

LCQ17: Services provided to young people and working youth

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

Regarding the services provided to young people and the working youth, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of non-governmental organisations which provided social services with young people and the working youth as targets in each of the past three years, and set out by name of organisation (i) the type of organisation to which they belonged, (ii) the amount of subsidy by public funding received each year (if applicable), (iii) the number of relevant employees, and (iv) the number of service recipients (with a breakdown by age group);

(2) whether the Home Affairs Bureau, the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Education Bureau commissioned in the past three years any organisations to implement new service projects with young people and the working youth as targets; if so, set out by name of project (i) the number of organisations, (ii) the name of organisations, (iii) the amount of subsidy by public funding received each year, and (iv) the number of service recipients each year (with a breakdown by age group); and

(3) given that the disturbances arising from the opposition to the proposed legislative amendments and the epidemic have dealt a heavy blow to society and the economy, seriously affecting the development and upward mobility of young people and the working youth, whether the aforesaid bureaux have plans to launch targeted service projects to help them face up to adversity and equip themselves so as to better meet the challenges ahead?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the Education Bureau (EDB), our consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Luk Chung-hung is as follows:

(1) and (2) Over the past three financial years, 47 welfare organisations were subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to provide youth services. The average annual amount of total subvention allocated to these organisations was about \$2,029 million, with around 425 900 children and young people aged six to 24 receiving such services. In addition, over the

past three financial years, 31 welfare organisations were allocated funding from the Child Development Fund to operate projects, which last three years each, throughout the territory. More than 8 000 children and young people aged 10 to 19 have benefitted from joining the projects, and the average annual funding provision was about \$47.3 million. SWD does not have information on the organisations' number of employees providing relevant services. For new services, SWD subvents five welfare organisations in operating five Cyber Youth Support Teams which were set up in December 2018. In 2019-20, the amount of subvention allocated for the service was around \$23.9 million, and the number of young people aged six to 24 receiving the service was 7 977.

Similarly, during the past three financial years, the Labour Department (LD) commissioned 26 organisations to provide case management and employment support services for young people. The average amount of service fee per year is about \$12.9 million. Some 13 500 young people aged 15 to 29 were served each year on average. LD does not have information on the organisations' number of employees providing relevant services.

Besides, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) introduced the Funding Scheme for Youth Life Planning Activities (FSYLPA) since 2014 to subsidise non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in providing time-limited service projects on youth life planning. In the most recent funding cycle from 2019/20 to 2021/22 school years, a total of 24 non-profit-making NGOs have been granted subvention to roll out relevant services. A total amount of funding at around \$115 million has been allocated, and an estimated number of around 318 000 people (including secondary school students, fresh graduates and school leavers, teachers and parents) will receive the services. HAB does not keep statistics on the number of staff providing the relevant services employed by the NGOs concerned.

As regards EDB, the Bureau allocated \$350,000 in 2020-21 financial year to commission a social service organisation to launch a pilot scheme in 10 selected secondary schools which provides consultancy services on vocational and professional education and training for school teachers. The subject pilot scheme has been rolled out in the 2020/21 school year. It is estimated that about 2 200 senior secondary school students from the participating schools will be benefitted. There will be 12 staff in the organisation concerned responsible for providing the services.

(3) The social unrest, unstable epidemic situation and prolonged class suspension over the past year have affected the lives and learning patterns of young people. Some of them feel confused about their future. In view of these situations, we should care more about young people's well-being, enable them to enjoy more diversified development opportunities and assist them in equipping themselves, achieving upward mobility and realising their aspirations.

SWD has been in communication with the subvented NGOs to meet the young people's welfare needs. Starting from September of the 2019/20 school year, SWD has implemented the "two social workers for each secondary school"

measure in more than 460 secondary schools throughout the territory, with supervisory manpower strengthened correspondingly. During suspension of face-to-face classes for schools due to the pandemic as required, school social workers continue to maintain close liaison with students and school personnel. Apart from maintaining contacts with students through telephone calls and online means, school social workers also provide timely counselling to students through interviews or visits in case of need or in urgent situation. To enhance contact with young people who are in need of emotional support, SWD has introduced cross-district overnight outreach services operated by an NGO to provide online platform support and counselling services and clinical psychological services, etc. for needy students and young people. In addition, SWD provides clinical psychological services for the young people in need via NGOs, and has conducted training workshops for school social workers, teachers and principals to enhance their skills in handling students' emotion. SWD has also provided psycho-education through radio broadcasting so as to strength parent-child relationship, and has worked with social workers in enhancing parent-child communication. SWD has uploaded to its webpage the 2020 Psycho-education information Hub for Combatting the Novel Coronavirus, and has published the Psycho-education Resource Package on Combatting the Novel Coronavirus, with a view to providing psychological support information for members of the public including young people. During the pandemic, subvented NGOs, through the provision of additional resources from SWD, have strengthened cyber outreach and counselling for providing appropriate services and making service referrals for young people in need.

