and language proficiency, form the principal basis for decision-making. Issues of gender balance and length of time since serving on a mission are also taken into account. The final decisions on participation in missions are made by the EU and OSCE, and Irish nominees have a high success rate.

Observers selected for participation in election observation missions are drawn from Ireland's election observation roster, established in May 2013. Officials from the Department, who work on relevant geographic desks, may, on occasion also participate on such missions. The costs incurred by these officials are paid on the same basis as other election roster members, but no pre-departure grant is provided.

The Irish Aid website has a listing and breakdown of observers deployed to countries since the formation of the current election observation roster in 2013.

Election Observation Missions 2014

Country	Organisation	Role	Surname	Forename	Expenditure (€ Euro)
Serbia	OSCE	LTO	Keaveney	Cecilia	5,001
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	O'Callaghan	Sean	5,949
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	Durnin	John	2,720
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	Byrne	Eric	2,720
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	Brocklesby	Gabrielle	2,720
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	Coakley	John Paul	2,720
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	O'Keefe	Almha	2,720
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	OSCE	STO	Schorderet	Aisling	1,982
Guinea Bissau	EU	STO	Cunniffe	Diarmuid	642
Egypt	EU	STO	Boyle	Michael	649
Malawi	EU	LTO	O'Shea	Aidan	155
Malawi	EU	STO	Kavanagh	Michael	657
Malawi	EU	STO	McCabe	Ellen	657
Ukraine	OSCE	LTO	Verling	Michael	15,136
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Denny	David	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	O'Sullivan	Finbar	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Kennefick	Frank	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Doody	James	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Moore	John	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Cousins	John	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Grogan	Kevin	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Brennan	Noel	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Donovan	Peter	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Lynch	John	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Emerson	Peter	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Richardson	Andrew	3,785
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	MacHale	Fidelma	3,185
Ukraine	EU	STO	Grogan	Deirdre	638
Ukraine	EU	STO	McDaniel	Patrick	38
Ukraine	EU	STO	Mulvihill	John	638
Kosovo	EU	LTO	Murphy	Nicholas	600
Kosovo	EU	STO	Boyle	Adrienne	600
Turkey	OSCE	LTO	O'Shea	Barbara	5,711
Tunisia	EU	LTO	Lee	Dorcha	975
Tunisia	EU	STO	Sampson	Robert	638
Bosnia Herzegovina	OSCE	LTO	Peavoy	Diarmuid	5,686
Bosnia Herzegovina	OSCE	STO	MacDermott	Eithne	3,047
Bosnia Herzegovina	OSCE	STO	Purcell	Jack	3,047
Bosnia Herzegovina	OSCE	STO	O'Neill	Geraldine	3,047
Ukraine	OSCE	LTO	Richardson	Andrew	8,548
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Cross	Marie	3,373
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Grogan	Kevin	2,773
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Hannigan	Dominic	3,373
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Mullen	Elizabeth	3,373
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	O'Sullivan	Finbar	2,773

Questions - Written Answers

Country	Organisation	Role	Surname	Forename	Expenditure (€ Euro)
Ukraine	EU	STO	Dalton	Kieran	638
Ukraine	EU	STO	Fagan	Brian	638
Ukraine	EU	STO	Gilvarry	Ciara	638
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Brennan	Caroline	2,486
Moldova	OSCE	STO	O'Shea	Mary	2,486
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Donnelly	Paddy	2,486
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Quinlan	Patrick	2,486
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Duffy	Terry	2,486

Election Observation Missions 2015 to date (Oct 2015)

