

Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Mainland-HKSAR Families

**Obstetric Services for Non-local Women and
Preparations to Facilitate Children Born in Hong Kong to
Mainland Women to Study and Live in Hong Kong**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the latest situation of obstetric services provided by public hospitals for non-local women and preparations to facilitate children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women to study and live in Hong Kong.

OBSTETRIC SERVICES FOR NON-LOCAL WOMEN

Government's Policy on Obstetric Services

2. It is the Government's policy to ensure that Hong Kong residents are given proper and adequate obstetric services. In recent years, there has been rapid increase in the demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-local women (including Mainland women). Before 2007, such increase in demand had caused tremendous pressure on the capacity of obstetric services in public hospitals. It was also noted that there had been a large number of non-local women seeking emergency admission to public hospitals through the Accident and Emergency Departments (A&EDs) for delivery.

Measures to Control the Use of Obstetric Service by Non-local Women

3. To tackle the problem of rapid increase in the demand for obstetric services in Hong Kong by non-local women in recent years, the Hospital Authority (HA) has implemented since 1 February 2007 revised arrangements for obstetric service for non-local women (including Mainland women), all being Non-eligible persons (NEPs)¹. The revised obstetric service

¹ Our public healthcare services are available to our local residents (as Eligible Persons) at highly subsidized rates. Non-local people (as Non-eligible Persons) should pay the specified charges applicable to them for

arrangements for NEPs apply to all non-local women including those whose husbands are Hong Kong residents. Under the revised arrangements, all NEPs who wish to seek obstetric services in public hospitals have to make prior booking and pay for a package charge of \$39,000². An NEP who has secured a booking and made payment would be issued a booking certificate by the hospital. For cases of delivery by emergency admission through the A&EDs without prior booking, and/or without attending any antenatal attendance at a HA hospital, the charge would be \$48,000.

4. HA would reserve sufficient places in public hospitals for delivery by local women and would only accept booking from NEP when spare service capacity is available. Once the service capacity is reached, HA would stop making bookings for non-local women. Through the booking system, sufficient places would be reserved for local pregnant women to ensure that they have priority over NEP in using obstetric services. A booking system is also in place in the private hospitals which would issue booking certificates to non-local women using their delivery services.

5. As complementary measures to the above arrangements at public and private hospitals, the Immigration Department has also stepped up arrival clearance checks for all non-local pregnant women who are at an advanced stage of pregnancy³. Pregnant Mainland women who are suspected of entering Hong Kong to give birth will be asked by immigration officers upon entry to produce the booking confirmation certificates issued by Hong Kong hospitals to prove that a local hospital has confirmed the arrangements for their admission to the hospital. Those who fail to do so may be denied entry.

6. The objectives of the revised arrangements set out in paragraph 3 to 5 above are to:

- (a) ensure that local pregnant women are given proper obstetric services and priority to use such services;

access to our public healthcare services.

² The package covers one antenatal check in a specialist out-patient clinic, the delivery and the first three days and two nights stay for the delivery.

³ Women who have been pregnant for seven months (i.e. 28 weeks) or above will be deemed to be at an advanced stage of pregnancy.

- (b) limit the number of non-local pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to give births to a level that can be supported by our healthcare system; and
- (c) deter dangerous behaviour of non-local pregnant women in seeking emergency hospital admissions through A&EDs shortly before labour.

7. With the above measures, our healthcare system has been able to fully meet the demand of local women for obstetric service. As for non-local women, the booking system and the arrangements for packaged charge have effectively managed their use of our obstetric service. Most notably, the number of non-local pregnant women seeking emergency hospital admissions through A&EDs shortly before labour has substantially reduced. Comparing the respective figures in 2006 and 2010, the number of deliveries by non-local women in public hospitals through the A&EDs has decreased significantly by 91.6%. As the majority of non-local pregnant women with booking have undergone antenatal examination before delivery, the risk of difficult labour, unrecognized congenital anomalies for the babies and infection for healthcare workers could be reduced, which not only provides better safeguards to the women and their babies but also eases the workload and pressure of frontline staff.

