

LCQ20: Influenza vaccination services

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (April 21):

Question:

Under the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) (the free scheme), a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Outreach Team or an Outreach Team of the Department of Health (DH) will go to those primary schools, as well as kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres (collectively referred to as KGs/CCCs) participating in the scheme to administer influenza vaccines to schoolchildren free of charge. The participating primary schools are provided with the vaccines by the DH, but the vaccines for the participating KGs/CCCs need to be arranged by the participating doctors themselves. Schools not participating in the free scheme may participate in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) (the charge-allowable scheme) so as to arrange school outreach vaccination services for their students, and the Government will provide a subsidy of \$240 per dose of vaccine. On the other hand, the findings of a survey conducted at the end of last year have shown that 20 per cent of the early childhood educators surveyed indicated that last year, the KGs/CCCs in which they taught had participated in the free scheme, but had been unable to arrange for their schoolchildren to receive influenza vaccination due to the doctors being unable to procure the vaccines or the impact of class suspension. Moreover, 85 per cent of the respondents considered that the non-provision of vaccines by the DH to KGs/CCCs had increased the workload of the teaching staff in those schools. Regarding influenza vaccination services, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information in each of the past two school years:

- (i) the number of schools participating in the free scheme,
- (ii) the number of schools participating in the charge-allowable scheme,
- (iii) among the schools mentioned in (i), the respective numbers of those that opted for the matching of Outreach Teams by the DH, that were successfully matched with Outreach Teams by the DH, and selected doctors themselves,
- (iv) among the schools mentioned in (i) and (ii), the number of those that eventually did not arrange for their students to receive vaccination, and
- (v) the number of schoolchildren who received influenza vaccination under the two schemes;

of a breakdown of such figures by school type (i.e. primary school and KG/CCC);

(2) of the number of doses of influenza vaccines procured by the Government for the various vaccination programmes and the values of the relevant contracts in each of the past two school years; among such vaccines, the

number of doses used in the free scheme;

(3) as the Government indicated in October last year that it would additionally supply in phases 100 000 doses of influenza vaccines to PPP Outreach Teams and doctors participating in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme in need, of the number of doses of such vaccines supplied to those doctors providing outreach vaccination services to schoolchildren in KGs/CCCs, with a breakdown by vaccine type (i.e. inactivated vaccine and live attenuated nasal vaccine); and

(4) as some principals of KGs/CCCs have relayed to me that since the Government does not provide influenza vaccines to KGs/CCCs participating in the free scheme, such schools need to shoulder a substantial amount of additional administrative work (e.g. assisting the doctors in ordering vaccines, and responding to parents' enquiries about the safety of the vaccines after the occurrence of cases in South Korea and Taiwan in which some residents died soon after receiving influenza vaccination), of the support provided in this respect to the KGs/CCCs by the DH and the Education Bureau; whether the Government will consider afresh providing vaccines to those KGs/CCCs participating in the free scheme from the 2021-2022 school year onwards; if so, whether the Government intends to provide inactivated vaccines or live attenuated nasal vaccines; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that seasonal influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged six months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive influenza vaccination for personal protection. The Government has all along been encouraging members of the public to receive vaccination as early as possible. In the 2020/21 season, free or subsidised influenza vaccination is provided for eligible groups under the Government Vaccination Programme, the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) and the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) (School Outreach (Free of Charge)). To increase the influenza vaccination uptake rate of schoolchildren and to support schools in organising outreach vaccination services, apart from the continued provision of free outreach vaccination services at primary schools, outreach services to kindergartens/kindergarten-cum-child care centres/child care centres (collectively referred to as KGs/CCCs) have been regularised in the 2020/21 season. Schools not participating in the School Outreach (Free of Charge) may arrange outreach vaccination services through the VSS School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) (School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed)).