Country	Organisation	Role	Surname	Forename	Expenditure (EURO)
Nigeria	EU	LTO	Keaveney	Cecilia	600
Tajikistan	OSCE	LTO	Walsh McMahan	Sheena	8,123
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Kiernan	Maria	3,819
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Buckley	Gerard	3,819
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	MacDonald	Donal	3,819
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Kirby	Denis	3,819
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	O'Casey	Eimear	3,819
Uzbekistan	OSCE	LTO	Martin	Seamus	6,626
Kazakhstan	OSCE	LTO	Verling	Michael	10,513
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Bourke	Deirdre	2,660
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Dalton	Kieran	2,660
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Burke	John	3,260
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Foley	Marga	3,260
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Gleeson	Fergus	3,260
Turkey	OSCE	LTO	Horgan	Edward	6,071
Haiti	EU	LTO	Fahy	Colm	600
Haiti	EU	STO	Peavoy	Diarmuid	600
Haiti	EU	LTO	Lee	Dorcha	600
Guinea	EU	LTO	Earlie	Thomas	600
Guinea	EU	STO	Ballagh	Peter	600
Sri Lanka	EU	LTO	Boland	Mary	600
Sri Lanka	EU	STO	Jean Marie	McGrath	600
Belarus	OSCE	LTO	McMahon	Peter	12,241
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Mac Dermott	Eithne	2,723
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Mulvihill	John	2,723
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Brennan	Noel	2,723
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Ball	Frances	2,723
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Ahern	Dermot	2,723
Tanzania	EU	LTO	Carr	Philippe	600
Tanzania	EU	STO	Ryan	Audrey	600
Tanzania	EU	STO	Breslin	Andrea	600
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Lynch	John	3,380
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	O'Keefe	Almha	3,380
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Coyne	Michael	3,380
Turkey	OSCE	LTO	O'Shea	Barbara	6,753
Myanmar	EU	LTO	Roche	Marion	600

Foreign Conflicts

89. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will raise the bombing of the hospital in Kunduz in Afghanistan by the armed forces of the United States of America on 3 October 2015, with a request under the Geneva Convention, and to support Médecins sans Frontières, who lost many of its staff in this bombing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35891/15]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I deeply regret the tragic loss of life that occurred in the air strikes at the MSF hospital in Kunduz and I extend my deepest sympathies to the families of those killed and injured. The services of medical personnel from Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in the most difficult of situations across the globe in alleviating suffering caused by armed conflict deserves the highest praise. With the tragic loss of life in the attack on the MSF hospital in Kunduz, the citizens of that city will be without vital humanitarian support and medical care.

A number of investigations are already underway. I support the call by the UN Secretary General for a thorough and impartial investigation of the events which led to this tragedy in order to ensure accountability.

Medical facilities and personnel are the object of special protection under International Humanitarian Law in any armed conflict. I am aware of calls by MSF for the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission, established pursuant to Article 90 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, to undertake an investigation. The Commission has stated that it stands ready to undertake an investigation but can only do so based on the consent of the concerned State or States.

Separately, I have asked that officials from my Department meet with representatives of MSF Ireland this week.

Teachers' Remuneration

90. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding newly qualified teachers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35815/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Since the beginning of the financial crisis, there has been a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure. The previous Government reduced the salaries and allowances payable of all new entrants to public service recruitment grades (including teachers) by 10% with effect from 1 January 2011 and required that such new entrants would start on the first point of the applicable salary scale.

Subsequently, following the public service-wide review of allowances and premium payments, the Government decided to withdraw or modify allowances for new beneficiary public servants with effect from 1 February 2012. Under this decision, certain allowances were withdrawn for new beneficiary teachers, including qualification allowances. However, the Government partially compensated for this by deciding that new entrant teachers would henceforth commence on a new salary scale which had a starting point higher than the starting point of the old scale.

These measures were implemented at a time of very difficult financial and budgetary cir-

cumstances for the State.

Alleviation of the salary imbalance between those who entered the public service since 2011 and those who entered before that date began under the Haddington Road Agreement. Improved pay scales for post-1 January 2011 and post-1 February 2012 entrants to teaching were agreed and implemented under the terms of that Agreement. In addition, allowances payable to post-1 January 2011 entrants and such allowances as remain payable to post-1 February 2012 entrants were restored to pre-2011 levels.

The Lansdowne Road Agreement has, through salary increases and a reduction in the Pension-Related Deduction, begun the process of restoring the reductions to public service pay which were implemented over recent years. The issue of equalised pay scales was not one which could be resolved in the discussions which lead to the Agreement. However, the flat-rate increases contained in the Agreement will be proportionately more favourable to new entrants to teaching (who are lower on the pay scale) than to longer serving teachers. The LRA proposals have been accepted by the INTO and are currently under consideration by the post-primary teacher unions, ASTI and TUI.

