

Appropriation Account 2024

Vote 40

**Children, Equality, Disability,
Integration and Youth**

Introduction

As Accounting Officer for Vote 40, I am required each year to prepare the appropriation account for the Vote and submit the account to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit.

In accordance with this requirement, I have prepared the attached account of the amount expended in the year ended 31 December 2024 for the salaries and expenses of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, including certain services administered by that Office, and for payment of certain grants.

The expenditure outturn is compared with the sums granted by Dáil Éireann under the Appropriation Act 2024, including the amount that could be used as appropriations-in-aid of expenditure for the year.

A surplus of €122.972 million is liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

The statement of accounting policies and principles and notes 1 to 6 form part of the account.

Transfer of function

On 1 January 2024, responsibility for services to support victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) as detailed in the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act 2023 transferred to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

On 1 May 2025, after the current reporting period, functions related to International Protection and Ukraine accommodation services, and Refugee and Migrant integration and the management of related funds transferred to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. At the same date, functions and duties related to Youth services and programmes transferred to the Department of Education and Youth. As of 2 May 2025, the Department was renamed the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Demand due to migration

In 2024, the Department continued to be impacted by the ongoing demand for accommodation and services for both International Protection Applicants (IPAs) and Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs).

International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) is a demand-led service with requirements for accommodation and services increasing as the number of new international protection applications increase. By the end of 2024, 32,700 people were in accommodation provided by IPAS. For comparison purposes, the numbers accommodated increased from 7,200 in December 2021 to 26,300 by December 2023. A supplementary estimate was secured towards the end of 2024 to meet the IPAS accommodation outturn of €1.01 billion which forms part of subhead E.4.

There continued to be demand for emergency accommodation and support for Ukrainian BOTPs, but at considerably reduced levels. At the end of 2024, there were approximately 29,000 BOTPs in Department supported accommodation, compared to almost 59,000 at the start of the year. The 2024 Ukraine accommodation allocation was reduced to €1.14 billion as part of the supplementary estimate process, and the outturn against this allocation was €1.09 billion within subhead E.5.

Statement of accounting policies and principles

The standard accounting policies and principles for the production of appropriation accounts, as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation in circular 20 of 2024, and financial reporting reforms introduced in circular 23 of 2023 have been applied in the preparation of the account, except for the following.

As part of the transition to the Central Government Accounting Standards (CGAS), the Department has received a derogation in respect of the following requirements of CGAS 17 Property, Plant, and Equipment.

- Property assets listed in Appendix A comprising land at Oberstown Children's Detention Campus have been recognised in the financial statements, contrary to CGAS 17:14.
- Property (land and buildings) recognised at cost with a current net book value of €53.4 million has not yet been revalued as required by CGAS 17:42A and 17:44.

Plans are in place to complete the valuation of property assets by class and have these properties recognised in the financial statements in order to achieve full compliance with CGAS 17.

Depreciation of capital assets

Depreciation of property, plant and equipment and amortisation of intangible assets are calculated and charged in accordance with CGAS 17 and CGAS 31 respectively.

For accounting purposes, the useful lives and associated rates of depreciation/ amortisation for major classes of assets are as follows.

<i>Asset class</i>	<i>Useful life</i>	<i>Rate of depreciation/ amortisation</i>
Buildings	50 years	2%
Rapid build homes	35 years	3%
Modular homes	25 years	4%
Furniture and fittings	10 years	10%
Office and IT equipment	5 years	20%
Software	5 years	20%

Payments to Pobal

Funds are advanced to Pobal in relation to the provision of certain services on an agency basis. Funds not required (e.g. due to lower than anticipated demand) are returned by Pobal to the Department. The net amount advanced to Pobal in the year is charged against the relevant vote subheads in the year (see note 6.1).

Statement on internal financial control

Responsibility for system of internal financial control

As Accounting Officer, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Department.

This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to me and my other obligations as Secretary General.

Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

Shared services

Certain services are provided to the Department on a shared services basis.

I have fulfilled my responsibilities in relation to the requirements of the service level agreements for this Department for the provision of ICT shared services, and the National Shared Services Office for the provision of HR and payroll shared services. I have also fulfilled my responsibilities under public financial procedures regarding the IT services provided by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in respect of the Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

I rely on a letter of assurance from the Accounting Officer of the National Shared Services Office that the appropriate controls are exercised in the provision of shared services to this Department. The Director of Oberstown Children Detention Campus also holds a letter of assurance from the Head of Information Management and Technology in the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration for the provision of ICT services.

Agency services

In 2024 Pobal administered a number of programmes on behalf of the Department across a range of early years and youth related programmes, as well as the provision of certain other services on its behalf. Net funding of €1.157 billion was advanced to Pobal in this regard (note 6.1).

The relationship between the Department and Pobal is governed by an overarching service level agreement which forms the general understanding of the purpose, context, objectives, terms and conditions of the relationship between both parties.

An independent review of the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) operating model was undertaken by Indecon Economic Consultants in 2021. The review, published on 29 March 2022, concluded that a new dedicated State agency under the remit of the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality (the Minister) is the optimal operating model for the ELC and SAC sector for the years ahead. This agency would undertake the functions currently carried out by Pobal Early Years (including Better Start), the 30 city/county childcare committees (CCC), as well as operational functions undertaken by the Department.

Following publication of the review, the Department commenced a design and implementation planning phase of this reform project. In December 2023, the Department contracted Indecon Economic Consultants to carry out a phase of research, analysis and stakeholder engagement to inform the design of a dedicated early learning and childcare agency. This will include an assessment in respect of the functions to be carried out by the agency. It is anticipated that this phase will be concluded in late 2025 with the production of a consolidated report on the design of the agency. A detailed costing exercise is also underway and is scheduled to conclude in late 2025 also. The work will culminate in a costed agency design, including the remit, organisational structure and service delivery model, which will be presented to Government for approval.

A Programme Advisory Board has been established to oversee this important work and comprises interdepartmental representatives alongside several external experts with experience at senior level in change management and large-scale reform, leadership, governance, public policy, and a knowledge of the ELC and SAC sector.

Financial control environment

A control environment comprising the following elements is in place.

- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability.
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- Formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.
- There is an Audit Committee to advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system.
- Procedures for key business processes have been documented.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets
- The senior management of the Department sign off on financial control assurance statements in relation to their individual areas of responsibility. These statements are available to me as Accounting Officer in finalising the appropriation account.

Administrative controls and management reporting

A framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place, including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability.

- There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management.
- There are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- A risk management system operates within the Department.
- There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems.
- There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines.

Internal Audit and Audit Committee

I confirm that the Department has an internal audit function with appropriately trained personnel and operates in accordance with a written charter which is approved by the Accounting Officer. The function's work is informed by analysis of the risks to which the Department is exposed. Its annual audit plans, which are approved by me, are based on this analysis. These plans aim to cover the key controls on a rolling basis over a reasonable period. In addition, in 2024 the Internal Audit Unit was designated by the Minister as the audit authority for the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

On a periodic basis, I meet with the Head of Internal Audit and with the Chair of the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee meeting minutes and annual report of the Audit Committee are considered by the Department's Management Board.

The Head of Internal Audit is a professional accountant and has a staffing complement of two professional accountants, a higher executive officer and an executive officer. In addition to the permanent staffing, the audit function is supported by audit services provided by an external contractor.

