



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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27 December 2017

Ms Joanne MAK
Clerk to Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms MAK,

**Legislative Council Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities
Meetings on 10 April and 8 May 2017**

Thank you for your letters of 14 June and 28 August 2017. In response to the discussions of the Subcommittee at the meetings on 10 April and 8 May 2017, and the motion passed by the Subcommittee on 10 April 2017, we would like to provide a follow-up response and supplementary information on the related issues as follows.

(a) Public healthcare information and interpretation services for ethnic minorities

To cater for the needs of ethnic minorities (“EMs”), interpretation services are arranged in public hospitals and clinics of the Hospital Authority (“HA”) through service contractor, part-time court interpreters and consulate offices. The interpretation services provided by the service contractor cover 18 languages (namely, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog, German, French, Sinhala, Spanish, Arabic, Malay and Portuguese).

The HA has guidelines in place on the arrangement of interpretation services. HA staff will contact the contractor's 24 hours call centre to arrange on-site or telephone interpretation services according to the needs of individual case or upon requests of patients. For scheduled services (such as medical appointment at the general outpatient and specialist clinics), patients may request the hospital/clinic concerned to arrange interpretation services in advance. For non-scheduled service (such as hospital admission during emergency), hospital staff will arrange immediate provision of telephone interpretation services or on-site interpretation services as soon as possible. The HA will continue to encourage the use of telephone interpretation services in Accident and Emergency ("A&E") Department and in-patient treatment.

In addition, HA provides response cue cards, disease information sheets and patient consent forms in 18¹ languages to enhance communication between the hospital staff and the EM patients so as to facilitate the registration and provision of services. These documents contain information about common diseases (e.g. headache, chest pain and fever), treatment procedures (e.g. blood transfusion and radiation safety issues) and details of the HA's services (e.g. fees and charges and the triage system of the A&E Department).

The HA has also launched a dedicated website for EMs, providing the essential information given on the current HA website, including the accident and emergency service, as well as the addresses, telephone numbers, consultation hours of General Outpatient Clinics ("GOPCs") and the arrangement of interpretation services. The website is available in eight languages, including Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi (Indian), Punjabi (Pakistani), Urdu, Thai, Bahasa Indonesia and Tagalog .

Besides, multilingual posters have also been printed and posted in public hospitals. TV panels are also used for promoting and helping ethnic minorities understand how to request for interpretation services.

The HA plans to assign a designated office in hospitals, such as the Enquiry Counter or Patient Resource Centre, to assist EM patients or answer their enquiries regarding the booking of interpretation services. The HA will also continue to strengthen the promotion of interpretation services to EMs.

(b) Deployment of interpreters

As at 30 June 2017, a total of 104 interpreters were deployed by HA's interpretation service contractor for interpretation services for EM patients attending HA's hospitals and clinics. The cluster-based mobile team ensures

¹ 18 languages for cue cards include: Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Tagalog, German, French, Spanish, Arabic, Malay, Portuguese and Russian.

flexible deployment of interpreters and adequate number of interpreters available for meeting the service demand. Regular review of service requests by clusters is conducted for projecting future service demand and the number of interpreter required for each cluster. Deployment of interpreters by hospital clusters as at 30 June 2017 is tabulated below –

| HA Cluster | Number of Interpreters Deployed in the Cluster -based Mobile Team* (as of 30 June 2017) |
|------------------------------|--|
| Hong Kong East cluster | 5 |
| Hong Kong West cluster | 10 |
| Kowloon Central cluster | 22 |
| Kowloon East cluster | 10 |
| Kowloon West cluster | 30 |
| New Territories East cluster | 7 |
| New Territorie West cluster | 20 |
| Total | 104 |

*The allocation of number of interpreters covered in each cluster-based mobile team are adjusted in a quarterly predictive manner in accordance to the trending needs for each different cluster.

As regards the breakdown of interpreters by languages, please refer to Annex A. Breakdown of interpretation services provided in HA in 2015/16 by clusters and by languages are set out in Annex B.

(c) Arrangements for EM patients to make bookings in GOPCs

Service of the HA's GOPCs is primarily used by the elders, low-income individuals, and patients with chronic diseases. HA has launched the GOPC telephone appointment system with a view to facilitating patients with episodic diseases to make appointment via telephone. Currently, the GOPC telephone appointment system offers three language options, i.e. Cantonese, English and Putonghua. Help desks are set up in GOPCs to provide assistance to people who may encounter difficulties in using the telephone appointment service.

Since the implementation of the GOPC telephone appointment system, HA has been considering the feedback from the public and continues to evaluate its services. Over the years, various improvement measures have been introduced to enhance the appointment system. HA values the feedback from users, including the suggestion of enhancing GOPC telephone appointment system with pre-recorded EM language options. Along with HA's corporate direction, appropriate enhancements would be explored and planned for implementation to ensure that the primary care services could be properly provided for users.

(d) *Electronic record of patients*

With a view to facilitating effective communication in the healthcare settings, the HA is exploring a new initiative to record patient's preferred language choice in patient's electronic profile. This serves to streamline and support the clinical workflow of arranging translation services for patients. The HA will further study the feasibility and details of the initiative with stakeholders, such as nurses, registration colleagues, and IT team.

(e) *Drug administration instructions*

Currently, the HA prints patient's name, drug administration instructions and related warning messages in Chinese or English, as well as the English drug name, on the drug label pasted on the dispensing bags or containers. In general, when attending medical consultations in public hospitals and clinics, EM patients may request for interpretation services to facilitate communication with HA's clinical staff. To ensure medication safety, pharmacy staff would also provide EM patients with drug administration advice and warning messages through the interpreters.

