

LCQ21: Child Assessment Service

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Kwok Ka-ki and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

The Child Assessment Service under the Department of Health (DH) provides professional assessments for and follow-up services needed by children who are under 12 years of age with developmental disorders or behavioural problems. Seven Child Assessment Centres (CACs) under DH provide such services. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the (i) number of new cases, (ii) attendance, and (iii) average, longest and shortest waiting time of new cases in respect of each CAC in each of the past five years;

(2) of the (i) services provided and (ii) average daily number of cases under each service handled last year by each CAC; and

(3) whether the services provided by the various CACs have been affected by the recent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (commonly known as "the Wuhan pneumonia") epidemic; if so, of the details (including the numbers of children and cases affected); whether DH has assessed the impacts of the delay in receiving assessments on the affected children in terms of their living and learning; whether DH will expedite handling the backlog of cases, upon the full resumption of services at various CACs, by allocating additional resources, extending the service hours at CACs and deploying additional manpower; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) and (2) In consultation with the Department of Health (DH), reply of various parts of the question is as follows:

The Child Assessment Service (CAS) under DH, which has seven Child Assessment Centres (CACs) in Hong Kong, provides comprehensive assessments and diagnosis to children under 12 years of age who are suspected to have developmental problems. After assessment, follow-up plans will be formulated according to the individual needs of children. Children will be referred to other appropriate service providers identified for training and education support. Pending assessment and rehabilitation services, the CAS will provide interim support to the children's parents, with a view to support the development and growth of the children. All CACs provide similar service.

The number of newly referred cases received by the CAS in the past five

years are as follows:

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of new cases	9 872	10 188	10 438	10 466	9 799

The attendance at the seven CACs under the CAS in the past five years is as follows:

Year CAC	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Central Kowloon CAC	6 476	5 666	5 489	5 632	5 492
Ha Kwai Chung CAC	7 033	7 373	7 209	6 413	5 827
Pamela Youde CAC (Kwun Tong)	7 243	7 120	7 187	7 315	6 577
Pamela Youde CAC (Sha Tin)	7 152	7 933	8 262	8 493	7 535
Fanling CAC	4 055	3 882	3 892	4 182	4 875
Tuen Mun CAC	5 465	5 194	5 384	5 610	5 186
Ngau Tau Kok CAC*	0	0	0	1 682	2 513
Total:	37 424	37 168	37 423	39 327	38 005

* Ngau Tau Kok CAC commenced operation from January 2018.

The CAS has adopted a triage system to ensure that children with urgent and more serious conditions are accorded with higher priority in assessment with a view to enhancing service efficiency. The actual waiting time depends on the complexity and conditions of individual cases. DH does not maintain statistics on the average, the longest or the shortest waiting time for assessment of new cases as well as the average daily caseload of individual centre.

(3) Noting the increasing demands for the services provided by the CAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with effective infection control measures put in place, the CAS has all along maintained assessment service in order to provide timely assessment to the children with suspected developmental problems, so as to facilitate them to obtain support service like training and education support at the earliest possible time. To reduce client flow and minimise social contact, the CAS has suspended interim support to parents, such as seminars, workshops and practical training, since February 2020. When the pandemic is eased, CAS will consider gradually resuming relevant activities after assessing the risk and infection control measures.