

For discussion on
9 November 2015

**Legislative Council
Panel on Welfare Services**

**The Situation of Lead in Drinking Water in
Child Care Centres and Residential Care Homes and
the follow-up actions by the Administration**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the situation of lead in drinking water in child care centres and residential care homes and the follow-up actions taken.

Background

2. The Government has been paying close attention to the incident of lead in drinking water. The Chief Secretary of Administration convened the first high-level, inter-departmental meeting on 11 July 2015 to co-ordinate follow-up actions. So far 17 meetings have been held and a number of measures have been taken. The Government announced on 1 September 2015 that water sampling tests would be conducted for kindergartens as a matter of priority and then for public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools built with public funding completed in 2005 or after in phases. Similar water sampling test arrangements would be made for welfare units serving children aged below six who have to stay in the units for long hours and consume drinking water in the units. The latest development and follow-up actions taken by the Government in respect of child care centres and children's residential care homes are set out in the following paragraphs.

Water Sampling and Blood Lead Testing for Welfare Units

3. With regard to children aged below six being identified as one of the three groups more easily affected by lead¹, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been working closely with the Water Supplies Department (WSD) and the Department of Health (DH) in working out the arrangements for (a) conducting water sampling tests for welfare units serving children aged below six who have to stay in the units for long hours and consume drinking water in the units; and (b) conducting blood lead testing for children² and pregnant and lactating staff of the affected units if the test results indicate excess lead in water samples concerned. On 30 September 2015, in collaboration with WSD and DH, SWD organised a briefing for representatives from some 200 target welfare units to brief them on the ways to reduce lead exposure and maintain water safety, and prepare them for the arrangements on water sampling tests which would be conducted in phases.

4. On 5 October 2015, with the assistance of WSD, SWD started the water sampling tests in phases for about 200 welfare units, including day and residential child care centres, day child care services, children's homes, small group homes and day and residential special child care centres. These water sampling tests are estimated to be completed in three months. Up to 30 October, water sampling tests have been completed for 55 welfare units concerned. Of these 55 welfare units, 4 are residential child care centres, 5 are residential special child care centres, 3 are children's homes, 15 are day child care centres, 11 are day special child care centres and 17 small group homes. As at 30 October 2015, all the drinking water samples have been found to comply with the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s Guidelines³. The water sampling test results for the afore-mentioned welfare units are at **Annex**. All water sampling test results have also been uploaded to SWD's website.

¹ The Food and Health Bureau, Department of Health and the Hospital Authority have, after reviewing the relevant literature and research from local medical sector and overseas health authorities, defined the groups which are more easily affected by lead as children aged below six, pregnant women and lactating women, and decided to arrange blood lead testing for them if they are residents of the affected Public Rental Housing (PRH) estates.

² Considering the request of residents and in view of the latest development, the Government adjusted the scope of blood testing to children **aged below eight**, pregnant women and lactating women on 3 August 2015.

³ The provisional guideline value of WHO's "Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality" (2011) is 10 micrograms per litre for lead in drinking water.

5. In accordance with the arrangements worked out with DH and WSD, if the test results indicate excess lead in water samples, SWD will inform DH immediately for arranging blood lead testing for children aged below eight, pregnant and lactating staff of the affected units. Besides, SWD will liaise with the welfare unit concerned on the follow-up actions required, including notification to parents/guardians of the children and female staff of the affected units to inform them of the results of the water sampling tests and the arrangements for blood lead testing in due course. SWD will arrange shuttle bus services to facilitate the affected children, who have registered for blood lead tests, and their parents/guardians to travel between the welfare service units and the hospitals for taking blood lead tests on the dates of appointment as arranged by DH.

Other Support Measures

6. SWD has arranged for water filters for lead reduction to be provided to 13 welfare units located in Government premises completed in 2005 or after and serving children aged below six who have to stay in the units for long hours and consume drinking water in the units. SWD has also assisted about 200 other subvented welfare units (such as child care centres, residential care units and day care units) in purchasing water filters for lead reduction through the Government Logistics Department.

7. To enhance the welfare sector's understanding of the ways to reduce lead exposure and maintain safety of drinking water, SWD has disseminated health advice about reducing lead exposure from the Centre for Health Protection of DH and the advice on the installation and use of wall-mounted kettles provided by WSD on 28 August and 30 September respectively to different welfare units serving service users who have to stay in the units for long hours and consume drinking water in the units, including residential care homes for the children, the elderly and the disabled. These advices were uploaded to SWD's website. SWD has also provided enquiry hotline for the welfare units concerned to seek advice and information.

