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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2022-23

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Session No. : 20

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-LWB(WW)01

(Question Serial No. SV028)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Gordon LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

In reply to questions relating to the number of manpower responsible for the care of the residents of all residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and each RCHE during Session 20 (welfare and women policy areas) of the special meetings of the Finance Committee, the Government indicated that an investigation report previously conducted on the manpower of the homes would be provided after the meetings. Would the Government please provide such information?

Asked by: Hon CHOW Ho-ding, Holden

Reply:

In 2021, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) collected information from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating subsidised elderly, rehabilitation and family and child welfare services through questionnaires on the staffing situation of front-line care workers of their service units (including residential and day service units). According to the information provided, front-line care workers of subsidised service units as at 1 January 2021 included 7 405 personal care workers, 1 663 ward attendants and 1 132 home helpers. The job vacancy rates for the above 3 posts were 17.6%, 14.0% and 20.3% respectively.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. SV029)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Gordon LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

It is stated in part (2) of the reply of LWB(WW)005 that the Social Welfare Department does not maintain information on the training provided by service centres operated by subvented organisations. What are the reasons behind? No training seminars on prevention of child abuse have been organised by the Children's Residential Home under the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children for nearly 7 years. What measures will the Government adopt to prevent recurrence of similar situations?

Asked by: Hon LEE Hoey Simon

Reply:

According to the existing Service Performance Monitoring System, non-government organisations (NGOs) operating subvented welfare services have to properly supervise and manage their service units for compliance with the requirements of the Funding and Service Agreements (FSAs). Service Quality Standard (SQS) 5 therein states that service units/NGOs should have a training policy and a plan for staff training and development. NGOs are required to submit a self-assessment report to the Social Welfare Department (SWD) every year to ensure the service units' compliance with the requirements of the FSAs and the 16 SQSs, but they do not have to submit the details of the training plans regularly. As such, SWD does not maintain the information concerned. In the light of the incident in the Children's Residential Home, SWD will conduct a comprehensive review on the relevant measures, with a view to enhancing the regulation and monitoring of residential child care services. Measures include stepping up risk-based inspections and examination of NGOs as to whether they have provided staff with training on awareness of child protection.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-LWB(WW)03****(Question Serial No. S049)**Head: (170) Social Welfare DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): ()Programme: Not SpecifiedControlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Gordon LEUNG)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and WelfareQuestion:

1. Regarding the Lump Sum Grant (LSG) mentioned in the reply, please list the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved, the name of the NGOs and the amount of subvention they received, broken down by type of service (family and child welfare, rehabilitation service, elderly service, children and youth service, etc.).
2. Further to the above, please list the NGOs involved in various types of social services, the number of services units involved and their respective names, broken down by district of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) or the District Council.
3. What measures are in place to ensure that NGOs receiving LSG subvention can render reasonable service to support the public in need of assistance amid the epidemic?

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piuReply:

1. The estimated provision for NGOs or the private sector in 2022-23, broken down by programme area, is tabulated below:

Programme area	Estimated provision (\$ million)
Service for The Elderly	12,733.6
Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services	9,270.2
Family and Child Welfare	3,412.1
Young People	2,584.9
Community Development	206.8
Social Security	182.8
Services for Offenders	81.9

The above estimated provision broken down by programme area has already included the total amount of subvention allocated to 165 NGOs under the LSG Subvention System. SWD does not have information on the number and list of NGOs, and the amount of subvention received, broken down by type of service.

2. Service operators and the number and list of service units, broken down by district of SWD and type of service are available on SWD's website. For details, please refer to the following website: https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_district/.
3. Under the LSG Subvention System, NGOs shall provide services as per the requirements set out in the Funding and Service Agreements and comply with the specified output and outcome standards. During the epidemic, SWD has been paying close attention to the operation of subvented service units. Adjustments have been made to take into account the development of the epidemic and service needs, while ensuring normal operation of emergency and essential services, so as to provide assistance to people in need.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. S048)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (3) Services for The Elderly

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Gordon LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding community care services (CCS) for the elderly, the total number of places of CCS is 17 097 (3 732 + 4 120 + 9 245) according to reply serial no. LWB(WW)017. As mentioned in paragraph 1 of reply serial no. LWB(WW)007, 3 600 service places of day care centres/units for the elderly (DEs/DCUs), being a service type of CCS, will be provided as a medium-term strategy. As such, the number of CCS places will increase to 20 697 in the future.

According to the service planning standard of the Planning Department in 2017, there should be 17.2 CCS places per 1 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above. Based on the population projections by the Census and Statistics Department, the number of elderly persons aged 65 or above will increase from 1 321 300 to 2 066 100 in the period between 2019 and 2029. Based on the planning standard, the number of CCS places should increase from 22 726 to 35 537.

