Health expenditure in Hong Kong

**Highlights**

- In Hong Kong, the public healthcare system provides a comprehensive range of health services at very low fees. The subsidization rates for in-patient and out-patient services were 94% and 90% respectively in 2012-2013 (Figure 1).

- At present, public hospitals provide nearly 90% in-patient services (in terms of bed-days). The number of attendances of public primary care and specialist out-patient services also increased by around 20% between 2005-2006 and 2014-2015.

- While the public healthcare system has been heavily relied upon by the patients, the Hospital Authority only employs around 40% of doctors in Hong Kong.

- The long waiting time for specialist out-patient services (Figure 2) reflected that the public healthcare system has been overstretched. Likewise, the average waiting time for semi-urgent and non-urgent patients of public accident and emergency services increased by 31 minutes and 27 minutes respectively between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 (Figures 3 and 4). The longest waiting time for non-urgent patients in 2015-2016 was recorded at the United Christian Hospital (3.8 hours) followed by the Kwong Wah Hospital (3.2 hours) and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (3 hours).
Highlights

• Amid the heavy reliance on the public hospital system, public health expenditure increased by an annual average of 6.8% between FY2006-2007 and FY2015-2016 (Figure 5). While the growth rate was slightly higher than that of total public expenditure (6.3%), it was lower than that of other policy group areas such as infrastructure, environment and food, housing and social welfare.

• In recent years, the overstretched public hospitals might have channelled patients into the private health system. Probably reflecting this, private consumption expenditure on health services increased more rapidly than public health expenditure by an annual average of 8.8% between FY2006-2007 and FY2015-2016. This resulted in an increasingly higher share of private consumption expenditure on health services to total health expenditure, as evidenced by the latest health expenditure figures provided by the Food and Health Bureau (Figure 6).

Data sources: Latest figures from Budget Speech, Census and Statistics Department, Food and Health Bureau and Hospital Authority.