Audits are conducted to the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation and Institute of Internal Auditors standards. The internal audit function is reviewed periodically by me and by the Audit Committee. The function was subject to an external quality review in February 2020 by the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors and the conclusion was that it “achieved a high degree of general conformance to the standards”.

The internal audit plan for 2024 was approved by me in June 2024. During 2024, internal audit issued nine reports. On no occasion was a ‘no assurance’ audit opinion made. On four occasions a ‘limited assurance’ audit opinion was made.

I confirm that there are procedures in place to ensure that the reports and the recommendations of the internal audit function are appropriately pursued.

Procurement

The Department ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good procurement practice in the award of all contracts and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines.

The Department has provided details to the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation of 22 non-competitive contracts in excess of €25,000 (exclusive of VAT) in the annual return in respect of circular 40/2002.

Non-compliance with procurement rules

The Department complied with the guidelines with the exception of 22 contracts in excess of €25,000 (exclusive of VAT) totalling €52,901,587 (exclusive of VAT) as set out below.

- Twenty-one contracts with a value of €52,806,989 related to the provision of international protection accommodation services.
- One contract with a value of €94,598 related to the software and support for the Department’s financial management system.

The above contracts have been included in the 40/2002 annual return referenced above.

Contract management

At the end of 2024, contracts for a number of active International Protection accommodation centres had expired and were at various stages of the contract renewal process. This concerned 161 accommodation centres housing approximately 14,000 IPAs.

To maintain continuity in the interim period between expiry and renewal, centres continued to operate under the existing contracted terms and conditions, and the Department continued to discharge payments at the same contracted rates.

While efforts were underway during the year to renew all contracts in a timely manner, resourcing proved to be a limiting factor. The Department allocated additional resources to the process in 2024, establishing a dedicated International Protection contracts management team.

We understand the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration continues to progress expired International Protection contracts through renewal processes.

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

In 2024, the Funds Administration Unit in the Department was the Managing Authority for delivering Ireland's national programme under the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

AMIF funding from the EU Commission is released in the accounts through appropriations-in-aid once it is deemed to be certain. At 31 December 2024, the balance of funds received but not released was €34.48 million. €13.9 million of this was expected to be returned to the EU Commission. €13.5 million related to an emergency accommodation grant and €400,000 for the CAPS-EU Project, which was returned in 2025 as detailed below.

In June 2020, the EU awarded Ireland a grant of €13.5 million to provide emergency accommodation to persons entering the state who were seeking international protection but could not be accommodated within the existing accommodation portfolio. This grant was not part of Ireland's AMIF national programme. The full grant amount was received in late 2020 and held in a suspense account.

However, a subsequent European Court of Auditors report in 2022 identified issues with the procurement of emergency accommodation and recommended a full recovery of the grant amount paid. This recommendation is currently being considered by the EU Commission, and the full amount of €13.5 million is being retained in a suspense account pending a decision.

In December 2020, the Department was directly awarded €460,000 in respect of the CAPS-EU project which aims to design, implement, sustain, and scale up community sponsorship programmes for refugees. This was not part of Ireland's AMIF national programme. The project has completed, and the EU Commission has approved Ireland's final expenditure claim for €60,000 and requested a refund of €349,000 for the project expenditure underspend. In 2025, this €349,000 was refunded to the EU and final beneficiaries' payments totalling a net €51,000 were made.

Risk and control framework

The Department has a comprehensive risk management policy framework in place. Risk is overseen by a Risk Management Committee. The Committee is chaired by the Assistant Secretary leading the Organisation and Strategy Development Division and includes nominees from all other Divisions either at Assistant Secretary or Principal Officer level. Risk is formally reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Committee and on a monthly basis at individual unit level. The Management Board and Minister are briefed on corporate risk on a regular basis.

The risk management system involves the identification of risk across the Department and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

The system is supported by a risk register which identifies key corporate and unit level risks facing the Department, each of which is identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register details the controls and actions in place or to be taken to mitigate risk and is reviewed and updated by the Risk Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

The system is also supported by a risk appetite statement which is in place for the Department.

The Department is prepared to take controlled risks to capitalise on new opportunities so that it can meet its responsibilities and find innovative ways of furthering its objectives. It recognises that its appetite for risk varies according to the activity undertaken across the Department's broad range of functions. It will have no tolerance for risks that (i) affect the protection, safety and welfare of children (ii) impact on the application of sound financial controls or (iii) compromise the delivery of legislative or regulatory requirements. It has a high-risk appetite for areas of our work involving (i) the development and implementation of new services and (ii) the management of emergency or crisis events.

Ongoing monitoring and review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes, and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Management Board, where relevant, in a timely way. I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified, and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

Review of effectiveness

The Department has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The Department's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial controls is informed by the work of the Internal and Audit Unit and the external auditors and the senior management within the Department responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework. The Department actively implements recommendations from internal audits of the risk management policy. The risk management and risk registers are a standing item on the Audit Committee's agenda.

Internal financial control issues

Continued impact of Ukraine conflict on the Department

Emergency accommodation and support for Ukrainian BOTPs continued in 2024, but demand was lower than in previous years. The reduction in demand was primarily driven by a lower number of BOTP arrivals requiring accommodation, increasing number of BOTPs leaving State-provided accommodation in favour of independent living, and the ongoing work of the Department to consolidate the BOTP accommodation portfolio.

By the end of 2024, over 113,000 Ukrainians have been granted temporary protection status in Ireland since February 2022, of whom over 77% sought assistance with accommodation from the State. At the beginning of 2024, almost 59,000 BOTPs were accommodated in State-provided accommodation. This reduced to approximately 29,000 BOTPs at the end of 2024.

The reduced number of BOTPs availing of State-provided accommodation was partially offset by increased numbers availing of accommodation provided under the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) scheme. The number of hosts increased from approximately 9,000 hosts involving approximately 20,000 BOTPs at the end of 2023 to approximately 15,000 hosts involving almost 35,000 BOTPs at the end of 2024. This reflected the trend of Ukraine BOTPs making their way towards independent living.

Enhancements to internal financial controls in 2024 included the development of a new payments system. This was fully rolled out by August 2024 and availed of by over 95% of accommodation providers. This facilitated prompt processing of invoices, resulting in significantly reduced prompt payment interest arising in 2024.

The work of the dedicated compliance team continued in 2024. The compliance team examined suspected breaches of contractual terms, including but not limited to, financial compliance, compliance with health and safety conditions, use of unsanctioned properties, and accommodation standards. An inspections company assisted with this work, and the team also worked closely with the Department of Social Protection, the local authorities and other partners.

The compliance team was also supported by an accountancy firm providing forensic accountancy services. Where elements of financial non-compliance were identified, the team engaged with the accommodation provider to regularise the situation where possible, and to progress recovery of any overclaims identified through the establishment of a recoupment plan. As of April 2025, the compliance team had successfully recouped €2.4 million in respect of overclaims by BOTP emergency accommodation providers in relation to services rendered from 2022 to 2025. Work is ongoing by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to recoup overclaims.

Additional controls were put in place in 2024 to mitigate the risk of future overclaims including onboarding 95% of providers on the new bespoke payments system, centralisation of all contracts on the payments system, additional property inspections to ensure compliance with contractual agreements, and establishment of a financial compliance team focusing on risk-based cases. Further developments planned to enhance controls included digitisation of provider registers linking to the new payments system, to allow for more efficient invoice generation.

