

**For Information on
15 May 2023**

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

**Manpower Situation of Lifeguards of
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the manpower, recruitment and management of lifeguards at aquatic venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in recent years.

Background

2. The LCSD currently manages 45 public swimming pools, 42 gazetted beaches¹ and five water sports centres. Excluding the manpower of senior lifeguards², more than 1 300 lifeguards are needed during non-swimming season (i.e. from November to March of the following year). In the swimming season from April onwards, over 1 800 and 2 000 lifeguards are required during non-peak months (i.e. from April to May and from September to October) and peak months (i.e. from June to August) respectively to cater for the manpower needs of all aquatic venues.

3. To provide life saving and other related services at aquatic venues, the LCSD employs lifeguards on long-term employment (including civil service lifeguards and ex-Council contract lifeguards), non-civil service contract (NCSC) full-year lifeguards³ and NCSC seasonal lifeguards during the swimming season. The recruitment number of NCSC seasonal lifeguards varies according to time, opening conditions of facilities and responses to recruitment exercises. For the details of lifeguard posts under the LCSD, see **Annex 1**.

4. Civil service lifeguards include lifeguards and senior lifeguards, which belong to the grades of Artisan and Senior Artisan respectively. Lifeguards in the

¹ Hairpin Beach, Rocky Bay Beach and Gemini Beach are not provided with beach facilities such as beach building and shark prevention net, and therefore are not open for swimming.

² There is no manpower issue for senior lifeguards.

³ With contract terms of one year or two years.

Artisan grade are remunerated at Master Pay Scale (MPS) points 5 to 8 (\$18,120 - \$21,875), whereas senior lifeguards in the Senior Artisan grade are remunerated at MPS points 8 to 10 (\$21,875 - \$24,670)⁴. In addition, civil service lifeguards carrying out obnoxious tasks at public beaches or water sports centres and those performing more physically demanding tasks at aquatic venues are granted hardship allowances starting June 2022. The rate per allowance being \$1,066 per month. Lifeguards and senior lifeguards are posted to different aquatic venues, including beaches, swimming pools and water sports centres.

5. All lifeguards employed by the LCSD shall possess lifeguard awards issued by the Hong Kong Life Saving Society⁵ (HKLSS). In addition to meeting entry requirements⁶, applicants for civil service lifeguard posts shall pass selection interviews, Chinese and English language proficiency tests tailored to meet operational needs, and trade tests conducted by the LCSD, as well as other applicable recruitment procedures, including integrity checking and medical examination. Applicants for NCSC seasonal lifeguard posts are also required to meet entry requirements⁷ and pass the selection interviews, language proficiency tests and trade tests conducted by the LCSD. Since seasonal lifeguards are recruited mainly to augment the lifeguard services at aquatic venues during the swimming season, their entry requirements and assessment requirements are slightly different from those of their civil service counterparts.

Manpower of lifeguards

Overall situation of Hong Kong

6. Recent years, there are increasing number of private swimming pools in private developments, hotels, theme parks, etc. According to figures provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the number of private swimming pools in Hong Kong increased by 15% from 1 205 in 2016 to 1 380 in 2022. This, together with the opening of the year-round and all-weather Water

⁴ Pay scale as at 1 April 2022.

⁵ The HKLSS is the only body recognised by the International Life Saving Federation for assessing and awarding lifeguard qualifications in Hong Kong.

⁶ A valid Beach Lifeguard Award and Pool Lifeguard Award or above from the HKLSS; a valid First Aid Certificate of the St John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross, or the Auxiliary Medical Service; a Chinese and English language standard up to Primary Six or equivalent; and visual acuity at a minimum of 6/60.

⁷ A valid Beach Lifeguard Award or Pool Lifeguard Award or above from the HKLSS; and/or a valid First Aid Certificate of the St John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross, or the Auxiliary Medical Service; a Chinese and English language standard up to Primary Six or equivalent.

World of the Ocean Park in September 2021, has led to the employment of many qualified lifeguards at these swimming pool facilities to provide life saving services. The ever-rising service demand in the lifesaving industry exacerbates the difficulty of lifeguard recruitment.

