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Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2018-19

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Session No. : 20

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)01

(Question Serial No. SV042)

Head: (141) Government Secretariat: Labour and Welfare Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (-) Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Ms CHANG King-yiu)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

How many places in total can be provided by the 27 projects for residential care homes for the elderly being implemented by the Government?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki

Reply:

As at the end of January 2018, the Social Welfare Department is planning to implement 30 development projects (27 projects being the figure at the end of December 2017) for the provision of new contract residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and day care centres/units for the elderly. 24 of these projects involve contract RCHEs. It is estimated that about 3 050 residential care places for the elderly (including subsidised and non-subsidised places) will be progressively provided starting from 2017-18.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)02

(Question Serial No. S0159)

Head: (141) Government Secretariat: Labour and Welfare Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Social Welfare

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Ms CHANG King-yiu)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Pursuant to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)016, in answering the question whether the Government would set aside a fund to provide regular assistance to social welfare organisations which provide guide dog services, it was stated that the organisations concerned had applied for funding. However, guide dogs normally undergo training for 1 to 2 years after they are born and they are required to retire from service when they are around 8-10 years old. After retirement, difficulties may be encountered when looking for adoptive families. At present, persons eligible to adopt the guide dogs are sighted family members of the visually impaired persons who have received service from the respective guide dogs, the adoptive families which have provided initial training to the guide dogs and other suitable families. Yet, visually impaired persons may not necessarily have family members who can adopt the retired guide dogs, and it is also impossible for the families who have provided training to the guide dogs to take in all the dogs they have trained due to the excessive number of dogs or simply because there are still puppies at their home undergoing training and it is difficult for them to attend simultaneously to the dogs. Unluckily, it may be relatively more difficult to find members of the public who are willing to adopt the retired guide dogs because these dogs may be growing old, having difficulties in mobility or suffering from illness. Regarding the above areas, will the Government advise this Committee on the following:

1. Will the Government confirm that it has presently not set aside a fund to provide regular assistance to guide dog organisations or their services?
2. Does the Government have a grasp of the present adoption situation concerning the retired guide dogs and what are the details?
3. What are the measures put in place to support the retirement arrangements for guide dogs?
4. Is there any long-term plan to provide more comprehensive support for guide dog services, such as granting of land for free for operating a dog training centre? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon TAM Man-ho, Jeremy (Member Question No.)

Reply:

The Government does not keep information on the adoption of retired guide dogs in Hong Kong, etc.

At present, guide dog services are provided by 2 non-profit-making organisations in Hong Kong. In 2013-14, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18, these 2 organisations applied for funding from the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) to organise promotional activities on guide dog services and their applications met with LWB's approval. The amounts of funding provided in the above 4 financial years were \$66,680, \$31,900, \$345,480 and \$180,000 respectively.

The Government will continue to offer funding and support in other aspects to organisations providing guide dog services according to the actual circumstances. The organisations concerned have applied for granting of land from the Government to operate a dog training centre. LWB has given policy support to the application and the departments concerned will carry out the vetting and approval work in accordance with the established procedures.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)03

(Question Serial No. S0147)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (7) Young People

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Further to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)188 that shows a downward trend in the number of beneficiaries under the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development (the Scheme), does the Government have any measures in place to step up publicity or streamline application procedures? If yes, what are the details and expenditure involved? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

In view of the fact that all eligible applicants for cash assistance under the Scheme are children and youths who are receiving casework counselling services of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the SWD will promote the Scheme to needy children and youths through welfare service units under the SWD or NGOs in order to provide them with cash assistance as appropriate and support their developmental needs.

In order to benefit more disadvantaged children and youths, it is proposed in the 2018-19 Budget that the Scheme be enhanced with an additional recurrent expenditure of \$11 million to raise the ceiling of cash assistance from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per person per year and increase the annual quota of beneficiaries from 6 000 to 10 000.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)04

(Question Serial No. S0148)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (7) Young People

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

It is stated in paragraph 179 of the Budget Speech that the Government will “enhance the District Support Scheme for Children and Youth Development (the Scheme) by raising the ceiling of cash assistance and increasing the number of quotas for disadvantaged children and youths. The additional recurrent expenditure involved will be \$20.5 million and \$11 million respectively.” How many additional beneficiaries will be covered by the relevant expenditure?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin

Reply:

The additional recurrent expenditure of \$11 million on the Scheme as stated in the Budget will be used to raise the ceiling of cash assistance under the Scheme from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per person per year and increase the annual quota of beneficiaries from 6 000 to 10 000.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)05