The ongoing focus by the Department on consolidating its accommodation portfolio saw over 400 contracts terminated in 2024. The consolidation policy was expanded to include renegotiating rates, reducing number of contracted beds and removing minimum occupancy clauses which will ensure enhanced value for money while protecting exchequer funding, as the portfolio continues to be reduced.

The Department's risk register was updated to reflect the impact the conflict in Ukraine had on the Department.

International Protection payments to accommodation providers

Overclaims by International Protection accommodation providers, over various periods from 2023 onwards, have been identified. The value up to the end of 2024 was approximately €4.2 million, related to ten cases. Recoupment plans are in place for seven cases, two are pending finalisation and one case was fully recouped in early 2025.

Hybrid accommodation arrangements evolved when demand from Ukraine BOTPs reduced in 2024, creating capacity in some accommodation centres to house IPAs. Overclaims of €1.3 million in respect of these arrangements were fully recovered by March 2025.

Following review, potential adjustments related to VAT charged on emergency accommodation have been identified and are under review in 2025 by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Early Years – compliance with programme rules

During the 2024 calendar year, consisting of two programme years (2023/2024 and 2024/2025), a total of 1,402 contracts/allocations with ELC and SAC providers were inspected.

Compliance Risk Inspection Profiling (CRISP) is a risk-rating system developed to rate the risk level of providers, based on key variables such as previous compliance outcomes, total contract value and time since last inspection. The first inspections of services using the CRISP model commenced in March 2023. 2024 saw 47% of higher risk services and services of concern being inspected according to the CRISP. This compares with 3% of such services in 2023.

The development and embedding of this sampling model provides greater assurances around targeting compliance resources towards the inspection of services most likely to have non-compliant outcomes, thereby helping to maximise the protection of exchequer funding.

In relation to ELC and SAC contracts/allocation inspected overall, the overclaim rate was 0.66% or €457,978. Of the providers contracted to deliver the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), 478 contracts were inspected. The overclaims rate as a percentage of the allocation inspected was 1.19%, or €367,063. The average number of non-compliant outcomes was 2.2 out of 23 checks per service. All identified overclaims are subject to recoupment against future funding. Following a non-compliant outcome under the NCS, providers are required to take rectification actions and to submit self-declarations of future compliance. A total of 98% of providers inspected in 2024 that were found to be non-compliant have taken the requisite rectification actions. For the remaining 2%, tailored supports are provided for those with major non-compliant outcomes, with all non-compliant services considered for future risk profiling under the CRISP system.

In relation to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, of the 481 inspections conducted for the calendar year up to December 2024, 14.8% were found to be 'major non-compliant' where major non-compliance reflects the compliance issues of greatest significance to exchequer funding, including attendance record requirements. The overclaim rate for ECCE was 0.14% or €52,800.

A total of 339 allocations were inspected for the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Level 1 (out of a total of 2,841, or 12% of AIM Level 1 allocations), with a 98.2% compliance rate. Overclaims of €10,854 were identified for AIM Level 1. AIM Level 7 compliance checks were also introduced in May 2024. A small number of initial checks were conducted in 2024, with a total of 67 allocations inspected. Overall, 38 were found to be compliant, with 25 reported as major non-compliant. Where services are found to be non-compliant, their capitation/funding is stopped. A new application is then required for services to be considered for future funding.

Almost all verification work in respect of the Covid-19 schemes was completed in 2024. Non-compliant amounts for the Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS), which was delivered during 2020, totalled approximately €464,000 (3.3%), which has been fully recouped. Following an internal audit recommendation to expand sample coverage, an additional ten onsite audit inspections were conducted during 2024.

A total of 596 applicants received funding of €4.69 million under the Fire Safety Grant during 2021, and 100% verification has taken place. As of August 2025, €784,271 has been recouped or 16.7% of the total grant funding amount, with recoupment ongoing through repayment plans. Reasons for recoupment included expenditure incurred and paid outside the eligibility period, monies spent on ineligible items as per the grant funding agreement and the identification of unspent monies. The Playing Outside grant, delivered in 2021, benefited 3,691 applicants to the amount of €4.7 million. 87% of verification checks are complete (as of August 2025) for this grant as the sample has been expanded to cover all applicants. Verifications for the Ventilation Grant, which was the Department's final Covid-19 scheme delivered in 2022 have concluded with the final report drafted by Pobal.

There were several positive developments during the 2024 calendar year. In addition to the introduction of AIM Level 7 compliance checks as noted, the implementation of recommendations of the Mazars review of compliance sampling and coverage was completed with an increase in the risk-based compliance approach using the CRISP model (see above). Onsite sampling of attendance records and parental agreements was also adjusted to improve inspection efficiency.

A compliance framework sanction was introduced in 2024 for persistently non-compliant services. The sanction underpinning the compliance framework (which covers three levels of support: initial support level, level 1, level 2) was communicated to service providers and commenced full operations on 30 September 2024. An internal guidance document on the new sanction process was also circulated to relevant parties in Pobal and the CCCs to assist implementation. The sanction constitutes 6% of an approved provider's annual core funding allocation during the programme year in which the non-compliant outcome was issued. A total of 80% of the sanction is applied when an approved provider is initially placed on level 2 of the compliance framework, with the remaining 20% applied where a service fails to rectify their non-compliance at the end of level 2. The Department is monitoring the effectiveness of the compliance framework and associated sanction on an ongoing basis. The development of an onsite core funding compliance function is to be completed in 2025.

Overall, the Department has strengthened its oversight of the Pobal compliance function during 2024, with Department officials accompanying Pobal on 12 compliance inspections, and shadowing Pobal staff on pre and post-visit compliance processes. The Department has developed an internal reporting structure to document these visits, which is being used to help inform ongoing improvements to the compliance function. A pilot of 30 core funding onsite inspections have been completed. The pilot is informing the wider roll out of core funding checks. These are being systemised and are currently under ICT development with a completion date ready for December 2025/January 2026 inspections.

At the end of 2024, Pobal's debt management process recorded a debtor balance of approximately €4.6 million against all Departmental programmes. This included programmes other than the ELC and SAC programme that were operated in that year, with approximately €3 million relating to historical capital projects dating back to the period 2000-2010. The Department and Pobal have reviewed the legacy debts and have identified amounts that are likely to be irrecoverable, with an analysis of the total irrecoverable debts to be completed. This debtor management process will conclude by establishing a set procedure for the future identification and treatment of debts as they emerge.

Kevin McCarthy
Accounting Officer
Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

26 September 2025

Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to Dáil Éireann

Vote 40 Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Opinion on the appropriation account

I have audited the appropriation account for Vote 40 Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth for the year ended 31 December 2024 under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.

In my opinion, the appropriation account

- properly presents the receipts and expenditure of Vote 40 Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth for the year ended 31 December 2024, and
- has been prepared in the form prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

Basis of opinion

I conducted my audit of the appropriation account in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Report on the statement on internal financial control, and on other matters

The Accounting Officer has presented a statement on internal financial control together with the appropriation account. My responsibilities to report in relation to the information in the statement, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

Non-compliant procurement

The Accounting Officer has disclosed in the statement of internal financial control that a material level of non-compliance with national procurement rules occurred in respect of contracts that operated in 2024. These were mainly in respect of the provision of accommodation for persons seeking international protection.