In regard to the issue of the re-engagement of retired teachers raised by the Deputy, it is the policy of my Department is to ensure, as far as possible, that the managerial authorities of primary and post-primary schools give priority to unemployed registered teachers who are fully qualified when filling vacant teaching posts. It is schools that employ teachers and not my Department. However my Department has issued a number of circulars addressing this issue in recent years.

Under these circulars, school Principals must maintain a list of unemployed registered teachers who are available for substitute work at short notice and report to the Board of Management on any exceptional occasion where they have had to engage a registered teacher who is retired. Circular 31/2011 details a cascade of measures for the recruitment of teachers, prioritising registered teachers over retired registered teachers and unregistered people.

A retired teacher who returns to teaching on or after 1 February 2012 will commence at the first point of the incremental salary scale (i.e. the lowest point or starting salary for teachers). Incremental credit for service prior to 1 February 2012, qualification allowances and certain job role allowances are also not payable. This measure represents a significant financial disincentive for teachers who retired at the top of their salary scale, often with a post of responsibility allowance, to return to teaching.

The most recent information available on retired teachers paid by my Department and employed by managerial authorities of schools relates to the 2013/14 school year. 37,012 were employed as teachers in primary schools of which 302 were retired primary school teachers. This compares to 847 retired teachers employed in primary schools for the 2011/12 school year. In Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools 20,352 were employed as teachers of which 235 were retired post-primary teachers. This compares to 544 retired teachers employed in post-primary schools paid by my Department in the 2011/12 school year.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

91. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will intervene in an application for a student grant for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo, who has been denied the special rate of grant; her views that the circumstances of this case are unusual, and that a special dispensation should be applied; and if she will make a statement on the mat-

ter. [35817/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service compliments the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Schools Building Projects Status

92. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Offaly will receive a new school building, as it is still operating on a split site following an amalgamation in 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35821/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for major capital funding for a new school building to facilitate an amalgamation.

As the Deputy will appreciate, due to the competing demands on my Department’s capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the funding available for the provision of essential school classroom accommodation, it is not possible to provide an indicative timeframe for the progression of a major project for the school in question at this time.

Schools Building Projects Status

93. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will confirm that a new school (details supplied) in County Galway will be included in the capital expenditure programme 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35824/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Major Building Project referred to by the Deputy, is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The Stage 2(b) Submission (Detailed Design) has been approved by the Department, however, as the project was not included in the Department’s Five Year Building Programme, the project was not authorised to proceed to tender. The Design Team and Board of Management were informed of

this by letter in July 2015.

School building projects, including the project in question, which have not been included in the current Five Year programme, will continue to be progressed to the final planning stages and are available to be considered in the context of the new 6 Year Construction Plan that I intend to announce in the coming weeks.

Home Tuition Scheme

94. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 644 and 645 of 6 October 2015, if she will explain the reference to removing the option from parents of selecting their preferred provider, when no such option existed for all parents for over four years because her Department never included details of such an option in its annually published circular, but instead her Department entered into an exclusive agreement with just one private commercial organisation while during that same period at least three other parent-led schools were forced to close, and those parents were never provided the same option afforded to the parents who attended the private commercial organisation. [35833/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As the Deputy is aware, where parents of children who are eligible for home tuition have sought alternative arrangements to be put in place for the tuition, my Department responded and facilitated by putting arrangements in place with private providers, nominated by the parents, who provide group tuition to children in a class-type setting. In all cases parents had the option of having the tuition provided by a single tutor in the home or availing of the services of their nominated provider.

Payment of the home tuition grant in these cases is made directly to the service provider and is calculated on a group rate basis. In recent times there has been stronger demand from parents/guardians of children for whom home tuition has been approved to be accommodated in this regard. From this year my Department has advised parents of the option to enter into a group arrangement with other parents of children for whom home tuition has been approved.

However parents wishing to enter into such an arrangement must notify my Department in advance for approval and providers selected by these parents must comply with the general provision of the scheme.

