

LCQ14: Youth development work

Following is a question by Reverend Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon and a written reply by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

The Government promulgated the Youth Development Blueprint in December last year, outlining the overall vision and guiding principles for its long-term youth development work in future, while putting forward more than 160 specific actions and measures conducive to youth development at the initial stage. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the Government will launch a one-stop information mobile app for youth to disseminate diversified information on various youth development programmes, whether such an app will be equipped with a function for users to provide feedback, so as to enable the Government to receive the views of young people more effectively, instead of simply disseminating information unilaterally; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as the Government will re-launch the Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents projects in the Land Sale Programme in the current financial year, whether it will set aside quotas for the youths in such projects to implement a tailor-made scheme for young people; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that the Government established the District Youth Community Building Committee and the District Youth Development and Civic Education Committee in 18 districts in April this year, whether it will, by drawing reference from the eligibility criteria for members of the District Services and Community Care Teams, require members of such committees to sign a declaration in relation to national security and to be persons having no criminal convictions; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given the designation of the Deputy Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs (Youth Affairs) of the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau as the Commissioner for Youth (the Commissioner) to co-ordinate youth development work in various areas within the Government, whether the Government has assessed if the substantive rank of the Commissioner (i.e. Deputy Secretary) will render it difficult for him to co-ordinate various policy bureaux and rationalise the relevant work; how the Commissioner ensures that various policy bureaux are able to take forward the initiatives in relation to youth affairs effectively so that the relevant indicators will be met?

Reply:

President,

The Government all along attaches great importance to youth development.

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) released the Youth Development Blueprint (the Blueprint) late last year to outline the overall vision and guiding principles for the Government's long-term youth development work in future, with a vision to nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for our country and Hong Kong, and equipped with global perspective and positive thinking. The Blueprint put forward more than 160 measures, including some which assist young people in overcoming hurdles in education, employment, entrepreneurship and home ownership, providing all-round support for youth development.

In consultation with the Housing Bureau, the consolidated reply to the question raised by Reverend Canon the Hon Peter Douglas Koon is as follows:

(1) The HYAB plans to launch a youth-oriented mobile application (the App) in the first quarter of 2024. It will disseminate the latest information on youth development and a wide range of activities, so that young people can explore different areas and development opportunities based on their individual needs and interests. In designing the App, the HYAB collected opinions from more than 1 300 young people via survey and focus groups to better understand their expectations and suggestions on the App. We plan to incorporate a feedback function in the App so that we can keep tabs on contents that are more popular among young users. After the launch of the App, we will closely monitor its implementation and user feedback, and review and optimise its functions and contents continuously. We will launch updated versions and new features as and when appropriate to ensure that the App can cater for the needs of young people.

(2) Starter Homes for Hong Kong Residents (SH) projects could help address the home ownership aspirations of those who are not eligible for purchasing Home Ownership Scheme flats and yet cannot afford private housing. The Government is committed to developing SH projects with a view to enriching the housing ladder, and ensuring that the various housing rungs can meet the needs of different home purchasers. Apart from the first two SH projects of the Urban Renewal Authority (i.e. eResidence Towers 1 and 2, as well as eResidence Towers 3) launched for sale which provide a total of 753 SH units, the Government is taking forward four other SH projects, which will provide over 5 800 SH units.

The majority of the past applicants and purchasers for SH were young people aged 40 or below, illustrating that SH projects can help the youth realise their home ownership aspirations. Since SH units, being subsidised housing, are precious resources of the community, the allocation of such units has to balance the needs of different stakeholders. The Government thus does not have any plan at this stage to set aside special quotas for the youth under SH projects.

(3) The Chief Executive announced in his 2022 Policy Address the launch of the Youth Participation Initiative. One of the initiatives is for the Home Affairs Department (HAD) to open up certain seats of the District Youth Community Building Committee and the District Youth Development and Civic Education Committee (the Committees) set up in 18 districts for young people to nominate themselves as members. Each of the Committees consists of 20 to

30 members, one-third of whom are self-nominated youth members.

The HAD invited self-nominations to the Committees in January 2023 and attracted close to 1 100 applications. Assessment Panels were set up by all District Offices to recruit young people on merit basis, who have a strong commitment to serve the community, a good understanding of district and youth affairs, as well as good analytical and communication skills. About 330 young people in total have joined the Committees, which aim to provide forums for members to offer their views on district affairs such as district works projects, youth development and civic education. There is no requirement for members to sign any declaration, and the origin or background of the young people is not a factor for consideration in the recruitment process.

(4) Youth development work involves a wide range of issues and stakeholders which straddles various policy areas. One of the guiding principles set out in the Blueprint is to enhance central governance and co-ordination, with a view to facilitating cross-bureau and cross-sector collaboration (including the Government, business sector, academia and the community), as well as engaging and driving various sectors to participate in youth work. The Commissioner for Youth, a dedicated position with specific responsibilities, is an important component in the governance structure for the Government's youth work. It serves to strengthen internal co-ordination for youth development work within the Government and liaise with various sectors of the community to enhance their communication and collaboration with the Government. Besides, the Youth Development Commission, chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, plays an effective and high-level leadership role in monitoring and assessing the implementation progress of the Blueprint, and in steering various bureaux to take forward youth work in an effective manner.