7. Swimming pools and beach facilities were closed for a prolonged period during the COVID-19 epidemic. Consequently, the LCSD, the HKLSS and its affiliated clubs had not been able to organise life saving training programmes, revalidation courses and examinations, causing a serious impact on the supply of qualified lifeguards. Based on the information provided by the HKLSS, the number of newly issued Pool Lifeguard Awards dropped by 73% from 1 403 in 2018-19 to 374 in 2020-21. The number of newly issued Beach Lifeguard Awards also decreased by 60% from 335 in 2018-19 to 134 in 2020-21. The supply of lifeguards shrinks significantly while the demand for them is growing, resulting in a severe shortage of lifeguards in both the public and private sectors. Following the relaxation of social distancing measures by the end of 2022, the life saving training programmes and revalidation courses previously affected by the epidemic have resumed gradually. However, having left the profession for nearly three years, some lifeguards may have changed their career. This also affects the manpower market of lifeguards to a certain extent.

Lifeguards on long-term employment under the LCSD

8. Due to the insufficient supply of lifeguards in the market in recent years, the LCSD has encountered persistent difficulties in recruiting seasonal lifeguards. To stabilise the supply of lifeguards, the LCSD has been continuously increasing the number of posts of lifeguards employed on a long-term basis in the past years. In the 2022-23 recruitment exercise, the LCSD raised the recruitment target to allow a higher intake for absorbing more manpower. While the number of applicants invited to interviews far exceeded the recruitment target, only less than 30% of them could pass the trade test and the recruitment interview, a percentage that was far lower than the past ratio of 40%. As such, the recruitment target could not be met. Details of the recruitment exercises for civil service lifeguards from 2017 to 2023 are set out in **Annex 2**. The average vacancy rate of civil service lifeguards in the past three years was 4.21%, which was lower than the rate of 7.12% for the entire civil service in the same period. This shows that civil service lifeguard posts appeal to people aspiring to join the industry to a certain extent. The LCSD had no proven and persistent difficulties recruiting civil service lifeguards in the past, and there have been no fundamental changes to their job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities. Hence, a grade structure review for civil service lifeguards is not justified at present. The LCSD will continue to monitor the statistics on recruitment and wastage of civil service lifeguards and follow up as appropriate.

9. At present, the total number of civil service lifeguard posts has increased by over 55% from 937 in August 2011 to 1 451 in August 2022. For details about the posts created over the past decade, please refer to **Annex 3**. As at 1 April 2023, there were a total of 1 443 lifeguards on long-term employment, including 184 civil service senior lifeguards, 1 207 civil service lifeguards and 52 ex-Council contract lifeguards to attend to the service and work of different aquatic venues.

LCSD seasonal lifeguards/NCSC full-year lifeguards

10. During the swimming season from April to October, the LCSD employs a total of over 700 full-time and part-time hourly-rated seasonal lifeguards to augment the life saving and related services at all aquatic venues. As a result of the progressive increase in the number of lifeguards on long-term employment, the ratio of seasonal lifeguards in the overall lifeguard pool has decreased from 45% in 2018 to 34% in 2022. From April to May 2023, the LCSD needs to employ more than 600 seasonal lifeguards to cater for the manpower demand after all aquatic venues are reopened. However, in recent years, there has been a consistent decrease in both the number of applications received for seasonal lifeguard and the number of people employed, details of which are set out at **Annex 4**. As at 1 May, there was 240 contract lifeguards reported for duty, including full-time seasonal lifeguards under Post-retirement Service Contract, NCSC full-time seasonal lifeguards and contract full-year lifeguards. Other appointed contract staff will report for duty in batches. The LCSD is still actively recruiting seasonal lifeguards for the year to meet the manpower demand in the peak swimming months. Having regard to the lifeguards recruited thus far, the LCSD will provide life saving services in a total of 42 swimming pools⁸ (among which 17 are partially open) and 22 gazetted beaches under its purview.

Enhancing the attractiveness of joining the lifeguard profession

11. The difficulties in recruiting seasonal lifeguards, coupled with the impact on life saving training and assessment brought about by the epidemic in the past three years, have caused the manpower shortage of seasonal lifeguards to persist and even exacerbate. Regarding contract terms, the LCSD has increased the number of posts on long-term employment in 2023 and recruited 110 full-year lifeguards on two-year contract thus far to stabilise the supply of lifeguards.

⁸ Redevelopment works are being carried out at Kowloon Tsai Swimming Pool. Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park Swimming Pool and Lam Tin Swimming Pool are currently under annual maintenance.