(Question Serial No. S0101)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (4) Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Further to Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)034, please inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) Are the 8 integrated community centres for mental wellness (ICCMWs) with a total floor area equal to or above the standard Schedule of Accommodation (SoA) operating in permanent premises?
- (2) In reply to part 2 of the question, it is stated that “16 ICCMWs have a total floor area below the standard SoA”, while in reply to part 3 of the question, it is stated that “fully subsidised by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the 9 ICCMWs without permanent premises or having a total floor area below the standard SoA are currently renting commercial premises for service provision or office use”. Is “subsidised to rent commercial premises for service provision or office use” referring to being subsidised to rent 1 unit of commercial premises with a total floor area meeting the standard SoA for operation, or being subsidised to rent more than 1 unit to increase the total floor area of the ICCMWs? What are the reasons for not subsidising the remaining 7 ICCMWs? Does the Government provide any other support for them to resolve the problem of total floor area being below the standard SoA?
- (3) How many new cases were handled, how many members were there in each ICCMW and what was the staffing establishment of each ICCMW in the past 3 years?
- (4) The service districts adopted in Tables 1 and 2 differ from those in the List of ICCMWs on the SWD website. Please explain why a different set of service districts is used in Tables 1 and 2.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Pierre

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows:

- (1) Among the 8 ICCMWs with a total floor area equal to or above the standard SoA, 5 are operating/will operate in permanent premises, while the remaining 3 are currently renting commercial premises for temporary service provision or office use with subsidies from the SWD.

- (2) The Government has all along been committed to arranging premises for ICCMWs, and has sourced suitable permanent premises through various means, including earmarking of space for ICCMWs in new development or redevelopment projects under planning. The Government has been keeping an eye on government properties left vacant by service re-engineering and vacant school premises suitable for ICCMWs. To meet the needs of operation and service provision, the SWD has subsidised those ICCMWs without permanent premises or having a total floor area below the standard SoA to rent 1 or more commercial premises for temporary service provision or office use.

The SWD has approved all applications for ICCMWs to rent commercial premises for temporary service provision or office use, involving a total of 9 ICCMWs. Among them, 7 do not have permanent premises or cannot yet operate in permanent premises, while the remaining 2 are operating in permanent premises with a total floor area below the standard SoA, and have therefore rented separate commercial premises as their temporary sub-bases. The 2 ICCMWs have already identified suitable sites as their permanent sub-bases, and their operational floor area will improve upon completion of construction/renovation works. The SWD will keep in view the operational need of other ICCMWs, and provide relevant assistance, including subsidies for renting commercial premises.

- (3) & (4) The 24 ICCMWs in the territory are set up in 11 administrative districts of the SWD. Depending on the team size of individual ICCMWs, each administrative district has 1 to 3 ICCMWs with their respective service districts. To facilitate public access, the contact details of ICCMWs provided on the SWD's website are set out by service district, while statistics on their services (including the number of members and new cases, etc.), which are collated and released by the SWD, are normally set out by administrative district of the SWD (see Tables 1 and 2).

Notional staffing establishment (NSE) is used by the SWD for calculating the amount of subventions for subvented services. Under the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, service operators have the flexibility to deploy resources and arrange suitable staffing to meet the requirements as set out in the Funding and Service Agreements. The SWD does not have supplementary information regarding the staffing establishment of ICCMWs.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)06

(Question Serial No. S0155)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (4) Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

1. Regarding Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)076, only 22 residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) have been officially licensed over the past year, while up to 223 RCHDs are still operating with certificates of exemption (CoEs). Given such progress, it will take 10 more years for all RCHDs to be licensed. According to the Government's reply, it will not be until the end of 2019 that all RCHDs will be able to meet the licensing requirements. Does it mean that it is difficult for existing RCHDs to meet even the most basic licensing requirements? Has the Government drawn up any measure to cope with the possible surge of RCHD closures?
2. As RCHDs have difficulties in meeting the licensing requirements, does the Government have the manpower and resources to facilitate such RCHDs to meet the requirements?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

Operators of those RCHDs that existed before the commencement of the Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Ordinance (i.e. 18 November 2011) may apply to the Director of Social Welfare for CoEs so that they will have more time to carry out building or fire rectification works for compliance with licensing requirements and standards. These homes are also required to comply with requirements relevant to home management and health care.

In order to assist RCHDs operating with CoEs to expedite the process of necessary rectification works, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has implemented various facilitating measures. These include providing RCHDs with subsidies under the Lotteries Fund (LF) to carry out rectification works; implementing the Financial Assistance Scheme for Private RCHDs as funded by the LF, and increasing the grant up to 90% of the recognised cost of the rectification works; streamlining the workflow of engaging authorised persons for the provision of technical support; expediting and streamlining the procedures of applying for and utilising the LF; and providing additional technical support to RCHDs having difficulties in taking forward the rectification works. The SWD has been in discussion with all RCHDs operating with CoEs on options to expedite the relevant works, with their progress being followed up closely. In view of the progress of rectification works, it is expected most of the homes will be able to meet the licensing requirements by the end of 2019.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-LWB(WW)07****(Question Serial No. S0145)**Head: (170) Social Welfare DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): ()Programme: (2) Social SecurityControlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and WelfareQuestion:

Regarding Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)097, please provide in table form the number and percentage of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) cases involving singleton recipients in public and private housing with actual rent exceeding the maximum rent allowance (MRA) in the past 5 years with a breakdown by age group (in ten-year bands).