Latest Situation

8. Despite the above measures, the demand for local obstetric service from non-local women (mainly from the Mainland) has continued to increase in recent years. The total number of live births born in Hong Kong has increased from 70 900 in 2007 to 88 500 in 2010. Specifically, the number of live births born to Mainland women has increased from 27 600 to over 40 000 in the same period. The numbers of Mainland women giving birth in public hospitals and in Hong Kong overall in recent years are set out in **Annexes A and B** respectively. The public sector would stop accepting booking for obstetric services from non-local women when the capacity in public hospitals is fully utilised. The Government is very concerned about the ongoing surge of the number of Mainland women giving birth in Hong Kong in recent years because of the strain on our overall healthcare system and local obstetrics and neonatal services. In particular, as most of the private hospitals are not providing

neonatal intensive care service, newborns requiring intensive care in private hospitals will also be transferred to public hospitals for treatment. The bed occupancy rate of neonatal intensive care unit of public hospitals has increased from an average 94% in 2010 to about 108% in February 2011. The turnover rate of obstetricians and gynaecologists in public hospitals has increased from 6% in 2008-09 to 10.2% in 2010-11.

9. The Government is committed to providing quality and priority obstetric services to local women. The healthcare of local expectant mothers should not be compromised under any circumstances. We must ensure that our professional standard of obstetric care is maintained and that our ethical medical practice is continued. HA will continue to reserve sufficient places for local pregnant women to ensure that they have priority over non-local pregnant women in the use of obstetric services. In anticipation of rising service demand from local women, HA announced on 8 April 2011 that public hospitals would stop accepting booking for obstetric services from non-local women from now till the end of 2011, with a view to ensuring adequate services can be provided to local women. Meanwhile, the private hospitals have agreed not to expand their maternity services in the short term. HA and the private hospitals will also review their respective training programmes for nurses at obstetric and neonatal services to ensure that they can cope with the demand of our community in the medium and long term.

10. The Secretary for Food and Health met with a group of obstetricians, gynaecologists and paediatricians in public hospitals and representatives of private hospitals in early April to exchange views on the problem of surging demand of obstetrics and neonatal services from non-local women.

11. As the next step, the Food and Health Bureau will collect more information about the operation of obstetric service, and line up further discussion with the public and the private sectors with a view to jointly exploring every possible means to tackle the problem.

PREPARATIONS TO FACILITATE CHILDREN BORN IN HONG KONG TO MAINLAND WOMEN TO STUDY AND LIVE IN HONG KONG

12. The relevant Government bureaux and department have put in place a number of preparatory measures to facilitate children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women to study and live in Hong Kong.

Education and Support Services

13. On education, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing nine-year free and universal basic education through public sector primary and secondary schools, and has extended free education to include senior secondary education starting from the 2008/09 school year.

14. If the concerned children are new arrival children, the EDB provides them with the six-month full-time "Initiation Programme", runs the "Induction Programme" through non-government organisations (NGOs) and provides schools with the "School-based Support Scheme Grant", which aim to help new arrival children to integrate into the local community and overcome their learning difficulties.

Transportation Arrangements for Cross-boundary Students

15. Cross-boundary Students (CBS) refer to students who are Hong Kong residents living in Shenzhen and travelling daily to attend schools in Hong Kong. The EDB has assumed the coordinating role in the various transportation arrangements for CBS since July 2007.

Special Transportation Arrangements

16. Issuance of Closed Area Permits (CAP) for Access to Lo Wu Boundary Control Point (BCP) – Under a flexible policy of the Security Bureau (SB) and the Hong Kong Police Force, CAP are issued to CBS attending schools outside the Frontier Closed Area (FCA) via Lo Wu Station Road. For the 2010/11 school year, about 2 400 CAP have been issued to CBS attending

kindergartens and Primary One to Primary Four classes in the North District.