12. Moreover, the LCSD has rolled out a series of measures, including enhancing the remuneration package of seasonal lifeguards, increasing the end-of-contract gratuity of eligible seasonal lifeguards, subsidising seasonal lifeguards in obtaining/revalidating lifeguard awards and stepping up the promotion of recruitment exercises, in order to increase the number of eligible applicants for the post of seasonal lifeguard, attract them to join the profession and retain them in the team. The LCSD will also enhance the flexibility of recruitment procedures by launching the Combined Seasonal Lifeguard Training Scheme to offer full-time training and practice in respect of swimming pool and beach lifeguards in a “hire and train” mode, so as to help those without life saving qualifications to acquire pool and/or beach life saving awards before serving as the seasonal lifeguards of the LCSD. Details of these measures are set out at **Annex 5**.

Introduction of smart system to strengthen life saving services and measures and assist lifeguards in their work

13. To strengthen life saving services at public swimming pools, the LCSD will conduct a trial in public swimming pools on the use of drowning detection system (DDS) in the 2023 swimming season. Applying artificial intelligence detection technology, the DDS analyses the videos and images captured by the camera, displays the motions of swimmers in the form of skeletal movements and calculates the probability of drowning using artificial intelligence. If drowning is detected, the system will alert the lifeguards and assist them in their rescue work. The LCSD will review its influence on swimming pool manpower requirement upon the trial.

Way forward

14. The LCSD will keep the usage of all aquatic venues and the public’s needs for the services under review to support the enhancement of venues and improvement of venue management. The LCSD plans to implement the following measures in phases to increase and stabilise the manpower provision of lifeguards:

Short-term measures

- i) Create NCSC lifeguard posts with longer contract periods to attract more eligible individuals to join the lifeguard profession with a view to stabilising manpower provision, thereby enhancing the public service and operational efficiency of aquatic venues;
- ii) Work with the HKLSS to explore ways to speed up and compress life saving training programmes/examinations and

lifeguard revalidation courses to expedite the increase of lifeguard provision;

- iii) Organise life saving training programmes for ethnic minorities again to let them receive intensive training within a short period of time for becoming qualified lifeguards, thereby expanding the source of manpower supply in the market; and
- iv) Explore with the HKLSS and the Employees Retraining Board to co-organise life saving training programmes and provide employment services to boost the supply of lifeguards.

Mid- and long-term measures

- i) Explore ways to reduce the reliance on seasonal lifeguards with a view to tackling the shortage of core lifeguards; and
- ii) Explore the feasibility of outsourcing seasonal lifeguard services at designated public swimming pools.

Advice sought

15. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
May 2023

**Lifeguards of
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool) /Non-civil Service Contract Lifeguards

- (a) Discharging life saving duties;
- (b) Discharging first aid duties;
- (c) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (d) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (e) Discharging winter work duties.

Artisan (Lifeguards of Water Sports Centres)

- (a) Discharging life saving duties;
- (b) Discharging first aid duties;
- (c) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (d) Patrolling water sports activity areas on rescue boats and taking care of participants of water sports activities;
- (e) Directing participants of water sports activities to get in and out of crafts and towing/launching the crafts into water and taking them out of water and back to the water sports centres;
- (f) Assisting in issue and collection of water sports equipment/gear to ensure that they are in good condition before and after use;
- (g) Cleansing water sports equipment and undertaking minor repairs and maintenance;
- (h) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (i) Discharging winter work duties.

Senior Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool)

- (a) Deputising the Amenities Assistant in-charge;
- (b) Supervising Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool), contract lifeguards and other junior staff in carrying out daily work and district winter work programmes;
- (c) Directing and performing life saving operations and first aid services, inspecting life saving and first aid equipment, as well as ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times;
- (d) Training Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool) and contract lifeguards, and assisting in implementing the departmental drill programmes; and
- (e) Assisting in enforcing the relevant laws/by-laws/regulations.