Asked by: Hon KWONG Chun-yuReply:

Rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme is calculated on the basis of the number of eligible members in a household. The amount of rent allowance payable to a recipient is the actual rent paid, or the MRA appropriate to the number of eligible members in the household, whichever is the less.

The number and percentage of CSSA cases with singleton recipients receiving rent allowance in public and private housing with actual rent exceeding MRA over the past 5 years are provided as follows:

	Number of CSSA cases receiving rent allowance with actual rent exceeding MRA	
	in public housing	in private housing
2013-14	2 703 (3.8%)	7 444 (47.5%)
2014-15	4 599 (6.5%)	7 171 (48.7%)
2015-16	3 749 (5.3%)	7 288 (52.1%)
2016-17	2 855 (4.0%)	6 861 (51.7%)
2017-18 (as at end- December 2017)	2 908 (4.1%)	7 566 (57.4%)

The MRA has been increased by 1.5% with effect from 1 February 2018.

The Social Welfare Department does not have a breakdown by age group in ten-year bands.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)08

(Question Serial No. S0154)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (3) Services for The Elderly

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

1. It is stated in Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)0193 that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) does not have the number of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) having their accreditation removed in the past. However, a list of RCHEs participating in various accreditation schemes is available on the SWD Elderly Information Website. Why doesn't the Government have the statistics when it has the list?
2. Information has it that there are 735 RCHEs in the territory, but only 58 of them are accredited, accounting for less than 8% of the total. Does the Government have any target number of RCHEs to apply for subsidised accreditation? Will condition(s) be attached to the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly (the Pilot Scheme) so that only accredited RCHEs are eligible for the Pilot Scheme and that RCHEs will make service improvement or service pledges for the protection of elderly persons participating in the Pilot Scheme?

Asked by: Hon LUK Chung-hung

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows:

1. At present, RCHEs make their own arrangements to join accreditation schemes implemented by various certification bodies. Details on participation in accreditation schemes as provided by the RCHEs have been uploaded onto the SWD Elderly Information Website, which was launched in February 2017 to facilitate public access. The SWD does not have information on RCHEs having had their accreditation removed since the accreditation schemes are not run by the SWD.

2. As at end-January 2018, a total of 74 RCHEs (including subvented, contract, self-financing and private homes) were accredited under different accreditation schemes in Hong Kong, and 58 of them were private homes. The Government has all along been encouraging the sector to actively join independent accreditation schemes. Under the Pilot Scheme, which has been implemented since March 2017, RCHEs successfully accredited on their first participation in an accreditation scheme recognised by the Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS) will be reimbursed with 50% of the accreditation fee. In order to further encourage RCHEs to join accreditation schemes, the SWD will implement a five-year scheme starting from 2018-19 to provide full subsidies for private RCHEs to join accreditation scheme(s) recognised by the HKAS. The SWD will work with the certification bodies concerned on measures to encourage more RCHEs to join the accreditation schemes.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-LWB(WW)09****(Question Serial No. S0158)**Head: (170) Social Welfare DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): ()Programme: (2) Social SecurityControlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and WelfareQuestion:

The Government has set out the average monthly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) payments to elderly singletons and singletons with disabilities in a paper submitted to the Legislative Council. Please set out the average monthly payments to single able-bodied CSSA adult recipients in the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chunReply:

Established on a household basis, each CSSA case may involve family members of different natures, according to which the Social Welfare Department (SWD) disburses CSSA payments at different standard rates. As the average monthly CSSA payments by case nature cannot properly reflect the CSSA payments received by CSSA households, the SWD does not have information on the average CSSA payments to CSSA households by case nature. Only if a CSSA case is a one-person household can the average CSSA payment to that household properly reflect the average CSSA payments received by households of that case nature.