International protection accommodation contracts

Chapter 10 of my *Report on the Accounts of the Public Services* for 2024 examines the management of contracts for the provision of accommodation for persons seeking international protection.

Prompt payment interest and compensation

Note 6.6 to the account discloses that in 2024, prompt payment interest and compensation charged to the vote amounted to €309,000. This is significantly reduced from the expenditure of €3.3 million incurred in 2023 in relation to late payments. The Accounting Officer has outlined in the SIFC that a new payments system has facilitated the Department in improving the timeliness of payment of invoices resulting in a significant decrease in the prompt payment interest and compensation expense in 2024.

Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

26 September 2025

Appendix to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer

The Accounting Officer is responsible for

- the preparation of the appropriation account in accordance with section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866
- ensuring the appropriation account complies with the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation's *Public Financial Procedures*, and with other directions of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.
- ensuring the regularity of transactions, and
- implementing such internal control as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the appropriation account free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 to audit the appropriation account and to report thereon to Dáil Éireann stating whether, in my opinion, the account properly presents the receipts and expenditure related to the vote.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the appropriation account is free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the appropriation account.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the appropriation account whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I assess whether the accounting provisions of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation's *Public Financial Procedures* have been complied with.

I communicate with the Accounting Officer regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the appropriation account to be readily and properly audited, or
- the appropriation account is not in agreement with the accounting records.

Appendix to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (continued)**Reporting on the statement on internal financial control**

My opinion on the appropriation account does not cover the Accounting Officer's statement on internal financial control, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the appropriation account, I am required under the ISAs to read the statement on internal financial control and, in doing so, consider whether the information contained therein is materially inconsistent with the appropriation account or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement, I am required to report that fact.

Reporting on other matters

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I am required to report under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

I am also required under the 1993 Act to prepare, in each year, a report on such matters arising from my audits of the appropriation accounts as I consider appropriate. In such cases, the audit reports on the relevant appropriation accounts refer to the relevant chapter(s) in my annual *Report on the Accounts of the Public Services*.

Vote 40 Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Appropriation Account 2024

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
Programme expenditure				
A	Children and family support programme			
	<i>Original</i>	1,050,291		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	51,844		
		1,102,135	1,100,684	1,074,331
B	Sectoral programmes for children and young people			
	<i>Original</i>	1,207,663		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	50,248		
		1,257,911	1,237,012	1,097,071
C	Policy and legislation programme			
	<i>Original</i>	277,415		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(161,408)		
		116,007	106,685	41,096
D	An equal and inclusive society			
	<i>Original</i>	2,968,557		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	162,566		
		3,131,123	3,120,434	2,773,345
E	A fair and efficient support system for international protection seekers			
	<i>Original</i>	1,924,229		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	456,750		
		2,380,979	2,301,366	2,159,155
Gross expenditure				
	<i>Original</i>	7,428,155		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	560,000		
		7,988,155	7,866,181	7,144,998
<i>Deduct</i>				
F	Appropriations-in-aid	29,865	30,863	31,205
Net expenditure				
	<i>Original</i>	7,398,290		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	560,000		
		7,958,290	7,835,318	7,113,793

Surplus

The surplus of the amount provided over the net amount applied is liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

	2024	2023
	€	€
Surplus to be surrendered	<u>122,972,205</u>	<u>38,750,829</u>

Kevin McCarthy
 Accounting Officer
 Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

28 March 2025

Notes to the Appropriation Account

Note 1 Operating Cost Statement 2024

		2024	2023
	€000	€000	€000
Programme cost		7,800,066	7,095,428
Pay		57,407	43,808
Non pay		8,708	5,762
Gross expenditure		7,866,181	7,144,998
<i>Deduct</i>			
Appropriations-in-aid		30,863	31,205
Net expenditure		7,835,318	7,113,793
Changes in capital assets			
<i>Property, plant and equipment</i>			
<i>(note 2.1)</i>			
Purchases	(76,428)		
Depreciation	8,859		
Loss on disposal	8		
<i>Intangible assets (note 2.2)</i>			
Purchases	(3,227)		
Amortisation	4,883		
		(65,905)	(169,331)
Changes in net current assets			
Decrease in prepayments (note 2.4)	3,442		
Increase in payments recoverable	(3,979)		
Increase in provisions (note 2.6)	2,405		
Increase in accrued expenses (note 2.7)	7,065		
		8,933	(143,764)
Direct expenditure		7,778,346	6,800,698
Expenditure borne elsewhere			
Net allied services expenditure (note 1.1)		8,857	8,752
Net programme cost		7,787,203	6,809,450

1.1 Net allied services expenditure

The net allied services expenditure amount is made up of the following amounts in relation to Vote 40 borne elsewhere.

		2024	2023
		€000	€000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	41	40
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances	3,559	3,276
Vote 13	Office of Public Works	3,370	3,770
Vote 18	National Shared Services Office	111	98
Vote 20	Garda Síochána	257	231
Vote 43	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	1,439	1,260
Central Fund – ministerial pensions		80	77
		8,857	8,752

Note 2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 €000	2023 €000
Capital assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2.1	328,614	261,053
Intangible assets	2.2	6,576	8,232
		335,190	269,285
Current assets			
Bank and cash	2.3	36,134	35,913
Prepayments	2.4	50,392	53,834
Other debit balances	2.5	18,377	10,808
Payments recoverable		3,979	—
		108,882	100,555
<i>Less</i>			
Current liabilities			
Provisions	2.6	2,405	—
Accrued expenses	2.7	46,304	39,239
Other credit balances	2.8	6,071	11,565
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	2.9	34,477	32,379
Net Exchequer funding	2.10	13,963	2,777
		103,220	85,960
Net current assets		5,662	14,595
Net assets		340,852	283,880
Represented by:			
State funding account	2.11	340,852	283,880

2.1 Property, plant and equipment

	Land and buildings ^a	Office and IT equipment	Furniture and fittings	Assets under development ^b	Total
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
Cost or valuation					
At 1 January 2024	81,571	60	242	189,671	271,544
Additions	4,794	49	1,727	69,858	76,428
Transfer	232,676	—	—	(232,676)	—
Disposals	—	(36)	—	—	(36)
At 31 December 2024	319,041	73	1,969	26,853	347,936
Accumulated depreciation					
At 1 January 2024	10,358	52	81	—	10,491
Depreciation for the year	8,654	10	195	—	8,859
Depreciation on disposals	—	(28)	—	—	(28)
At 31 December 2024	19,012	34	276	—	19,322
Net assets					
At 31 December 2024	300,029	39	1,693	26,853	328,614
At 31 December 2023	71,213	8	161	189,671	261,053

Note ^a Lands and certain buildings vested in the Minister which do not have valuations are set out in Appendix A.

^b Assets under development comprises expenditure relating to the Rapid Build Housing Programme and the Modular Homes Programme.

2.2 Intangible assets

	Acquired and developed software €000	Assets under development ^a €000	Total €000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 January 2024	20,736	1,348	22,084
Additions	2,561	666	3,227
Transfer	1,119	(1,119)	—
At 31 December 2024	24,416	895	25,311
Accumulated amortisation			
At 1 January 2024	13,852	—	13,852
Amortisation for the year	4,883	—	4,883
At 31 December 2024	18,735	—	18,735
Net assets			
At 31 December 2024	5,681	895	6,576
At 31 December 2023	6,884	1,348	8,232

Note ^a Intangible assets under development primarily comprises expenditure relating to the Early Years Platform Customer Relationship Management system developed by Pobal.