Taking the population in 2019 as a reference, there is a shortfall of 5 629 (22 726 - 17 097) between the existing number of CCS places and the service output based on the planning standard. In 2029, assuming that the length in years is comparable with that of the medium-term strategy, a shortfall of 14 840 (35 537 - 20 697) service places has to be made up before the planning standard can be met.

Would the Government please advise the following?

1. Reply serial no. LWB(WW)007 mentions that as a medium-term strategy, the Government will provide an additional of 3 600 service places of DEs/DCUs. Which period exactly does "medium-term" refer to?
2. How does the Government cope with the serious shortfall of CCS for the elderly?
3. At present, the number of persons waitlisted for integrated home care services (frail cases) (IHCS(FC)) and/or enhanced home and community care services (EHCCS) exceeds 4 000 (see Annex 1 to reply serial no. LWB(WW)017) and there seems to be no plan to increase the service supply. How does the Government enable these frail elderly persons to age in place?

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen

Reply:

1. As mentioned in reply serial no. LWB(WW)007, the Government is planning and taking forward 80 development projects of elderly service facilities which are expected to provide about 3 600 subsidised day care service places for the elderly in phases in the future as a medium-term strategy. About 2 600 service places are expected to commence service between 2022-23 and 2032-33. The expected service commencement years of the remainder of about 1 000 service places are to be finalised.
2. & 3. In December 2018, the Government included a population-based planning ratio for the provision of elderly service facilities in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. For subsidised CCS, 17.2 service places are to be provided per 1 000 elderly persons aged 65 or above. Such planning ratio will facilitate the Social Welfare Department and relevant departments (e.g. the Planning Department and the Housing Department) in reserving suitable places early for the construction of facilities that provide elderly services when planning new development projects to satisfy the service demand of the districts.

To strengthen support for frail elderly persons to age in place, the Government substantially increased the number of subsidised CCS places in the previous years. In respect of home-based CCS, the Government increased 2 000 service places for EHCCS in October 2019 and increased a total of 3 000 service places for IHCS(FC) in October 2020 and April 2021, resulting in a gradual increase of places for subsidised home care services from 8 365 in September 2019 to 13 365 in April 2021. The average waiting time for subsidised home care services was shortened from about 15 months in the end of December 2019 to about 6 months in the end of December 2021. As for day care services, the number of service places increased from 3 383 in the end of December 2019 to 3 732 in the end of December 2021. The average waiting time for the service was also shortened from about 14 months in the end of December 2019 to about 7 months in the end of December 2021.

In addition, the Government launched the third phase of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher (CCSV) for the Elderly in October 2020 and increased the number of CCSVs from 3 000 in July 2017 to 8 000 in October 2020, providing more diversified choices for elderly persons in need of CCS.

The Government will continue to review the demand for subsidised CCS from time to time to provide appropriate services for elderly persons in need.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. S051)

Head: (170) Social Welfare Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (4) Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Social Welfare (Gordon LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

To follow up on government measures adopted in residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) during the epidemic, please advise this Committee:

1. the number of subsidised RCHDs across the territory with isolation rooms;
2. the number of subsidised RCHDs across the territory without isolation rooms;
3. the number of subsidised RCHDs across the territory with no staff at the rank of nurse responsible for infection control; and
4. the measures adopted by the Government to enhance the infection control of RCHDs and the cost involved in the past year.

Asked by: Hon TIK Chi-yuen

Reply:

1. & 2. There were a total of 275 RCHDs (including private RCHDs under the Bought Place Scheme (BPS)) providing subsidised places as at the end of March 2022, of which 149 were equipped with designated isolation rooms while the remaining 126 were not.
3. Of the service units providing subsidised residential rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, hostels for moderately mentally handicapped persons (HMMHs) (49), supported hostels (SHOSs) (31) and small group homes for mildly mentally handicapped children (SGHs(MMHC)) (6) do not include staff at the rank of nurse in their notional staffing establishment. If non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing the services concerned are receiving lump sum grants, they may flexibly deploy subvention and arrange suitable manpower (including nurses) under the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (LSGSS) to meet the service demand. As for the 21 RCHDs under the BPS, 9 of them do not include staff at the rank of nurse in their staffing establishment. During the fifth wave of the epidemic, the seven hospital clusters under the Hospital Authority made special arrangements to provide RCHDs in the clusters with professional advice and support on infection control.