The average monthly CSSA payments to CSSA cases involving one-person households under the case natures of low-earnings and unemployment over the past 3 years are set out as follows:

	Low-earnings (\$)	Unemployment (\$)
Since 1 February 2016	4,135	3,775
Since 1 February 2017	4,230	3,897
Since 1 February 2018	4,373	4,064

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)10

(Question Serial No. S0164)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (2) Social Security

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

1. Please provide the number of applications approved for the grant to cover costs of glasses among Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients aged below 60 who were disabled/in ill-health and the average amount of the grant in the past 3 years.
2. Please provide the number of applications approved for the grant to cover costs of glasses among CSSA recipients aged 60 or above and the average amount of the grant in the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Reply:

The Social Welfare Department does not have the number of applications approved for the grant to cover costs of glasses among CSSA recipients and the average amount of the grant.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)11

(Question Serial No. S0165)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Social Security

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

1. Please provide the number of applications approved for grants to cover telephone installation fees and monthly telephone charges among Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients aged below 60 who were disabled/in ill health and the average amounts of the grants in the past 3 years.
2. Please provide the number of applications approved for grants to cover telephone installation fees and monthly telephone charges among CSSA recipients aged 60 or above and the average amounts of the grants in the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Reply:

The Social Welfare Department does not have the number of applications approved for the grants to cover telephone installation fees and monthly telephone charges among CSSA recipients and the average amounts of the grants.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)12

(Question Serial No. S0166)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Social Security

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Please provide in table form the number of approved “domestic removal grant” and “grant for rent deposit” among Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) cases and the average amounts of the grants over the past 3 years by number of household members.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chun

Reply:

The Social Welfare Department does not have the number of approved “domestic removal grant” and “grant for rent deposit” among CSSA cases and the average amounts of the grants by number of household members.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-LWB(WW)13****(Question Serial No. S0167)**Head: (170) Social Welfare DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): ()Programme: (2) Social SecurityControlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Ms Carol YIP)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and WelfareQuestion:

Please provide the number of able-bodied adults receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) over the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-chunReply:

The number of able-bodied adults receiving CSSA (excluding those under the Portable CSSA Scheme) from 2015-16 to 2017-18 is provided as follows:

Year	Number of able-bodied adults
2015-16	58 639
2016-17	53 189
2017-18 (as at end-December 2017)	49 432

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)14

(Question Serial No. S0146)

Head: (173) Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (2) Working Family Allowance

Controlling Officer: Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency
(Mr Esmond LEE)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)359, the main reason for being unable to apply for Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme by ethnic minorities is “applications not further processed due to insufficient information”. These cases account for 67% of the total number of unsuccessful applications. In this connection, will the Government introduce any improvement measures to assist ethnic minorities in their applications? If yes, what are the details and the expenditure involved? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon AU Nok-hin (Member Question No. (LegCo use):)

Reply:

The “applications not further processed due to insufficient information” as stated in part 4 of Reply Serial No. LWB(WW)359 only referred to the applications for the Low-income Working Family Allowance (LIFA) (renamed as the Working Family Allowance (WFA) on 1 April 2018) from those in the capacity of self-employed persons, instead of cases of ethnic minorities whose LIFA applications were not approved due to insufficient information.

To help ethnic minorities apply for the allowance, a number of briefing sessions have been organised by the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supporting the ethnic minorities and for various ethnic minority communities since the implementation of the LIFA Scheme. Among them, 51 briefing sessions were provided with interpretation services. As regards the promotion of WFA Scheme, the WFAO has organised/attended 12 briefing sessions with the provision of interpretation services of ethnic minority languages so far.

The WFAO has translated the promotional leaflet and poster on the WFA Scheme into 7 ethnic minority languages (including Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai and Punjabi) and distributed them to ethnic minorities through support service centres for ethnic minorities funded by HAD and other NGOs supporting ethnic minorities. The

WFAO has appealed to these organisations to publicise the WFA through their websites or newsletters, and to answer general enquiries on the WFA. The WFAO has also arranged for the promotional leaflet and poster in ethnic minority languages to be distributed by schools with more ethnic minority students. Moreover, with the consent of these schools, briefing sessions were held and enquiry counters set up so as to introduce the WFA Scheme to the students and their parents.

In addition, one of the support service centres for ethnic minorities mentioned above has been assisting the WFAO in handling telephone enquiries made in the ethnic minority languages on the LIFA/WFA, including the enquiries during the application process. The WFAO has also translated the sample WFA application form into 7 ethnic minority languages as mentioned above for reference by ethnic minorities in filling out the application form.

The WFAO has commissioned over 70 service units of NGOs, including those serving ethnic minority groups, to help first-time WFA applicants fill out the application form during the period from April to December 2018. When there is a need to make written enquiries to ethnic minority applicants during the application process, the WFAO will enclose an information sheet in ethnic minority languages in the letter so as to briefly introduce to them how to seek language support. The WFAO will also proactively arrange telephone interpretation service through the support service centre for ethnic minorities, or by engaging interpretation service on its own, to facilitate the communication between the WFAO and the ethnic minorities who speak neither Chinese nor English.

The WFAO will continue to collaborate with these support service centres for ethnic minorities in supporting ethnic-minority applicants, and no additional funding is involved.

- End -