The Deputy’s question refers to three unnamed facilities and it is unclear to which facilities this question refers. Accordingly it is not possible to respond in respect of these three facilities. However, in general, if a facility is selected by parents and this facility is unwilling to comply with the general terms of the scheme, and in particular, with the requirement that where a school placement is identified for the eligible child, the home tuition provision will cease, my Department will not approve the arrangement with the provider.

School Management

95. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the relationship that exists between her Department and the Department of Defence in relation to the operations of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; if she will define the responsibilities in relation to maintenance and improvement works, as they relate to either Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35854/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The school to which the

Deputy refers is recognised by my Department in accordance with the terms of the Education Act 1998. The Minister for Defence and the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin are joint Patrons of the school. The functions of a Patron and a Board of Management, which are also set out in the Act, are common to Patrons and Boards of Management operating all State recognised schools.

As a recognised school, the relationship between the school and my Department is the same as that with all other recognised schools, i.e. my Department pays capitation grants, teachers' salaries etc. to the school.

In addition, the school is eligible to apply to my Department for capital funding for works to the building under any of my Department's Capital Programme schemes/funding streams. Similar to all State recognised schools, the day to day operation of the school and responsibility for maintenance issues are matters for the Principal and the Board of Management.

Schools Building Projects Status

96. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she is aware of the concerns of a community (details supplied) in Dublin 24 which have been expressed to the planning department of South Dublin County Council, regarding access to a second level school site; if she will have the matter considered by her officials; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35869/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The school building project referred to by the Deputy is included on the current 5 year construction programme announced in 2012. It is listed on the programme to proceed to tender and construction in 2015/16.

The major building project is currently at an advanced stage of Architectural Planning - Stage 2b (Detailed Design) which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert, Disability Access Cert and the preparation of Tender Documents.

Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, which is the patron body for the school, has indicated to my Department that it will shortly arrange a meeting between local residents and the Design Team to discuss concerns raised during the planning application.

Student Grant Scheme Appeals

97. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if support from Student Universal Support Ireland will be offered to three students from the same family (details supplied) considering that they are minimally above the student grant income thresholds; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35872/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The students to whom the Deputy refers, recently appealed the decision of the awarding authority to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board (SGAB).

The appeal will be heard within the 60 day timeframe set out in the Student Support Act 2011. The decision of the SGAB will be communicated directly to the students in due course.

School Transport Availability

98. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a wheelchair accessible bus is not available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35875/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Damien English): Under the terms of my Department's School Transport scheme, a child with special educational needs is eligible for school transport if s/he is attending the nearest recognised: mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit that is or can be resourced to meet the child's special educational needs under Department of Education and Skills criteria.

The child referred to by the Deputy is eligible for school transport and my Department, in accordance with the terms of the scheme, has sanctioned a Special Transport Grant for the family to cover the cost of private transport arrangements.

The family has informed my Department that the above arrangement is satisfactory.

Gaelscoil Issues

99. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her views on the right of parents in the Dublin West and south Meath areas to have their children educated through the medium of the Irish language at secondary level. [35877/15]

100. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Education and Skills given that there are three Gaelscoileanna in the Dublin West and south Meath areas, and given the willingness of 454 students from these areas to enrol in a second level Gaelcholáiste from 2017, her views on the application of a school (details supplied) to be established as a second level school; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35878/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 and 100 together.

A submission in relation to the establishment of a second level Gaelcholáiste to serve the Dublin West and South Meath area has been received by my Department.

My Department's five-year construction plan is focused on meeting demographic demands to ensure that every child and young person will have access to a physical school place.

My Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post-primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed. My Department is in the process of concluding a report on the outcome of an exercise to determine where additional post-primary school accommodation will be needed from 2017 onwards. The demographic exercise encompassed all areas of the country, including the Dublin West and South Meath areas.

I will announce the details of the new post-primary schools to be provided nationwide arising from this exercise shortly. Arrangements will also be made to provide additional post-primary accommodation in existing schools where the demographic demand warrants this.

Having established the requirement for a new post-primary school, my Department assesses the medium of instruction requirement.

My Department runs an open patronage determination process to decide who will operate the schools. It is open to all patrons and prospective patrons to apply under this process.

