

LCQ11: Child care services

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

According to the research findings published by the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children in 2016, the enrolment rate of full-day child care services for children aged below three in Hong Kong was only 13 per cent, while the relevant rate for the member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development was 35.2 per cent on average. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) Whether it has plans to establish more child care centres (CCCs); if so, of the additional number in the coming five years;
- (2) Whether it has set a target on the enrolment rate of child care services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) Of the number of CCCs in Hong Kong and the number of service places provided by them in each of the past five years;
- (4) Whether it has assessed if there will be a shortage of qualified child care workers in the coming five years; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the details, and whether it will introduce programmes for training such workers; and
- (5) Given that the unemployment rates of various sectors (e.g. the retail and catering sectors) have been on the rise recently, whether the Government has plans to offer training courses on child care work for the unemployed, so as to attract new blood to the sector after the present epidemic has subsided?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) To further enhance day child care services, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) plans to provide in phases about 400 long full-day child care service places in aided standalone child care centres (CCCs) for children aged below three in North District, Kwun Tong, Sha Tin, Kwai Tsing and Yuen Long. In the first phase, 337 CCC service places are expected to be available in 2020-21, including 56 in Wah Ming Estate in Fanling, 88 in Shun Lee Estate in Kwun Tong, 105 in Shek Mun Estate in Sha Tin and 88 in Tin Shui Estate in Yuen Long. The implementation timetable of the remaining 63 service places has to be confirmed.
- (2) The Government will make reference to the final report of the Consultancy

Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services and formulate an appropriate population-based planning ratio for CCC places. The Government has included the planning ratio in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines with a view to reserving suitable premises in housing development projects for CCC operations so as to better meet the service demands in the community in new developments.

(3) The number of CCCs and that of service places in Hong Kong in the past five financial years are set out below:

| Year | Number of CCCs | Number of service places |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| 2015-16 | 532 | 29 478 |
| 2016-17 | 544 | 30 673 |
| 2017-18 | 555 | 32 991 |
| 2018-19 | 556 | 35 480 |
| 2019-20 (as at December 2019) | 557 | 34 383 |

(4) In accordance with the requirements of the Child Care Services Ordinance (Cap 243) and the Child Care Services Regulations (Cap 243A), CCCs providing service to children aged below three must employ registered child care workers (CCWs) and child care supervisors with certificates of a training course approved by the Director of Social Welfare or the equivalent qualification to take care of children. At present, there are about 2 000 newly registered CCWs every year. The SWD will continue to keep in view the manpower situation and encourage tertiary institutions/organisations to launch relevant courses or to increase the capacity so as to meet the service need.

(5) In general, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) will consult its Industry Consultative Networks to ascertain the employment opportunities of a particular industry or occupation and the need for developing new training courses. The ERB currently provides eight courses related to child care work (covering such aspects as infant and child care, children with special education needs, early childhood fitness exercise) for eligible persons aged 15 or above (including the unemployed). Trainees who have completed relevant placement-tied courses may receive training allowance and follow-up placement services for three to six months.