

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

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### **Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities**

#### **Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 April 2017**

#### **Support service centres for ethnic minorities**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the previous discussion held by the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the support service centres ("SSCs") for ethnic minorities ("EMs").

#### **Background**

2. The provision of support services for EMs has been transferred from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau ("CMAB") to the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") since April 2011. CMAB continues to be responsible for the overall policy on the promotion of racial equality and the Race Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 602). Under this arrangement, HAD makes use of the district network of District Offices, and through non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") and district organizations, to provide support services to facilitate the early integration of EMs into the community.

#### Support service centres for ethnic minorities

3. Since 2009, the Government has commissioned NGOs to run six SSCs for EMs in Wan Chai, Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Yau Tsim Mong and Kwai Chung, as well as two sub-centres in Sham Shui Po and Tung Chung, providing various tailor-made learning classes (e.g. Cantonese classes) and after-school tutorial classes, as well as counselling and referral services, integration programmes, interpretation services, etc., to help EMs integrate into the community. In addition to Chinese staff, the SSCs and sub-centres also employ EM staff to provide services for EMs.

## **Panel's discussion**

4. Issues relating to SSCs for EMs were discussed by the Panel in the context of discussion on the support services for EMs provided by HAD. The major concerns raised by members on SSCs for EMs are summarized below.

### Interpretation services

5. Some members considered that SSCs for EMs should employ more EMs to strengthen interpretation services for EMs so as to facilitate their access to essential public services. According to the Administration, interpretation services were available at various front-line units, including public hospitals and welfare service units. Interpretation services were available in hospitals/clinics under the management of the Hospital Authority through a service contractor, part-time court interpreters, volunteers, etc. Interpretation services were available in the health centres/clinics under the Department of Health mainly through the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents ("CHEER")<sup>1</sup> and part-time interpreters from the Judiciary. The service was provided on site or through telephone depending on the needs in each case.

6. Some members raised concern about the low usage of the interpretation service through video conferencing between bureaux/departments and CHEER. The Administration advised that relevant bureaux/departments might choose any interpretation and translation service providers which could meet their specific needs, including but not limited to CHEER, which provided general interpretation and translation services. Moreover, some bureaux/departments would use three-way telephone conference, instead of video conferencing, with the interpreters of CHEER to handle enquiries of EMs where appropriate.

### After-school tutorials and Chinese language courses for ethnic minority students

7. Concern was raised about the adequacy of resources for EM students to learn Chinese and the effectiveness of the programmes offered by SSCs for EMs and their sub-centres in improving EMs' language proficiency. In some members' view, the language barrier encountered by EMs was the major obstacle which impeded their integration into the community and affected their employability. They considered that the Government's support services for EMs should focus more on enhancing their Chinese language proficiency, in particular Chinese writing skills, of EMs.

8. According to the Administration, EM students might attend the after-school Chinese language courses offered by SSCs for EMs, in addition to

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<sup>1</sup> CHEER is one of the SSCs located in Kwun Tong and operated by the Hong Kong Christian Service.

those offered by schools. The EM participants of the tailor-made learning classes at these SSCs (such as Cantonese classes and after-school remedial classes for EM students on Chinese) generally considered that the classes had strengthened their ability and confidence in adapting to life in Hong Kong.

#### Evaluation of the operation of support service centres for ethnic minorities

9. Some members expressed concern about the adequacy of the operational funding provided by the Government for SSCs for EMs and the evaluation of the effectiveness of their language classes and integration programmes. According to the Administration, the operation and performance of SSCs for EMs was monitored through collecting feedback from the community and other monitoring mechanisms such as reports and users' evaluation of the activities of SSCs for EMs. According to the Administration, the feedback from service users and EM communities were, in general, positive and assuring. The Administration undertook that it would review and adjust the services of SSCs for EMs from time to time to better suit the needs of EMs.

#### **Latest development**

10. The Subcommittee will discuss SSCs for EMs at the next meeting on 10 April 2017.

#### **Relevant papers**

11. A list of the relevant papers available on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant documents on  
Support service centres for ethnic minorities**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Home Affairs	12.7.2013 (Item III)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	8.7.2015	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 152 – 167 (Written question)</a>
	2.3.2016	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 169 – 173 (Written question)</a>
	8.6.2016	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 89 – 93 (Written question)</a>
	9.11.2016	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings Pages 78 – 84 and Pages 93 – 95 (Written question)</a>

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