Details of the criteria for the establishment of new schools is available on my Depart-

ment's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Establishing-a-New-School>

Special Educational Needs Data

101. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in primary and post-primary schools, respectively, who have been diagnosed with dyslexia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35879/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): All mainstream Primary schools have been allocated additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model (GAM) to cater for children with high incidence special educational needs, including Specific Learning Disability (SLD), of which dyslexia is one such SLD. All Post Primary schools have also been allocated additional teaching resources for pupils with high incidence special educational needs, including SLDs.

It is a matter for individual schools to use their professional judgment to identify pupils who will receive this support and to use the resources available to the school to intervene at the appropriate level with such pupils. Schools are supported in this regard by the National Educational Psychological Services.

In addition, my Department provides funding for a number of special schools and special classes attached to mainstream primary schools which have been sanctioned to meet the needs of children with SLDs. There are 4 Special Schools and 12 Special Classes attached to mainstream Primary schools catering for pupils with SLD.

As the allocation of support for pupils with SLDs is managed locally by schools, my Department does not hold details of the number of students with dyslexia receiving support locally, as schools are not required to apply directly to my Department for learning support for SLDs such as dyslexia. However, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) report on Supporting Students Special Educational Needs in Schools sets out that 0.5% of the student population in Ireland is estimated to have an SLD.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

102. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan has still not received a Student Universal Support Ireland grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35883/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service compliments the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or

that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

103. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan is still awaiting the review of a special rate of the Student Universal Support Ireland grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35884/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members. This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications.

This service compliments the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Departmental Contracts

104. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 692 of 6 October 2015, if she will confirm whether a contract exists between her Department and the one private commercial organisation who first enjoyed the benefits of the arrangement referred to; her responses to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 912 and 913 of 26 May 2015, where she stated that her Department had no contract with this or any other provider; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35892/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): As previously stated in responses to Parliamentary Questions, including those referred to by the Deputy, my Department has put in place arrangements for the payment of the home tuition grant to a number of providers, on a group rate basis, where parents of children who are eligible for home tuition have sought alternative arrangements with these providers.

My Department has no contract with the private organisation as referred to by the Deputy. The contract is essentially between the parents and the provider.

Home Tuition Scheme

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will support a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35912/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme also provides a compensatory educational service for children with special educational needs seeking an educational placement. Provision is also made for early educational intervention for children with autism. Home Tuition funding is not provided to children with ASD over the age of three where a school placement is available.

Eligibility for children seeking an educational placement is determined in consultation with the local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO). As a placement was identified for the child by the SENO the application for Home Tuition was refused and the parents were advised accordingly.

My officials have advised me that the parents have indicated that they intend to appeal the decision to refuse home tuition. This appeal has not been received to date.

Schools Building Projects Status

106. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 1239 of 22 September 2015, in relation to a school (details supplied) in Dublin 9, if the contract for the repair of a roof, etc has been signed and agreed; if work has started; the length of time work should take; and if she is aware that the temporary arrangements have a limited time planning approval. [35942/15]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the roof repair forms part of the school’s proposed major building project. In this regard, the school will commence the Design Team appointment process in the coming weeks. The Project Manager has already been appointed and has carried out a site visit to the school.

Until planning permission and all statutory approvals have been secured, it is not possible to give a definitive date for the commencement of the construction stage. It is however my Department’s intention to progress the school’s building project as expeditiously as possible having regard to the normal technical and statutory requirements.

The Deputy will be aware that because the school was forced to vacate the school building, it had of necessity to secure temporary accommodation pending the restoration of the school building and the provision of additional permanent accommodation.

Commencement of Legislation

107. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the sections and subsections of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015,

that are commenced; that remain to be commenced; and in each case, the reason they are not so commenced. [35844/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 was commenced with effect from 1 September 2015, with the exception of section 34.

Section 34 amends section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to provide, amongst other things, that Part V obligations on the provision of social and affordable housing may be fulfilled by developers through rental accommodation availability agreements. Section 34 is linked to Chapter 4 of Part II of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which has not yet commenced.