17. Issuance of CAP for Access to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (LMC SL) Public Transport Interchange (PTI) – To ease the traffic load of Lo Wu Station Road, LMC SL PTI was opened up for CBS since April 2008. CAP are issued to CBS for access to the PTI which is located inside the FCA and within the conservation areas. At present, there are about 2 600 CBS using CAP to and from schools via LMC SL PTI.

18. Cross-boundary School Bus Services (CBSCS) under special quotas – The Government has introduced CBSCS with effect from March 2008 as a trial scheme to service at Man Kam To and Shenzhen Bay BCPs. In 2010/11, we had secured 65 special quotas from the Guangdong authorities, and approved all 52 applications which include 25 at Shenzhen Bay, 10 at Lok Ma Chau (Huanggang), 10 at Man Kam To and 7 at Sha Tau Kok serving around 1 800 CBS.

Other Related Measures

19. Clearance Counters and “e-Channels for Students” – To facilitate the entry/exit of CBS, Lo Wu, LMC SL and Shenzhen Bay BCPs open four to eight designated counters for them during rush hours before and after school on the weekdays. Depending on the number of CBS and resources, the Immigration Department (ImmD) will flexibility deploy sufficient manpower to man more designated counters to expedite the clearance of the CBS. In addition, there are six special e-channels (three for departure and three for arrival) built for use by CBS at the Lo Wu Control Point. ImmD is also planning to install CBS e-channels at other control points.

20. “On-board Clearance” – The ImmD, the Customs and Excise Department and the Department of Health are providing “on-board clearance” services to three cross-boundary school buses at MKT BCP and all seven at STK BCP in order to facilitate the entry/exit of CBS of tender age. The “on-board clearance” services are provided on a trial basis. CBS may stay on board the coaches at the control points to undergo the arrival/departure clearance.

21. Student Travel Subsidy Scheme – The Student Financial Assistance

Agency (SFAA) has been providing travel subsidy for needy CBS through a means-tested Student Travel Subsidy Scheme. The amount is calculated on the basis of the average fares on public transport to and from school within the boundaries of Hong Kong. Compared with the average travel subsidy granted to all recipients, the amount of subsidy received by cross boundary students is more than three times that received by other students.

22. Staggered School Hours – As a measure to alleviate the pressure at Lo Wu BCP caused by the increasing number of CBS, EDB has sought the collaboration of school heads of kindergartens and primary schools in the North District for the implementation of flexible school hours since the 2007/08 school year. Kindergartens have been advised to postpone schools' starting time to 9:00 a.m. while the starting time of primary schools be scheduled flexibly between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. To relieve the same congestion problem at LMC SL PTI during peak hours, EDB issued a letter to school heads of all kindergartens and primary school in North, Tai Po, Shatin, Yuen Long and Tuen Mun districts advising them of adopting the same arrangement.

Way Forward

23. Owing to the limited capacity and physical constraints of various boundary control points, there are practical limitations and constraints to enhance the existing special transportation arrangements for CBS. The EDB therefore proposes to adopt a multi-pronged approach to address the problems in the short, medium and long terms, on both the supply and demand sides.

Social Welfare Services

24. Children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women are eligible for various welfare services provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) by virtue of their status as Hong Kong permanent residents. For example, they are eligible for the continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial welfare services provided by the 61 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) over the territory. Social workers of IFSCs/ISCs will thoroughly assess and take care of the needs of the children and provide them with the appropriate services.

25. The SWD also provides various child care services through NGOs to children in need. Fee subsidies are available to service users who can pass the financial needs and social needs assessments. Children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women can also apply for the various child care services and fee subsidies if needed, even if their mothers are not Hong Kong residents.

Public Health Services

26. At present, public healthcare services cover a wide range of service, including outpatient, inpatient and ambulatory services, etc. It is the Government's policy to provide highly subsidised public healthcare services to Hong Kong residents. Children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women can access to public healthcare services provided by the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health as "Eligible persons".

Housing Services

27. Persons under the age of 18 will be deemed to have fulfilled the seven-year residence rule if they have established Hong Kong birth status as permanent resident. They may join their parent to apply for public housing through the Waiting List.