The Way Forward

8. SWD will continue to work closely with the welfare units, WSD and DH to facilitate the smooth conduct of water sampling tests for the welfare units and arrangement of blood lead tests for the children and pregnant and lactating staff of the welfare units with test results indicating excess lead in water samples.

Social Welfare Department
November 2015

Results of Water Sampling Tests for Welfare Units

(Results released up to 30 October 2015, involving 55 welfare units in total)

Welfare Units that comply with WHO's "Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality"

	Name of Welfare Unit	District	Number of Water Samples Taken
1	Po Leung Kuk Babies Section	Wan Chai	4
2	Po Leung Kuk Kinder Section	Wan Chai	4
3	Po Leung Kuk Children Section	Wan Chai	4
4	Po Leung Kuk New Comers' Ward	Wan Chai	2
5	Mother's Choice Child Care Home	Central & Western	3
6	Mother's Choice Wee Care Home	Central & Western	3
7	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Children's Residential Home	Yau Tsim Mong	3
8	Yan Chai Hospital Law's Foundation Child Care Centre cum Hostel	Tsuen Wan	2
9	Hong Chi Pinehill Pre-school Centre	Tai Po	1
10	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Jessie Tam Day Creche	Central & Western	3
11	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children SIA Shaukiwan Day Creche	Eastern	4
12	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Esther Lee Day Creche	North	2
13	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children William Grimsdale Day Creche	Kowloon City	2
14	Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children Air Cargo Community Day Creche	Yau Tsim Mong	3
15	Po Leung Kuk Mok Hing Yiu Creche	Wan Chai	2
16	Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Lady Maclehole Centre Joyful Children World	Kwai Tsing	1
17	Yuen Long Rhenish Day Creche	Yuen Long	2
18	Cannan Nursery (Central)	Central & Western	2
19	Cannan Nursery (Siu Sai Wan)	Eastern	2
20	Cannan Nursery (Whampoa Garden)	Kowloon City	2
21	Cannan Nursery (Kowloon Tong)	Kowloon City	2
22	Lingnan Day Nursery (Siu Sai Wan)	Eastern	1

23	Good Time International Play School (Choi Po Sin)	Wong Tai Sin	2
24	Parkview - Rhine Garden International Nursery	Tsuen Wan	2
25	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Mr and Mrs Liu Lit Mo Child Development Centre	Yuen Long	2
26	Hong Kong Christian Service Cheung Wah Special Child Care Centre	North	2
27	Hong Kong Christian Service Morrison Hill Child Development Centre	Wan Chai	3
28	The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council Child Enlightenment Centre	Sha Tin	2
29	The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council Chan Yin Chuen Child Enrichment Centre	Wong Tai Sin	2
30	The HK Council of the Church of Christ in China Tuen Mun Special Child Care Centre	Tuen Mun	3
31	The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf Bradbury Child Care Centre	Kowloon City	1
32	Heep Hong Society Mary Wong Centre	Kwun Tong	2
33	Heep Hong Society Cheung Sha Wan Centre	Sham Shui Po	2
34	Heep Hong Society Hoi Fu Child Care Centre	Yau Tsim Mong	1
35	Heep Hong Society Tung Chung Centre	Islands	1
36	Po Leung Kuk New Comers' Ward Annex	Sha Tin	2
37	SAHK Apleichau Pre-school Centre	Southern	3
38	SAHK Jockey Club Marion Fang Conductive Learning Centre	Wong Tai Sin	2
39	International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch Ming Tak (Integrated) Small Group Home	Eastern	2
40	International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch Mo Tak (Integrated) Small Group Home	Eastern	2
41	International Social Service – Hong Kong Branch Yin Tak (Integrated) Small Group Home	Eastern	2
42	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Peace Small Group Home	Eastern	2
43	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Faith Small Group Home	Eastern	2
44	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Truth Small Group Home	Eastern	2

45	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Salvation Small Group Home	Eastern	2
46	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Holy Spirit Small Group Home	Eastern	2
47	Sheng Kung Hui St. Christopher's Home Righteousness Small Group Home	Eastern	1
48	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Lok Sze (Integrated) Small Group Home	Eastern	1
49	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Lok Yin (Integrated) Small Group Home	Eastern	1
50	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Yan Sin Small Group Home	Eastern	1
51	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Yan Yuet Small Group Home	Eastern	1
52	Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Yan Hei Small Group Home	Eastern	1
53	Yan Chai Hospital No.1 Small Group Home	Eastern	1
54	Yan Chai Hospital No.2 Small Group Home	Eastern	1
55	Yan Chai Hospital No.3 Small Group Home	Eastern	1