In respect of schools, in accordance with the development of the social incidents and the epidemic, EDB has been keeping in close contact with schools and has issued letters and guidelines to schools from time to time, reminding them to keep a close eye on students' behaviour and strengthen the communication with parents. Schools have been requested to enhance guidance and discipline as well as support for students so as to help them release their negative emotions, strengthen their resilience and nurture their positive values and attitude. Professionals of different disciplines in a school (including guidance personnel, school social workers and school-based educational psychologists) will provide students with appropriate support. Through the whole-school discipline and guidance approach, related professionals collaborate with teachers to provide remedial, preventive and developmental counselling programs for students as necessary. Besides, EDB has been holding more workshops, thematic seminars and training courses for schools, and has also organised activities in collaboration with related non-governmental organisations to promote a positive and caring culture. For example, "Caring School in Adversity" was set as the theme of the grand prizes of the "Caring School Award Scheme" in 2020. Over 430 kindergartens, primary, secondary and special schools participated in the Scheme. In addition, EDB has been continuously promoting different student guidance projects, such as the "Understanding Adolescent Project" and the "Enhanced Smart Teen Project", for primary and secondary students respectively, aiming at enhancing their resilience in facing adversity and future challenges.

As for universities, not only has the pandemic affected universities' modes of teaching and learning, and student support services, it has also caused stress and anxiety among university students as they face disruption to their studies and job search. The University Grants Committee (UGC) thus made a one-off special allocation of \$50 million in November 2020 to encourage innovation among universities in developing a more diverse range of student support services through various delivery means. The eight UGC-funded universities will make use of the funding to take forward 75 initiatives in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years through expanding existing services and launching new ones that cover the areas of psychological counselling, mental well-being, career planning and development, and physical fitness and healthy lifestyle, thereby supporting students to tide over difficult times during the pandemic.

Besides, HAB together with the Youth Development Commission have launched various measures to sponsor NGOs in providing relevant services for young people. Although most of the exchange, internship and physical training activities could not be held due to the outbreak of COVID-19, we have allocated additional resources to NGOs funded under FSYLPA to enable them to make use of technology to organise activities that would enhance young people's well-being and stress management, as well as provide life planning support and training to students during the epidemic. The enhancement measures have met with positive response from the NGOs concerned. A total of more than 620 e-learning activities have been organised so far. Moreover, we have further enhanced FSYLPA by introducing the Individual Study and Career Support Service for Secondary School Students and Leavers under the scheme. Under the support service, the 24 currently funded NGOs were provided with one-off additional funding for a period of one year to provide comprehensive, in-depth and sustainable counselling services particularly for young people who have yet to have a clear progression or employment path.

In addition to creating a decent environment for growing up in Hong Kong, the Government has also been actively promoting opportunities for career development and entrepreneurship for Hong Kong young people in Hong Kong as well as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The Government launched the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme in January 2021 to encourage enterprises with business in both Hong Kong and the Mainland cities of GBA to employ local university graduates and station them to work in the Mainland cities of the GBA. The scheme provides 2 000 places, around 700 of which are designated for innovation and technology posts. Hong Kong residents who are legally employable in Hong Kong and hold bachelor's degrees or above awarded by institutions in or outside Hong Kong from 2019 to 2021 may participate in the scheme. Participating enterprises have to employ the target graduates in Hong Kong according to Hong Kong laws, offer them a monthly salary of not less than HK\$18,000, and station them in the Mainland cities of the GBA to work and receive on-the-job training. The Government will pay the enterprises a monthly allowance of HK\$10,000 for each qualified graduate employed for up to 18 months.

Besides, the Government has introduced, under the Youth Development Fund, the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong

Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, with a view to encouraging Hong Kong young people to make optimal use of the innovative and entrepreneurial (I&E) bases in GBA and helping them develop their businesses in both Hong Kong and Mainland GBA cities. The Chief Executive has announced in her 2020 Policy Address that funding under the current-round of the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the GBA would be raised, so that funded NGOs would have more resources to support and strengthen youth start-ups. After increasing the funding amount, it is estimated that over \$100 million will be granted by the aforesaid funding scheme to over 10 NGOs to implement youth entrepreneurship projects, under which subsidies will be provided for more than 200 youth start-ups (involving over 800 young people) who intend to start or have already started their businesses in Hong Kong and/or Mainland GBA cities, while start-up support and incubation services will be rendered to about 4 000 young people. As for the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the GBA, it is estimated that about \$5 million will be granted to over 10 NGOs to organise short-term experiential programmes at I&E bases in Mainland GBA cities, benefiting nearly 700 young people.