28. For those persons who are under the age of 18 and have family members living in public rental housing (PRH), they may apply for addition into the PRH tenancy for family reunion if they are either the children or dependent family members of the tenant, or children aged under 18 of one of the tenant's married offspring, subject to fulfilling the eligibility criteria for addition.

Employment Assistance

29. As these children reach the eligible age in due course, they may apply to join the wide array of training and retraining courses offered by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) if they meet the admission criteria. ERB will provide 130 000 training places in 2011-12, and has reserved resources for

the provision of 30 000 additional places when necessary. ERB will continue to closely monitor training demand, plan and deploy its resources appropriately to meet market needs.

30. In addition, the Labour Department (LD) provides a comprehensive range of employment services through a network of 12 Job Centres, two industry-based Recruitment Centres, a Telephone Employment Service Centre, the Interactive Employment Service website and vacancy search terminals installed at various locations in the territory. LD's employment services are provided free for all job seekers who are lawfully employable in Hong Kong.

ADVICE SOUGHT

31. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

Education Bureau
Food and Health Bureau
Labour and Welfare Bureau
Census and Statistics Department
Hospital Authority
Housing Department
Immigration Department
Labour Department
April 2011

Annex A

Number of deliveries in Public Hospitals of Hospital Authority

	Total number of deliveries	Deliveries by Eligible Persons	Deliveries by Non-eligible Persons^{Note} (deliveries by NEP women whose spouses are Hong Kong residents)
2002	36,909	28,709	8,200 (7,298)
2003	35,259	26,498	8,761 (7,347)
2004	37,335	26,414	10,921(8,203)
2005	40,916	27,090	13,826 (7,616)
2006	40,063	28,118	11,945 (5,149)
2007	39,183	30,556	8,627 (3,817)
2008	41,031	30,586	10,445 (3,764)
2009	40,575	30,525	10,050 (3,448)
2010	42,606	31,911	10,695 (3,581)

Note:

NEP patients are not obliged to disclose the resident status of their spouses when using HA's service. The figures provided above are based on the information available in HA.

Source: Hospital Authority

內地女性在香港所生的活產嬰兒數目
Number of live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women

其中內地女性在香港所生的活產嬰兒數目： Of which number of live births born in Hong Kong to Mainland women:					
年 Year	活產嬰兒數目 ⁽¹⁾ Number of live births ⁽¹⁾	其配偶為	其配偶為	其他 ⁽³⁾	小計 Sub-total
		香港永久性居民 Whose spouses are Hong Kong Permanent Residents	非香港永久性居民 ⁽²⁾ Whose spouses are not Hong Kong Permanent Residents ⁽²⁾	Others ⁽³⁾	
2000	54 134	7 464	709	—	8 173
2001	48 219	7 190	620	—	7 810
2002	48 209	7 256	1 250	—	8 506
2003	46 965	7 962	2 070	96	10 128
2004	49 796	8 896	4 102	211	13 209
2005	57 098	9 879	9 273	386	19 538
2006	65 626	9 438	16 044	650	26 132
2007	70 875	7 989	18 816	769	27 574
2008	78 822	7 228	25 269	1 068	33 565
2009	82 095	6 213	29 766	1 274	37 253
2010	88 495 [#]	6 169	32 653	1 826	40 648

註釋： (1) 數字是按事件的發生時間計算某統計期間內在香港出生的活產嬰兒總數（即該統計期間內的活產嬰兒）。
(2) 包括香港非永久性居民（來港少於七年的內地人士包括在這類別）及非香港居民。
(3) 在出生登記時，內地母親並沒有提供嬰兒父親居民身分的資料。
— 沒有數字。
臨時數字。

Notes: (1) The figures refer to the total number of live births born in Hong Kong in the reference period counted by the occurrence time of the events (i.e. births actually taking place in that reference period).
(2) Include Hong Kong Non-permanent Residents (Persons from the Mainland having resided in Hong Kong for less than 7 years being grouped in this category) and non-Hong Kong residents.
(3) Mainland mothers chose not to provide the father's residential status during birth registration.
— Not available.
Provisional figures.