4. For residential care homes (RCHs) and subsidised service units to grasp the development of the epidemic and the latest information and guidelines relating to infection control as soon as practicable, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has been reminding them to refer to the anti-epidemic guidelines of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) from time to time since January 2020. Having consulted the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority, SWD specifically issued the “Points to Note on Contingency” to residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and RCHDs in late October 2020 to assist them in handling situations in which residents or staff are infected and where residents are placed under quarantine, etc.

To enhance infection control measures and improve ventilation of private and self-financing RCHEs and RCHDs, SWD launched a time-limited programme in December 2020. Arrangements were made for nurses to conduct on-site inspections on infection control of the RCHs and teach staff about anti-epidemic knowledge and skills. Technical engineering teams were also deployed to conduct on-site ventilation assessments for RCHs and make recommendations on ventilation improvement. SWD arranged for nurses to visit the RCHs participating in the programme and conducted over 2 500 on-site inspections and staff training sessions. On-site ventilation assessments were also completed for the participating RCHs. Moreover, SWD provided NGOs operating subvented or contract RCHs with special funding for them to arrange the implementation of the same infection control measures and on-site ventilation assessments in their RCHs, involving an expenditure of about \$45 million.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (the Trust) disbursed a one-off allowance under the Jockey Club Facilities Enhancement Scheme for Pandemic Preparedness at Residential Care Homes (the scheme) for RCHs to purchase equipment to improve their ventilation and strengthen the support to the residents, involving an allocation of about \$243 million.

With the surge in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the fifth wave, SWD has collaborated with the Trust again in expanding the scheme since March 2022, providing specified high-efficiency air purifiers and filters for RCHEs and RCHDs with residents under on-site quarantine/isolation to further improve ventilation, with a view to reducing the risk of virus transmission. SWD has allocated additional time-limited resources to increase the provision of medical consultation service by visiting medical practitioners for residents of RCHEs and RCHDs since mid-March 2022, involving an estimated expenditure of about \$199 million.

In addition, SWD has been providing all residential service units (including RCHDs) with a total of 1 million masks on a monthly basis for their staff since February 2020. It has also increased the monthly provision of masks to RCHs to 2 million since March 2020. SWD has provided a total of 52 million masks to the aforesaid residential service units from February 2020 to April 2022. Moreover, it has provided an additional of over 24 million masks to RCHEs and RCHDs from July 2020 to February 2022 for needy residents. To enhance anti-epidemic equipment in RCHEs and RCHDs, the Government has been distributing 78 million items of personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. surgical masks, N95 masks, face shields, goggles, disposable gowns and gloves, etc.) to their staff since February 2022. The expenditure involved for the aforesaid items is about \$295 million.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. SV006)

Head: (186) Transport Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (5) Transport Services for Persons with Disabilities and Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities

Controlling Officer: Commissioner for Transport (Miss Rosanna LAW)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Question:

Regarding the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the \$2 Scheme), please provide the actual amount of the Government's reimbursement of the revenue forgone to the participating public transport operators in the financial year 2021-22 and the estimated amount of reimbursement for the financial year 2025-26, and their percentages in the overall expenditure of the \$2 Scheme.

Asked by: Hon IP LAU Suk-ye, Regina

Reply:

The revised estimate of the annual operating expenditure of the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (the \$2 Scheme) for 2021-22 is about \$1.5 billion. Of this, the revised estimate of the Government's reimbursement of the revenue forgone to the participating public transport operators is about \$1.419 billion, accounting for 95% of the annual operating expenditure.

The revised estimate for 2021-22 is lower than its original estimate of \$2.744 billion. This is mainly due to a significant drop in patronage in view of the pandemic. In 2022-23, the estimated expenditure for reimbursing the participating public transport operators for the revenue forgone is about \$6.04 billion, which mainly covers the full-year expenditure for lowering the eligible age to 60 and extending the \$2 Scheme to red minibuses, kaito and tram in the year, and the anticipated seven-month expenditure for including eligible routes of residents' service from September 2022. In drawing up the estimate for 2022-23, the Government has taken into account that people aged between 60 and 64 are more socially active than those aged 65 or above and around 47% of the former age group are employed, and thus assumed that the number of average daily trips taken by people aged between 60 and 64 on public transport is about 2 to 3 times as many as that taken by people aged 65 or above. Future expenditure of the \$2 Scheme will depend on a number of factors including changes in the population of eligible beneficiaries, potential increase in patronage induced by the enhancement measures, fare adjustments, effectiveness of the anti-abuse measures,

etc. The Government will closely monitor the operation of the \$2 Scheme and build up a more solid basis for projecting the relevant expenditure of each year and reflecting them in the respective estimates.

- End -