

LCQ19: Provision of welfare facilities and services

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (October 30):

Question:

The Financial Secretary announced in this year's Budget the allocation of \$20 billion for the Government to purchase properties over some three years for the operation of welfare facilities and services, such as child care centres (CCCs), day care centres for the elderly, neighbourhood elderly centres, and on-site pre-school rehabilitation services. On the other hand, the Government has, in accordance with the recommendations in the Final Report of the Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services, formulated a planning ratio for aided CCC places (i.e. 103 places for children aged below three per 20 000 persons). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective current numbers of CCCs, day care centres for the elderly, neighbourhood elderly centres, district elderly community centres, and on-site pre-school rehabilitation service units in the territory, as well as the respective numbers and utilisation rates of service places provided by them, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district;

(2) given that the Government plans to purchase properties for providing at least one additional CCC in each DC district, whether this number is set according to the aforesaid planning ratio; and

(3) regarding the three DC districts of Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City respectively,

(a) of the current (i) number of service places, (ii) manpower and (iii) utilisation rates in respect of each subsidised child care service in the district, and set out in a table the relevant details by name of organisation providing the service;

(b) whether it has assessed if the provision of one additional CCC in the district can meet the demand of local residents for the relevant services; of the indicators (such as utilisation rates) adopted for determining whether child care services in the district are adequate; and

(c) whether it will consider further increasing the number of service places and manpower for subsidised child care services in the district, so as to alleviate the pressure on dual-income parents in taking care of their children; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

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

(1) The number of aided day child care centres (CCCs) (including standalone CCCs and CCCs attached to kindergartens (KGs)), subsidised day care centres/units for the elderly, subvented neighbourhood elderly centres and subvented district elderly community centres in the territory, their number of service places and average utilisation rate by District Council (DC) district are set out in Annex 1.

Regarding on-site pre-school rehabilitation services (OPRS), the number of service places has been increased to 7 074 in October 2019, with 60 service teams (equivalent to 70 standard service teams in size) operated by 21 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide on-site services for children with special needs studying in 852 KGs/KG-cum-CCCs. The overall service utilisation rate is 93%. Since OPRS are allocated by operator, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) does not have information on the number of service places or utilisation rate broken down by DC district.

(2) The Government announced in the 2019-20 Budget that \$20 billion will be allocated to purchase properties over some three years for accommodating welfare facilities, including CCCs, to help meet the acute shortfall of premises.

Among the new services proposed to be set up in the premises acquired through the purchase exercise, the Government has included the provision of at least one additional CCC in each district. The proposal is made having regard to factors such as new day services which are in acute demand, district profiles, preliminary assessment of the availability of suitable premises, and the number of planned projects of welfare facilities in specific districts, etc.

(3)(a), (b) and (c) To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, the SWD provides subvention to NGOs to run a variety of child care services for meeting the different needs of parents and the children. In 2018-19, the number of service places, average utilisation rate and manpower of aided CCCs, extended hours service, occasional child care service and the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) in the Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City districts are set out in Annex 2. As regards the name of the organisations providing the above services, details can be found in the SWD's website

(www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_listofserv/id_childcares/).

To further enhance day child care services, apart from the proposal of purchasing suitable premises for the provision of one CCC in each of the Sham Shui Po, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City districts as pointed out above, the Government has also reserved premises for the provision of CCCs in development projects in the districts (for example, the proposed Joint-user Government Office Building (to be named as the Treasury Building) at the

junction of Tung Chau Street and Tonkin Street West in Cheung Sha Wan, a private housing development project on Cheung Shun Street and housing development projects in the Kowloon City district) to further increase subsidised child care service places in the districts with a view to meeting the keen service need.

In respect of manpower, as more knowledge and skills are required for taking care of young children, and parents' expectation for quality service provided by CCCs (including the care and training of children) has been increasing, the existing manning ratios of qualified child care workers are improved in aided day CCCs on top of meeting the minimum statutory requirement. With effect from September 2019, the manning ratios for Child Care Workers serving in aided day CCCs have been enhanced from 1:8 to 1:6 for children aged 0 to below two; and from 1:14 to 1:11 for children aged two to below three.

To enhance the service quality of the NSCCP, the SWD will provide additional provision to the operators to increase professional and supporting staff to strengthen the training for home-based child carers commencing from January 2020, and raise the level of incentive payment for home-based child carers to encourage more volunteers to serve as child carers.

The Government will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach and assess from time to time the community's demand for welfare services, identify suitable sites or premises for the provision of relevant facilities for meeting the needs of the localities or the community at large for welfare services.