2.3 Bank and cash

at 31 December	2024 €000	2023 €000
PMG balances	19,485	(16,191)
Other bank balances	16,649	52,104
	36,134	35,913

2.4 Prepayments

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
International protection seekers costs	26,532	33,791
Pobal	21,904	18,267
Administration/operational	1,692	339
Research	120	500
Ukrainian accommodation and certain related expenditure	80	770
Childcare programmes	46	151
Disability related expenditure	18	16
	50,392	53,834

2.5 Other debit balances

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Ukrainian recognition scheme	15,736	10,285
Other debit suspense items	2,440	384
Recoupable salaries	122	139
Advances to OPW	79	—
	18,377	10,808

2.6 Provisions

at 31 December	2024
	€000
Legal proceedings	2,405
Current liabilities	2,405
Non-current liabilities	—
Total	2,405

Movement for each class of provision

	Legal proceedings	Total
	€000	€000
Opening balance	—	—
Additional provision made	2,405	2,405
Amounts used	—	—
Unused amounts reversed	—	—
Discount unwind	—	—
Balance as at 31 December	2,405	2,405

2.7 Accrued expenses

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
International protection seekers costs	27,125	15,880
Ukrainian accommodation and certain related expenditure	14,181	21,299
Payroll related accruals	3,137	—
Other programme accruals	1,011	789
Administration/operational	518	652
Refugee and migrant integration	316	589
Disability related expenditure	16	30
	46,304	39,239

2.8 Other credit balances

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Amounts due to the State		
Income tax	1,046	878
Pay related social insurance	865	694
Value added tax	597	139
Professional services withholding tax	539	230
Universal social charge	204	177
Tax on refund of superannuation	16	—
Local property tax	7	6
Other	2	—
Relevant contracts tax	—	850
	3,276	2,974
Funds owed to OPW	—	7,023
Extra exchequer receipts	1,446	352
Other credit suspense items	1,349	1,216
	6,071	11,565

2.9 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
EU receipts	34,477	32,379

2.10 Net Exchequer funding

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Surplus to be surrendered	122,972	38,751
Exchequer grant undrawn	(109,009)	(35,974)
Net Exchequer funding	13,963	2,777
Represented by:		
Debtors		
Bank and cash	36,134	35,913
Debit balances: suspense	18,377	10,808
	54,511	46,721
Creditors		
Due to the State	(3,276)	(2,974)
Credit balances: suspense	(2,795)	(8,591)
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	(34,477)	(32,379)
	(40,548)	(43,944)
	13,963	2,777

2.11 State funding account

	Note	2024	2023
		€000	€000
Balance at 1 January		283,880	(28,810)
Disbursements from the Vote			
Estimate provision	Account	7,958,290	
Surplus to be surrendered	Account	(122,972)	
Net vote		7,835,318	7,113,793
Expenditure borne elsewhere	1.1	8,857	8,752
Adjustment	2.1	—	(405)
Net programme cost	1	(7,787,203)	(6,809,450)
Balance at 31 December		340,852	283,880

2.12 Commitments

	2024	2023
a) Global commitments	€000	€000
at 31 December		
Procurement of goods and services ^a	110	161
Capital ^b	31,440	49,626
Non-capital grant programmes ^{a, c}	50,478	113,294
Total of legally enforceable commitments	82,028	163,081

- Note ^a Following guidance received on commitments from Government Accounting, including circular 20 of 2024 *Requirements for Appropriation Accounts 2024*, the comparative figures for procurement of goods and services and non-capital grant programmes have been adjusted.
- ^b Due to commercial sensitivity, and the potential impact on public expenditure, the commitment related to the National Centre for Research and Remembrance is not disclosed.
- ^c The decrease in non-capital grant programmes relates to the ARP scheme. The scheme was due to end on 31 March 2025. Further extension by Ministerial Order was not finalised at 31 December 2024.

b) Major capital projects

	Cumulative expenditure to 31 December 2023	Expenditure in 2024	Project commitments in subsequent years	Expected total spend lifetime of project 2024	Expected total spend lifetime of project 2023
	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
Rapid Build Programme	187,774	66,086	31,440	285,300	237,400

- Note The movement in the expected total spend reflects the increase in costs to bring the project to completion, resulting from site challenges and expected economies of scale proving challenging to realise.

2.13 Operating lease

at 31 December	2024
	€000

Operating lease expense for year	46,316
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Note ^a There are no contingent rents payable nor sublease payments receivable.

The future aggregate minimum lease payments to be paid under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows.

Within one year	—
Between 1 and 5 years	—
Later than 5 years	—
Total non-cancellable operating lease commitments	—

2.14 Matured liabilities

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000

Estimates of matured liabilities not discharged at year end	13,516	4,374
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2.15 Contingent liabilities

The Department is involved in a number of legal cases that could generate liabilities, depending on the outcome of the litigation. The amounts and timing of any liabilities is uncertain. In legal cases where decisions have been made resulting in a quantifiable liability, the amount of the liabilities is disclosed in note 2.6 Provisions.

The City West Convention Centre is leased by the Department. Under this agreement, the Department is liable to pay a compensation fee for costs of scheduled events that could not proceed due to its use of the building. As at 31 December 2024, there were a number of such events, in respect of which the liability has not yet been finalised.

2.16 Impact of accounting policy changes in 2024

Nine new central government accounting standards (CGAS) were implemented with effect from 1 January 2024. The implementation had the following impact on the State funding balance.

at 31 December	2024
	€000
Provisions ^a	(2,405)
Holiday accrual ^b	(1,193)
Payroll accrual ^b	(1,944)
	(5,542)

Note ^a CGAS Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets

^b CGAS 39A Employee Benefits Part A

Note 3 Vote Expenditure

Analysis of administration expenditure

Administration expenditure set out below has been apportioned across the programmes, to present complete programme costings.

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
i	Salaries, wages and allowances			
	<i>Original</i>	59,803		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(591)		
			59,212	57,407
				43,808
ii	Travel and subsistence			
	<i>Original</i>	615		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	150		
			765	699
				522
iii	Training and development			
	<i>Original</i>	710		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	324		
			1,034	859
				404
iv	Operational services, supplies and sundry equipment			
	<i>Original</i>	3,191		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	402		
			3,593	2,603
				1,524
v	Digital capital investment and IT expenses			
	<i>Original</i>	1,232		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	1,178		
			2,410	2,542
				1,584
vi	Premises expenses			
	<i>Original</i>	2,346		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(112)		
			2,234	1,821
				1,448
vii	Policy reviews, consultancy services and research			
	<i>Original</i>	805		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(45)		
			760	184
				280
			70,008	66,115
				49,570

Note ^a The analysis of non-pay administration subheads has been changed as part of the process to modernise the administrative subheads across voted accounts. Prior year comparative figures have been re-analysed to reflect the new structure.