Senior Artisan (Lifeguards of Water Sports Centres)

- (a) Supervising Artisans (Lifeguards of Water Sports Centre), contract lifeguards and other junior staff;
- (b) Directing and performing life saving operations, rescue by crafts and first aid services;
- (c) Training Artisans (Lifeguard of Water Sports Centre) and contract lifeguards in drilling, and implementing rescue operations;
- (d) Supervising and performing the inspection, issue, maintenance and minor repairs of water sports equipment;
- (e) Maintaining proper records of water sports equipment, ensuring that they are safe to use and in sea-worthy condition, as well as arranging necessary maintenance of and replacement to defected crafts, gear and fittings;
- (f) Arranging necessary training in respect of water sports skills and maintenance of equipment to lifeguards and junior staff;
- (g) Preparing rosters and assigning daily duty posts for lifeguards and junior staff;
- (h) Assisting centre instructors in running training courses;
- (i) Performing janitor duties and maintenance of order and law enforcement as and when necessary;
- (j) Ensuring proper use and storage of motor rescue boats;
- (k) Assisting users of water sports centres in using the crafts properly; and
- (l) Inspecting life saving and first aid equipment regularly and ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times.

Recruitment Figures of Civil Service Lifeguards

Year of Recruitment	Recruitment Target (a)	Number of Applications Received (b)	Number of Candidates Invited for Interview (c)	Number of Candidates Passing Trade Test and Recruitment Interview (d)	Difference (e)=(d)-(a)
2022 - 23	75	250	169	50	-25
2021 - 22	43	271	207	89	46
2020 - 21	82	343	246	94	12
2019 - 20	45	386	298	140	95
2018 - 19	52	488	356	161	109
2017 - 18	7	96	43	28	21

**Creation of Additional Posts of Civil Service Lifeguards in
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Year	Number of Newly Created Post		
	Senior Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	Artisan (Lifeguard of Water Sports Centre)
2022-23	4	41	-
2021-22	3	20	-
2020-21	3	91	-
2019-20	1	83	-
2018-19	4	4	10
2017-18	1	2	-
2016-17	7	42	-
2015-16	-	30	-
2014-15	1	-	10
2013-14	3	37	-
Total :	27	350	20

Recruitment Figures of Seasonal Lifeguards

Year	Number of Application Received	Number of Recruited Staff¹
2022 - 23	572 ²	122 ³
2021 - 22	710	276
2020 - 21	802	323
2019 - 20	831	382
2018 - 19	915	595
2017 - 18	1 020	804
2016 - 17	1 164	811

¹ They refer to the numbers of seasonal lifeguards employed on non-civil service contract terms by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department during swimming seasons, excluding those employed on post-retirement service contract terms.

² It refers to the number of applications received as at 25 April 2023.

³ Recruitment is still in progress.

**Measures taken/to be taken by
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department
to Address the Manpower Shortage of Seasonal Lifeguards**

Remuneration

1. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will enhance the remuneration package of seasonal lifeguards with reference to the local private employment market in terms of pay level of lifeguards and other important relevant factors after taking into account the services and unique operational needs of public swimming pools and beaches, with a view to attracting more qualified persons to apply for the post. In the 2023 swimming season, the LCSD will further enhance the remuneration for seasonal lifeguards. Depending on the post, type of lifeguard awards and first-aid certificate held, a seasonal lifeguard's salary with gratuities may range from \$23,500 to \$25,000 per month.
2. To stabilise manpower supply, the LCSD has increased the end-of-contract gratuities for qualified seasonal lifeguards to encourage those having worked as full-time seasonal lifeguards to serve the Department again. For the swimming season this year, those full-time seasonal lifeguards who have served the LCSD for no less than six months in any swimming season over the past three years and have satisfactorily completed one single contract of six months or more in the swimming season this year, during which they must have acted and performed well, will be entitled to end-of-contract gratuities of 15% for the whole contract period. As for other seasonal lifeguards, end-of-contract gratuities of 10% will be offered on satisfactory completion of the first three months of the contract, which will increase to 15% starting from the fourth month.
3. Additional end-of-contract gratuities will be offered to seasonal lifeguards to subsidise their acquisition or revalidation of life saving awards. Additional end-of-contract gratuities of \$2,000 may be offered to those seasonal lifeguards who have been continuously employed for 3 months or more and have acquired or revalidated the Pool Lifeguard Award and Beach Lifeguard Award or above from the Hong Kong Life Saving Society (HKLSS) during the period from 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023 or contract completion dates, whichever is the earlier.
4. An additional monthly payment of \$300 will be made to those seasonal lifeguards holding valid first aid certificates on completion of a contract of a

specified period with the LCSD, in a bid to attract more holders of valid first aid certificates to serve as seasonal lifeguards and incentivise seasonal lifeguards to upgrade their skills.