In the interim, section 33 of the 2015 Act provides that Part V obligations may be fulfilled by developers through leasing arrangements.

Litter Pollution

108. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to provide additional funding to South Dublin County Council to allow it to continue to take effective action in respect of litter and graffiti; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35870/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I am very aware of the problems posed to local communities by litter and graffiti. The role of my Department is to provide the legislative framework to address the issue. Under the Litter Pollution Act 1997, the primary responsibility for management and enforcement responses to litter pollution, including the defacement of structures by writing or other marks, lie with local authorities. The Act provides significant powers to local authorities to deal with litter and the defacement of structures by writing or other marks. It is a matter for each local authority to decide on the most appropriate public awareness, enforcement and clean-up actions to deal with graffiti, taking account of local circumstances and competing priorities.

In order to support local authority efforts to tackle littering and graffiti, my Department also provides grant funding under the Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Scheme whereby local authorities are invited to submit proposed eligible projects for their functional areas. It is open to local community groups to approach their local authority for assistance with funding for anti-littering and anti-graffiti projects aimed at encouraging long-term behavioural change by individuals who engage in this unsocial behaviour. Under the scheme, each local authority decides which local projects to fund based on its own circumstances and priorities. In 2015, I made a total of €690,000 available to fund suitable projects under this scheme with South Dublin County Council receiving an allocation of €28,000. Given the many competing demands on limited resources, I have no proposals to increase funding through my Department in this area at this time.

It may be of interest to the Deputy to note that that the Department of Justice and Equality also has a role in the control of graffiti through the Criminal Damage Act 1991, which provides for the offences of damaging or defacing property.

Water Charges Administration

109. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of water charges paid by schools, by county, for the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35886/15]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly): I have no function in this matter and the information requested is not available in my Department. With effect from 1 January 2014, Irish Water is responsible for public water services.

It should be noted that the existing arrangements for all non-domestic customers are remaining in place with no changes for the time being in line with the Water Charges Plan approved by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). On this basis, the local authorities are continuing to bill and provide services to non-domestic water customers, including schools, as agents of Irish Water.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Administration

110. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when his Department will provide funding to Galway County Council for the tenant purchase scheme; the amount of funding that will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35936/15]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey): The necessary Regulations for the new scheme for the tenant purchase of existing local authority houses along incremental purchase lines are at an advanced stage and are expected to be finalised and signed by end October. Once operational, sales under the new Scheme will generate funds for the local authority to invest in new social housing supports or the refurbishment of existing housing.

Fuel Prices

111. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding fuel prices (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35822/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The Irish oil sector is completely privatised, liberalised and deregulated. There is free entry into the market and it is Government policy to encourage price competition and consumer choice. As such, I have no function in the setting of fuel prices. The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC, under the aegis of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation) has a role in ensuring that the market is functioning correctly and that consumers are not being disadvantaged. Previous investigations and surveys into oil prices (available at www.ccpc.ie) that the CCPC have undertaken indicate that the price paid by consumers is largely determined by the internationally traded price of crude oil, the consequent price at which refined product is traded in Europe and taxation levels, along with the level of competition in the retail market. As oil is traded in US dollars the recent weakness of the euro has also impacted on oil prices in the euro area.

The European Commission maintains a Statistics and Market Observatory, which presents consumer prices and net prices (excluding duties and taxes) of petroleum products in EU Member States (known as the Oil Bulletin) on a weekly basis. The Oil Bulletin is designed to improve the transparency of oil prices and to strengthen the internal market. The relevant link is:<http://>

ec.europa.eu/energy/observatory/oil/bulletin_en.htm. The latest bulletin from 5 October 2015 shows that petrol prices (including taxes) in Ireland were €1.34 per litre while diesel prices (including taxes) were €1.19 per litre. Heating oil prices (including taxes) in Ireland were €636.30 per 1,000 litres. In October 2014 the comparable prices (including taxes) for Ireland were €1.57 for petrol, €1.48 for diesel and €1,010 per 1,000 litres of home heating oil. This data illustrates that the consumer has seen a reduction in oil prices over the last year.