Significant variations

This note outlines the reasons for significant variations (+/- 25% and €100,000) in administration expenditure.

v Digital capital investment and IT expenses

Estimate provision €1.2 million; outturn €2.5 million

The overspend of €1.3 million was primarily due to IT costs associated with the increased staffing in the Department, along with increased IT development and migration project costs.

vii Policy reviews, consultancy services and research

Estimate provision €805,000; outturn €184,000

The underspend of €621,000 was due to costs relating to records management and data protection being lower than anticipated, the postponement of planned project management activities and the recognition of a legal expense in subhead D.11 which had been originally provided for in administration expenditure.

Programme A Children and family support

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
A.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	7,178		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(118)		
			7,060	6,889
A.2	Administration – non pay			7,884
	<i>Original</i>	1,069		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	226		
			1,295	1,045
A.3	Child and Family Agency			1,037
	<i>Original</i>	1,011,148		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	52,000		
			1,063,148	1,063,148
A.4	Youth justice – including Oberstown Children Detention Campus			1,001,151
	<i>Original</i>	30,690		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(264)		
			30,426	29,538
A.5	Guardian ad Litem Executive Office		205	64
				45
A.6	Child and Family Agency Covid-related supports		1	—
—	Services to support victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence		—	—
				36,834
		1,102,135	1,100,684	1,074,331

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditures (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall, the expenditure in relation to Programme A was €50 million higher than originally provided.

A.3 Child and Family Agency

Estimate provision €1.011 billion; outturn €1.063 billion

The overspend of €52 million was primarily driven by high demand for residential care placements, particularly single and dual occupancy placements and special emergency arrangements. In addition, there were overspends on disability residential services due to a HSE funding shortfall, on private foster care due to a higher level of placements than budgeted, and on Guardian ad Litem (GAL) services. There was also an overspend to cover the foster care allowance double payment in 2024 as announced in Budget 2025.

A.5 Guardian ad Litem Executive Office

Estimate provision €205,000; outturn €64,000

The underspend of €141,000 was mainly due to anticipated costs not arising in 2024, including costs associated with consultancy services, related to hiring the Director or the Head Guardian ad Litem for the service and those related to the start-up costs for the service in 2024.

Programme B Sectoral programmes for children and young people

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
B.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	10,765		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(118)		
			10,647	10,333
B.2	Administration – non pay			10,076
	<i>Original</i>	1,602		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	342		
			1,944	1,567
B.3	ECCE and AIM pre-school programmes			1,326
	<i>Original</i>	313,639		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	11,972		
			325,611	326,010
B.4	National Childcare Scheme and other childcare programmes			315,518
	<i>Original</i>	376,076		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	55,110		
			431,186	418,627
B.5	Childcare programmes: delivery supports and other initiatives			342,600
	<i>Original</i>	418,932		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(17,508)		
			401,424	394,975
B.6	Youth organisations and services (part funded by the National Lottery)			344,634
	<i>Original</i>	77,948		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	450		
			78,398	77,221
B.7	Creative Ireland		177	74,808
B.8	Economic and social disadvantage measures (Dormant Accounts funded)		7,397	149
			6,976	7,476
B.9	Programme for Peace and Reconciliation		1,126	484
B.10	Early Learning and Care/ School Age Childcare Covid supports		1	—
		1,257,911	1,237,012	1,097,071

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditures (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall, the expenditure in relation to Programme B was €29 million higher than originally provided.

B.4 National Childcare Scheme and other childcare programmes

Estimate provision €376.1 million; outturn €418.6 million

The overspend of €42.5 million was due to increased demand for the National Childcare Scheme (NCS). Scheme costs were impacted by registration growth occurring at a higher rate and earlier in the year than anticipated.

B.5 Childcare programmes: delivery supports and other initiatives

Estimate provision €418.9 million; outturn €395 million

The underspend of €23.9 million was predominantly due to underspends in the Building Blocks Expansion Scheme and the Sustainability Capital Programme. There was also an underspend in core funding.

B.8 Economic and social disadvantage measures (Dormant Accounts funded)

Estimate provision €7.397 million; outturn €6.976 million

The underspend of €421,000 was primarily due to the cancellation of initiatives funded under the Dormant Accounts scheme.

Programme C Policy and legislation

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
			Outturn	Outturn
			€000	€000
C.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	13,754		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(118)		
			13,636	13,204
C.2	Administration – non pay			13,143
	<i>Original</i>	2,046		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	437		
			2,483	2,003
C.3	Miscellaneous legal fees and settlements		539	1,728
C.4	Research, data and analytics		2,107	1,893
C.5	Children and young people's policy framework and other programmes		11,588	10,452
C.6	Adoption Authority of Ireland		8,581	7,332
C.7	Office of the Ombudsman for Children		4,317	4,032
C.8	Response to legacy of mother and baby institutions			7,348
	<i>Original</i>	9,183		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(3,144)		
			6,039	4,415
C.9	Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme			1,322
	<i>Original</i>	225,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(158,583)		
			66,417	63,119
C.10	Magdalen Fund		300	183
			116,007	106,685
				41,096

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditures (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall, the expenditure in relation to Programme C was €171 million lower than originally provided.

C.3 Miscellaneous legal fees and settlements

Estimate provision €539,000; outturn €52,000

The underspend of €487,000 was due to the inherent difficulty in predicting the likelihood and extent of legal fees and costs.

C.4 Research, data and analytics

Estimate provision €2.107 million; outturn €1.893 million

The underspend of €214,000 was primarily driven by the postponement of TILDA LGBTI and Ageing research due to resourcing issues. Allocation of funds for further research initiatives was not utilised as these projects failed to meet value-for-money criteria.

C.5 Children and young people's policy framework and other programmes

Estimate provision €11.59 million; outturn €10.45 million

The underspend of €1.14 million was primarily due to savings on external contractor costs due to work being carried out within the Department, as well as delays in grant payments in the year.

C.6 Adoption Authority of Ireland

Estimate provision €8.581 million; outturn €7.332 million

The underspend of €1.25 million was due to a number of factors including reduced staffing costs, delays in procurement impacting the commencement of projects and lower than anticipated legal and consultancy costs.

C.7 Office of the Ombudsman for Children

Estimate provision €4.317 million; outturn €4.032 million

The underspend of €285,000 was due to lower than expected staff costs, due in part to ongoing recruitment for open vacancies.

C.8 Response to legacy of mother and baby institutions

Estimate provision €9.183 million; outturn €4.415 million

The underspend of €4.768 million was due to the preparatory stage of the Tuam intervention taking longer than anticipated, with preliminary works undertaken in 2024 and full excavation and construction works only commencing in 2025.

C.9 Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme

Estimate provision €225 million; outturn €63 million

The underspend of €162 million was due to a lower than anticipated level of applications to the payment scheme between the period when the scheme opened in March 2024 and the end of the year.

C.10 Magdalen Fund

Estimate provision €300,000; outturn €183,000

The underspend of €117,000 was due to the payment scheme being demand-led in nature and therefore difficult to predict in any given year.