In consultation with the Department of Health (DH), our reply to various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung is as follows:

(1) The numbers of schools which participated in the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) and organised outreach

vaccination activities in the 2019/20 and the 2020/21 seasons are set out below:

	2019/20 season		2020/21 season (as at April 6, 2021)	
	Primary schools	KGs/ CCCs	Primary schools	KGs/ CCCs
(i) Number of schools which participated in the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and organised outreach vaccination activities	430	701	438	697
(a) Number of schools with outreach vaccination activities provided by Government Outreach Teams	18	24	12	23
(b) Number of schools with outreach vaccination activities provided by Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Outreach Teams	412	677	426	674
(c) Number of schoolchildren receiving influenza vaccination	195 600	82 300	167 000	67 700
(ii) Number of schools which participated in the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) and organised outreach vaccination activities	114#	55##	120*	80**
(a) Number of persons receiving influenza vaccination (including schoolchildren and other eligible groups under the VSS)	43 900	10 900	41 000	13 300

There are another 53 primary schools participating in both the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed).

There are another 62 KGs/CCCs participating in both the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed).

* There are another 66 primary schools participating in both the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed).

** There are another 85 KGs/CCCs participating in both the School Outreach (Free of Charge) and the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed).

Schools participating in the School Outreach (Free of Charge) may opt for self-selection of outreach vaccination teams or require matching by the DH. The breakdown of the figures in the 2019/20 and the 2020/21 seasons is

set out below:

	2019/20 season		2020/21 season (as at April 6, 2021)	
	Primary schools	KGs/ CCCs	Primary schools	KGs/ CCCs
Number of schools with outreach vaccination activities provided by PPP Outreach Teams	412	677	426	674
(a) Self-selection of outreach vaccination teams	198	401	319	605
(b) Matching by the DH	214	276	107	69

Schools participating in the School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed) are required to arrange their outreach vaccination teams.

(2) The number of doses of inactivated influenza vaccine (unless otherwise stated) procured by the Government for the influenza vaccination programmes mentioned above and the contract amount in the past two seasons are set out below:

Season	Number of doses	Amount (\$ million)
2019/20 (Actual)	815 000*	40.8
2020/21 (Estimate)	947 000#	93.0

* Including 1 700 doses of nasal spray live attenuated influenza vaccines (LAIV).

Including 69 000 doses of LAIV.

Among the influenza vaccines procured in the 2019/20 and the 2020/21 seasons, about 239 000 doses and 250 000 doses were respectively used in the School Outreach (Free of Charge).

(3) In view of the keen local demand and tight global supply of influenza vaccines when various influenza vaccination programmes were rolled out in the 2020/21 season, the Government, having reviewed the demand after the launch of various influenza vaccination programmes, announced on October 22, 2020 that it would procure additional vaccines and supply additional 100 000 doses in phases to PPP Outreach Teams and doctors participating in the VSS in need, so as to facilitate early vaccination of high risk groups and help relieve the tight supply in the private healthcare sector. Among the additional supply of vaccines, about 11 200 doses of LAIV were supplied to doctors

providing outreach vaccination services for schoolchildren in KGs/CCCs.

(4) The School Outreach (Free of Charge) is primarily co-ordinated by the DH. Under the 2020/21 School Outreach (Free of Charge) – KGs/CCCs, vaccines are procured by the doctors of the PPP Outreach Teams matched to the participating schools, instead of the schools themselves. Besides, doctors of the Outreach Teams are responsible for answering parents' enquiries about influenza vaccination. In addition, the DH has also set up a telephone line for parents to enquire about matters in relation to influenza vaccination.

Having reviewed the arrangements for the 2020/21 School Outreach (Free of Charge) – KGs/CCCs, the DH has drawn up the arrangements for the 2021/22 season under which influenza vaccines will be provided by the DH to the participating KGs/CCCs. Depending on the supply, the DH will provide inactivated influenza vaccines and LAIV for selection by KGs/CCCs and doctors of the PPP Outreach Teams.