Mobile Telephony Services

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Question No. 9 of 28 April 2015, the reason service providers in respect of mobile telephone services should be granted a licence to provide a minimum level of national population coverage, which operates against the interest of those living in sparsely populated areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35874/15]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White): The provision of mobile phone networks and services is undertaken by telecommunications service providers operating in a fully liberalised market under licences provided by the Commission for Communications Regulation, ComReg.

ComReg apply terms and conditions on Mobile Network Operators which are attached to the licences. Decisions in relation to such terms and conditions, including whether or not Mobile Network Operators must provide a minimum level of national population coverage, are a matter for ComReg.

While I do not have a role in relation to the terms and conditions of licences issued by ComReg, I am aware that the provision of services to all customers, including those living in sparsely populated areas, can be affected by several factors. This is due to the fact that mobile telephone services are a radio based technology and therefore can be affected by topography, quality of handsets, the capacity of the network and proximity to mobile telephone antennas.

In this regard my Department continues to focus its efforts on addressing barriers to deployment of telecoms infrastructure and services in order to facilitate the rollout of enhanced services throughout the country. My Department will continue to actively engage with relevant stakeholders, including Local Authorities and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on these issues with a view to facilitating the removal of barriers and the improvement of mobile services nationwide.

Road Signage

113. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure the National Roads Authority provides sufficient signage for the amenity park in Moate in County Westmeath as was previously promised. [35935/15]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I understand the amenity park referred to by the Deputy is the Dun na Si park, located on the Athlone road, off the R446 and near to the town of Moate, Co. Westmeath and he is referring to the provision of signage for the park from the M6 motorway.

As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The construction, improvement and maintenance of individual

national roads, is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII - formerly the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

TII has an established strategy, developed in consultation with Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, regarding the provision of signage on national roads for major tourist and leisure attractions and facilities and noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Archaeological Sites

114. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress her Department has made on the purchase of lands (details supplied); when the purchase will be complete; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35826/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is continuing its consideration of the various aspects of this proposed land acquisition, including the financial costs involved. The merits of the proposal must, of course, be considered within the context of value for money and the limited funds available to my Department.

Film Industry Tax Reliefs

115. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of applications for section 481 relief in 2015; the names of the films that have benefitted from this relief; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35838/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Key statistics in relation to Certification of Projects under Section 481 of The Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, are regularly published on my Department's website at the following link <http://www.ahg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/summary-of-key-statistics.pdf>.

I understand that the Revenue Commissioners publish on their website the beneficiaries of tax relief under S481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act (1997), as amended (Film Relief Scheme).

Appointments to State Boards

116. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when she plans to advertise publicly for the vacant position on the board of the Irish Film Board; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35839/15]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 30 September 2014, the Government introduced a new system for appointments to State Boards. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) now advertises all vacancies on its State Boards portal www.stateboards.ie and applications must be processed by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by PAS.

Officials of my Department are in discussions with PAS on the matter and I expect that the vacancy on the Irish Film Board will be advertised very shortly.

Offshore Islands

117. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding provided for in the Estimates for 2016 for island development offices and staff on non-Gaeltacht offshore islands; the way this compares with the funding in 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [35904/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): As indicated in Budget 2016, the current funding allocation available to my Department for the offshore islands has been increased from €5.9m in 2015 to €6.631m in 2016. This is an indicative figure which is subject to the Estimates being approved in due course. This additional allocation will be available for various support measures to all the offshore islands, including funding for development offices on the non-Gaeltacht islands.

Calafóirt agus Céanna

118. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an mbeadh sí sásta casadh le toiscaireacht ó phobal Inis Meáin le ceist forbairt Ché an Chalaídh Mhóir a phlé leo; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [35932/15]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): Mar is eol don Teachta, is cúram do Chomhairle Contae na Gaillimhe Cé an Chalaídh Mhóir ar Inis Meáin agus tá an Chomhairle freagrach as forbairt agus cothabháil na cé sin. Cé nach bhfuil aon airgead ar fáil domsa don fhorbairt faoi láthair, tá mé sásta, ar ndóigh, bualadh le toiscaireacht ón oileán chun an cheist a phlé leo, ach iarratas dá leithéid a fháil uathu.