5. Given the general remoteness of beaches or water sports centres, and as a result, longer commuting hours and higher transportation costs for seasonal lifeguards, many of them are hesitant to work at such beaches or water sports centres. To attract more qualified persons to join the service, the LCSD sets the monthly salaries for seasonal lifeguards posted to beaches or water sports centres at a level which is \$1,000 higher than their counterparts posted to swimming pools.

Supply of Qualified Lifeguards

6. The Combined Seasonal Lifeguard Training Scheme will be launched to offer full-time training and practice in respect of swimming pool and beach lifeguards in a “hire and train” mode, so as to help trainees acquire pool and/or beach life saving awards before serving as seasonal lifeguards at the beaches or swimming pools of the LCSD. Those without life saving qualifications are welcome to enrol, who will be entitled to monthly subsidies which vary between \$13,990 and \$15,670, subject to the type of life saving awards they have acquired. The Training Scheme for this year already completed in February, under which 15 trainees acquired the Pool Life Saving Award, while another 13 obtained the Beach Life Saving Award. It is worth noting that a separate group of 13 trainees managed to secure both the Pool and Beach Life Saving Awards.
7. To secure a steady supply of manpower, the LCSD extends the contract terms for serving seasonal lifeguards on post-retirement service contracts (PRSCs) to the swimming season this year. Meanwhile, the recruitment exercise for seasonal lifeguards under the PRSCs for the swimming season this year will continue to be run.
8. More Bronze Medallion life saving training programmes will be organised in collaboration with tertiary institutions/secondary schools, the District Councils and relevant organisations. On another front, the LCSD, alongside the Home Affairs Department, will continue to conduct career seminars on lifeguards with ethnic minorities as the targeted audience. Two Bronze Medallion life saving training programmes were held for ethnic minorities in 2021.
9. The LCSD works closely with the HKLSS to organise more life saving training programmes in provision of additional training places through the

Sports Subvention Scheme and the Community Sports Scheme, with a view to bolstering the supply of lifeguards.

10. To further promote the life saving career and encourage more members of the public to work as lifeguards, the LCSD will launch the “Integrated Certificates Course on Life Saving” at its designated District Leisure Services Offices from June 2023 onwards, to be offered either as the “Integrated Certificates Course on Pool Life Saving Training” (i.e. involving training on pool life saving) or the “Integrated Certificates Course on Pool and Beach Life Saving Training” (i.e. involving training on both pool and beach life saving), thereby enabling participants to obtain pool and/or beach life saving qualifications, without the hassles of making separate enrolments, through a series of life saving bridging programmes under “through-train” mode.

Recruitment Procedures

11. Recruitment days are held in those undermanned districts in particular, with a view to attracting qualified persons to apply for the posts of seasonal lifeguard on-site.
12. The recruitment procedures have been streamlined to expedite the supply of lifeguard by inviting full-time seasonal lifeguards to continue to serve on a part-time basis upon completion of contracts.

Administrative initiatives

13. The LCSD arranges the lifeguards of those undermanned swimming pools or beaches to take turns working overtime, with the aim of maintaining the lifeguard services. Their overtime work is compensated in the form of overtime allowance, time off or extension of their contract period.
14. The Department offers one-year contracts to part-time hourly-rated seasonal lifeguards, with a view to attracting more qualified persons to apply for the post, as well as to securing a steady supply of manpower throughout a year. As such, the Department is in a better position to address contingencies such as collective sick leave or strikes by lifeguards.

Publicity Efforts

15. The LCSD steps up its publicity efforts regarding the recruitment exercises of seasonal lifeguards. For instance, recruitment banners are displayed at swimming pools or beaches with higher usage rates across the 18 districts. In addition, recruitment information is disseminated through the websites of relevant organisations. Meanwhile, recruitment advertisements are placed on public transport, popular newspapers and social media websites to reach out to a wider audience. Recruitment pamphlets are also produced for distribution to secondary schools, post-secondary institutions or the relevant organisations.

16. The Department proactively liaises with youth services organisations and schools, in a bid to promote the life saving career and encourage young people to serve as lifeguards. We aim to enhance their interests in lifeguard services, with a view to increasing the supply of lifeguards in the long run.