Programme D Policy and legislation

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
			Outturn	Outturn
			€000	€000
D.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	8,970		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(118)		
			8,852	1,753
D.2	Administration – non pay			
	<i>Original</i>	1,336		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	284		
			1,620	230
D.3	National Disability Authority		6,703	5,753
D.4	Refugee and migrant integration		9,214	5,492
D.5	Grants to national women's organisations		678	642
D.6	Traveller and Roma initiatives		6,132	5,542
D.7	Positive action for gender equality		5,605	2,436
D.8	Equality and LGBTI initiatives		1,139	1,055
D.9	Decision Support Service		9,075	8,464
D.10	Disability equality		5,100	94
D.11	Specialist disability services			
	<i>Original</i>	2,887,562		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	162,400		
			3,049,962	2,696,787
D.12	Specialist disability services Covid-19		18,028	39,000
D.13	Farrelly Commission of Investigation		1,400	776
D.14	Disability programmes and regulatory bodies		7,245	4,975
D.15	Payments in respect of Thalidomide		370	346
		3,131,123	3,120,434	2,773,345

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditures (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall the expenditure in relation to Programme D was €152 million higher than originally provided.

D.4 Refugee and migrant integration

Estimate provision €9.214 million; outturn €7.807 million

The underspend of €1.4 million was mainly due to lower than anticipated resettlements in the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), as well as a public awareness campaign for the National Action Plan Against Racism being postponed to 2025.

D.7 Positive action for gender equality

Estimate provision €5.605 million; outturn €2.911 million

The underspend of €2.7 million was primarily driven by delays in calls for funding under the European Social Fund (ESF) as well as delays in the development of the gender pay gap portal.

D.10 Disability equality

Estimate provision €5.1 million; outturn €4.08 million

The underspend of €1.02 million was primarily driven by delays in the development and implementation of disability strategies, due to the development of the National Disability Strategy and the Autism Innovation Strategy taking longer than anticipated.

D.11 Specialist disability services

Estimate provision €2.89 billion; outturn €3.05 billion

The overspend of €163 million was due to the increased cost of residential placements along with pay cost pressures including the public sector and S39 pay deals, and agency and overtime costs. A virement of €156,000 was made from subhead D.10 to subhead D.11 to enable the payment of a legal fees expense to the State Claims Agency.

D.13 Farrelly Commission of Investigation

Estimate provision €1.4 million; outturn €589,000

The underspend of €811,000 was due to a decrease in general administration costs and the timing of processing of third-party legal costs.

D.14 Disability programmes and regulatory bodies

Estimate provision €7.245 million; outturn €3.26 million

The underspend of €3.985 million was primarily due to lower than anticipated demand in relation to Thalidomide supports, timing delays in relation to the Create III Digital Assistive Technology initiative and payments to World Health Organisation being lower than budgeted.

Programme E A fair and efficient support system for international protection seekers

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
E.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	19,136		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(119)		
			19,017	18,370
E.2	Administration – non pay			10,952
	<i>Original</i>	2,846		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	608		
			3,454	2,787
E.3	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund			1,441
	<i>Original</i>	2,786		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	847		
			3,633	3,479
E.4	International protection seekers accommodation			1,676
	<i>Original</i>	409,144		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	674,167		
			1,083,311	1,066,315
E.5	Ukraine accommodation and related costs			655,361
	<i>Original</i>	1,490,317		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(218,753)		
			1,271,564	1,210,415
			2,380,979	2,301,366
				2,159,155

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditures (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall the expenditure in relation to Programme E was €377 million higher than originally provided.

E.3 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Estimate provision €2.786 million; outturn €3.479 million

The overspend of €693,000 was primarily due to initial payments being higher than expected on the 2023 call for proposals and the closing of old projects.

E.4 International protection seekers accommodation

Estimate provision €409 million; outturn €1.066 billion

The overspend of €657 million was due to the record number of international protection applicants and the need to bring extra accommodation online throughout 2024. There have been significant increases in the number of new arrivals seeking international protection accommodation in Ireland, with total numbers accommodated increasing from 7,244 in December 2021 to a high of 32,702 by the end of December 2024.

E.5 Ukraine accommodation and related costs

Estimate provision €1.49 billion; outturn €1.21 billion

The underspend of €280 million is driven by reduced commercial accommodation costs, due to a lower number of BOTP arrivals being accommodated and the ongoing consolidation of the Ukraine accommodation portfolio. Consolidation policies include terminations of properties no longer required, revised contracted rates and a lower number of contracted beds. An underspend in facilities and other services is similarly driven by lower demand for accommodation.

Note 4 Receipts

4.1 Appropriations-in-aid

		2024	2023
	Estimate provision	Realised	Realised
	€000	€000	€000
1	Superannuation scheme – Child and Family Agency	9,000	12,000
2	Superannuation scheme – non-teaching staff of children detention schools	650	684
3	Superannuation scheme – Adoption Authority of Ireland	—	—
4	Superannuation scheme – Office of the Ombudsman for Children	—	—
5	Dormant Accounts receipts	7,397	7,500
6	Programme for Peace and Reconciliation	579	849
7	EU receipts	893	471
8	Receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration	11,000	9,291
9	Miscellaneous	346	410
	29,865	30,863	31,205

Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in appropriations-in-aid (+/- 5% and €100,000). Overall, appropriations-in-aid were €998,000 higher than forecast.

1 Superannuation scheme – Child and Family Agency

Estimate provision €9 million; realised €10.6 million

The increase in receipts of €1.6 million was mainly due to increased numbers of Child and Family Agency staff in 2024, and the effect of pay increments and pay increases from public sector agreements.

5 Dormant Accounts receipts

Estimate provision €7.397 million; realised €7.013 million

The shortfall in receipts of €384,000 was primarily due to the delay and cancellation of initiatives funded under the Dormant Accounts scheme.

6 Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

Estimate provision €579,000; realised €196,000

The shortfall in receipts of €383,000 was mainly due to the PEACEPLUS claims being postponed until 2025 which delayed submission to the Commission and the PEACE IV accounting year extension to June 2025, postponing the final receipt.

7 EU receipts*Estimate provision €893,000; realised €1.53 million*

EU receipts in respect of AMIF funding are released in the accounts through appropriations-in-aid when they are deemed to be certain. As a result, it is difficult to accurately predict the level of appropriations-in-aid in any given year.

8 Receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration*Estimate provision €11 million; realised €10.236 million*

The shortfall in receipts of €764,000 was due to lower additional superannuation contribution (ASC) receipts than originally expected.

9 Miscellaneous*Estimate provision €346,000; realised €599,000*

The increase of €253,000 was mainly due to receipts from the BOTP modular housing management company. The related costs are included in subhead E.5.

4.2 Extra receipts payable to the Exchequer

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Balance at 1 January	352	505
Adjustment to opening balance	(1)	(6)
Refunds of grant funding: Pobal	5,990	6,754
Refunds of grant funding: ETBs	1,258	374
Other	1,019	389
Oberstown Children Detention Campus	4	75
Transferred to the Exchequer	(7,176)	(7,739)
Balance at 31 December	1,446	352

Note 5 Staffing and Remuneration

5.1 Employee numbers

Full time equivalents at 31 December	2024	2023
Department	982	769
Agencies of the Department	5,515	5,380
	6,497	6,149

5.2 Pay

Remuneration of Department staff	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Pay	50,582	38,979
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	161	218
Other allowances	139	252
Overtime	414	549
Employer's PRSI	5,043	3,717
Total pay ^a	56,339	43,715

Note ^a The total pay figure is distributed across subheads A.1, B.1, C.1, D.1 and E.1.