The HA will explore the feasibility of additional means to improve medication safety and facilitate patients' access to related drug information in the light of service and operational needs.

The HA has a system in place that regularly reviews the quality and coverage of the interpretation services provided to EM patients. The HA will continue to explore and implement feasible measures to improve the access of EMs to public healthcare services.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Clarissa Wan)
for Secretary for Food and Health

Encl.

c.c. Hospital Authority (Attn: Ms Dorothy LAM)

Interpreters by languages

| Interpreter | Language | Language | Language |
|-------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| 1 | Punjabi | Hindi | Urdu |
| 2 | Vietnamese | | |
| 3 | Korean | | |
| 4 | French | | |
| 5 | Punjabi | Hindi | |
| 6 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| 7 | Sign | | |
| 8 | Tagalog | | |
| 9 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 10 | Korean | | |
| 11 | Sign | | |
| 12 | Nepali | | |
| 13 | Tagalog | | |
| 14 | Thai | | |
| 15 | Portuguese | | |
| 16 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 17 | Japanese | | |
| 18 | Tagalog | | |
| 19 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 20 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 21 | Nepali | | |
| 22 | Hindi | Urdu | Bengali |
| 23 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 24 | Sign | | |
| 25 | Urdu | | |
| 26 | Thai | | |
| 27 | Nepali | | |
| 28 | Bengali | | |
| 29 | Urdu | | |
| 30 | Urdu | | |
| 31 | Punjabi | | |
| 32 | Nepali | | |
| 33 | Nepali | | |
| 34 | Nepali | | |

| Interpreter | Language | Language | Language |
|-------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| 35 | Bengali | | |
| 36 | Japanese | | |
| 37 | Sinhala | | |
| 38 | Hindi | Urdu | Bengali |
| 39 | Japanese | | |
| 40 | Vietnamese | | |
| 41 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 42 | Urdu | | |
| 43 | Korean | | |
| 44 | Thai | | |
| 45 | Tagalog | | |
| 46 | Sign | | |
| 47 | Vietnamese | | |
| 48 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 49 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| 50 | Thai | | |
| 51 | Japanese | | |
| 52 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 53 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 54 | Tagalog | | |
| 55 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 56 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 57 | Punjabi | Hindi | Urdu |
| 58 | Punjabi | Hindi | Urdu |
| 59 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 60 | Japanese | | |
| 61 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| 62 | Nepali | Bengali | |
| 63 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| 64 | Hindi | Punjabi | Urdu |
| 65 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 66 | Punjabi | | |
| 67 | Japanese | | |
| 68 | Japanese | | |
| 69 | Sign | | |
| 70 | Sign | | |
| 71 | Sign | | |
| 72 | Hindi | Punjabi | Bengali |

| Interpreter | Language | Language | Language |
|-------------|------------------|----------|----------|
| 73 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 74 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 75 | Nepali | | |
| 76 | Hindi | | |
| 77 | Spanish | | |
| 78 | Thai | | |
| 79 | French | | |
| 80 | German | | |
| 81 | Sign | | |
| 82 | French | | |
| 83 | Japanese | | |
| 84 | Sinhala | | |
| 85 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 86 | Nepali | | |
| 87 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| 88 | Hindi | Punjabi | Urdu |
| 89 | Hindi | Punjabi | Urdu |
| 90 | Spanish | | |
| 91 | Spanish | | |
| 92 | Hindi | Urdu | |
| 93 | Punjabi | Hindi | Urdu |
| 94 | Arabic | | |
| 95 | Korean | | |
| 96 | Urdu | Punjabi | |
| 97 | Sign | | |
| 98 | Sign | | |
| 99 | Urdu | | |
| 100 | Urdu | | |
| 101 | Nepali | | |
| 102 | Nepali | | |
| 103 | Hindi | | |
| 104 | Bahasa Indonesia | | |

Interpretation services provided by HA in 2015/16 by clusters and by languages

| From April 2015 to March 2016 (Total cases: 10 449) | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Language | HAHO | HKEC | HKWC | KCC | KEC | KWC | NTEC | NTWC |
| Urdu | 0 | 411 | 191 | 541 | 517 | 2193 | 60 | 967 |
| Punjabi | 1 | 219 | 144 | 232 | 269 | 668 | 56 | 210 |
| Nepali | 0 | 43 | 69 | 433 | 5 | 238 | 23 | 313 |
| Bahasa Indonesia | 0 | 108 | 75 | 128 | 77 | 184 | 56 | 196 |
| Hindi | 1 | 40 | 37 | 140 | 54 | 130 | 14 | 45 |
| Japanese | 0 | 94 | 5 | 73 | 6 | 51 | 17 | 15 |
| Thai | 0 | 44 | 25 | 75 | 6 | 28 | 6 | 19 |
| Tagalog | 0 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 4 | 29 |
| Korean | 0 | 54 | 5 | 23 | 2 | 26 | 2 | 2 |
| Bengali | 0 | 2 | 17 | 15 | 0 | 32 | 1 | 59 |
| Vietnamese | 0 | 17 | 24 | 80 | 21 | 205 | 1 | 77 |
| French | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 |
| Spanish | 0 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Sinhala | 0 | 0 | 3 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Swahili | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Arabic | 0 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 5 | 7 |
| Taiwanese | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Russian | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Tamil | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 24 |
| Burmese | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 2 | 1 041 | 620 | 1 802 | 965 | 3 788 | 252 | 1 979 |