Remuneration of agency staff	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Pay ^a	339,065	321,592
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	2,950	2,819
Other allowances	1,091	1,430
Overtime	3,991	2,344
Employer's PRSI	35,820	32,921
Total pay	382,917	361,106

Note ^a The pay expenditure of agencies is not a direct financial transaction of the Department. Further information in relation to employee numbers and pay in respect of the Department's agencies is available from the relevant annual financial statements or directly from the agencies concerned.

The agencies are National Disability Authority (NDA), Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Office of the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) and Oberstown Children Detention Campus.

5.3 Allowances and overtime payments

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Highest individual payment	
			2024 €	2023 €
Department staff				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	19	7	32,176	25,628
Other allowances	18	3	49,473	69,592
Overtime	115	16	26,572	35,745
Extra remuneration in more than one category	7	2	19,176	25,236
Agency staff				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	526	74	28,854	23,710
Other allowances	467	—	9,492	30,013
Overtime	995	124	67,906	70,866
Extra remuneration in more than one category	611	93	34,448	36,052

5.4 Department employee pay bands

The number of Department employees whose total employee benefits (including basic pay, allowances, overtime; excluding employer PRSI, employer pension costs) for the financial year fell between €20,000 and €59,999 and within each band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards are as follows.

Pay bands (€)		Number of employees	
From	To	2024	2023
20,000	59,999	617	425
60,000	69,999	64	53
70,000	79,999	64	57
80,000	89,999	58	51
90,000	99,999	25	37
100,000	109,999	39	14
110,000	119,999	21	15
120,000	129,999	11	3
130,000	139,999	5	—
140,000	149,999	—	—
150,000	159,999	1	2
160,000	169,999	2	3
170,000	179,999	4	3
180,000	189,999	1	—
190,000	199,999	—	—
200,000	209,999	—	—
210,000	219,999	—	—
220,000	229,999	—	—
230,000	239,999	1	1

5.5 Other remuneration arrangements

Thirteen retired civil/public servants in receipt of a civil/public service pension were re-engaged at a total cost of €101,634. The payments made were consistent with the principles of the Public Service (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012.

This account includes expenditure of €42,960 (inclusive of salary, employee's superannuation and employer's PRSI) in respect of one officer who was serving outside the Department for part of 2024 and whose salary was paid by the Department. This amount is included in the figure for recoupable salaries within note 2.5 other debit balances.

5.6 Payroll overpayments

at 31 December	Number of recipients	2024 €	2023 €
Overpayments	71	95,506	84,725
Recovery plans in place	14	13,906	13,494

Four overpayment recovery plans, in respect of three individuals to the value of €1,903 were transferred to three Government departments in 2024.

Note ^a The National Shared Services Office (NSSO) implements and manages the recovery plans for overpayments.

5.7 Remuneration and benefits of Accounting Officer

The Accounting Officer's remuneration and taxable benefits for the financial year was as follows.

	2024 €000	2023 €000
Basic pay	<u>238</u>	<u>238</u>

The value of retirement benefits earned in the period is not included above. The Accounting Officer is a member of the pre-1995 superannuation scheme for established civil servants, and his entitlements to retirement benefits do not extend beyond the standard terms of that pension scheme.

Note 6 Miscellaneous

6.1 Payments to Pobal

In accordance with the Department's accounting policy, the net funds provided to Pobal for the year of €1.157 billion were charged to the relevant subheads as set out below.

During 2024, Pobal returned funds totalling €6.342 million to the Department. €5.631 million of the funds relating to prior years were returned to the Exchequer as extra Exchequer receipts (note 4.2) with €358,000 received in late December 2024 to be returned to the Exchequer in 2025.

		2024	2023
		€000	€000
Subhead			
B.3	ECCE and AIM pre-school programmes	323,542	313,844
B.4	National childcare scheme and other childcare programmes	418,627	342,600
B.5	Childcare programmes: delivery supports and other initiatives	381,779	335,971
B.6	Youth organisations and services (part funded by the National Lottery)	15,726	14,610
B.8	Economic and social disadvantage measures (Dormant Accounts funded)	308	281
C.5	Children and young people's policy framework and other programmes	2,581	2,429
C.8	Response to legacy of mother and baby institutions	376	—
E.5	Ukraine accommodation and related costs	14,092	20,590
Total paid to Pobal		1,157,031	1,030,325

Note ^a Pobal administers a large number of grant programmes on behalf of the Department. At 31 December 2024, Pobal had grant commitments totalling €21.9 million relating to programmes administered on behalf of the Department.

6.2 Compensation and legal costs

Payments/costs paid by the Department in the year

	Claims by		Total	Total
	Employees	Members of the public	2024	2023
Number of cases	30	78	108	75
	€000	€000	€000	€000
Department's own legal costs	—	135	135	203
Payments by/on behalf of Department				
Compensation	200	1,228	1,428	912
Legal costs	112	416	528	215
Other costs	47	127	174	159
2024 Total	359	1,906	2,265	1,489
2023 Total	525	964	1,489	

Note ^a At 31 December 2024, the Department has included in accrued expenses, €265,653 (2023: €27,226) being the total outstanding legal costs due to the State Claims Agency.

Cumulative costs of cases completed in 2024

	Claims by		Total
	Employees	Members of the public	
Number of cases	12	39	51
	€000	€000	€000
Department's own legal costs	—	48	48
Payments by/on behalf of Department			
Compensation	471	1,442	1,913
Legal costs	196	411	607
Other costs	25	100	125
Total	692	2,001	2,693

6.3 Committees, commissions and special inquiries

In March 2017, a commission of investigation was established into certain matters relative to a disability service in the South East and related matters. Commission expenditure is accounted for in subhead D.13 Farrelly Commission of Investigation.

	Year of appointment	Cumulative expenditure to the end of 2024	2024 €000	2023 €000
Farrelly Commission of Investigation	2017	8,154 ^a	589	776

Note ^a The cumulative expenditure to the end of 2024 includes €6.789 million incurred in the Department of Health, prior to the transfer of function of the Specialist Community Based Disability Services to the Department in 2023. Certain costs related to the commission will have been recorded in the Department's administration costs.

6.4 National Lottery funding

Subhead B.6 Youth organisations and services is part funded by the National Lottery.

	2024 €000	2023 €000
Subhead		
B.6 Youth organisations and Services	77,141	74,725

6.5 EU funding

The outturn shown in Subheads B.9, D.4 and E.3 include payments in respect of activities which are co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the ESF and the AMIF respectively.

	2024 €000	2023 €000
Subhead		
B.9 Programme for Peace and Reconciliation	1,126	484
D.4 Refugee and migrant integration	7,807	5,492
E.3 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund ^a	3,479	1,676

Note ^a AMIF expenditure for the year was €3.479 million. EU receipts in respect of AMIF funding are released in the accounts through appropriations-in-aid when they are deemed to be certain. The balance of funds received but not released into the accounts is disclosed in note 2.9.

6.6 Late payment interest

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Total of interest and compensation payments	309	3,288

Appendix A

State-owned lands and buildings controlled or managed by the Department which do not have valuations

1. Oberstown land and property (Trinity House and Cuan Beag)

The land from which the Oberstown Children Detention Campus operates is vested in the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The land was originally gifted from the Oblate Fathers to the Department of Education in 1972. The Department of Education constructed the Trinity House and Cuan Beag properties on the site.

The land including these buildings was transferred to the Department of Justice in 2008 and subsequently acquired through a transfer of functions by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2013.