

## LCQ22: Preventing youths from being addicted to video game playing

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (June 14):

Question:

A survey has pointed out that more than 30 per cent of the youths spend at least three hours per day on playing video games (commonly known as "video gaming"). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of requests for assistance received by the authorities in connection with youths' video gaming addiction in each of the past five years, together with a breakdown by age group (i.e. aged under 12, between 12 and 17, and between 18 and 25) and the number of hours spent on video gaming daily (i.e. less than three hours, three to five hours, and more than five hours) of the youths concerned;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of youth suicide cases in connection with issues arising from video gaming in each of the past five years; whether the authorities have currently put in place specific measures to support parents whose children are addicted to video gaming; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as it has been reported that the World Health Organization classified "gaming disorder" as a mental disease in 2019, whether the authorities will draw reference from the practices in other regions to roll out measures to prevent youths from being addicted to video gaming, such as requiring real-name registration for video game accounts, and capping the duration for gaming; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given that there are views that the existing "Healthy School Policy" implemented by the authorities focuses on the anti-drug element, whether the authorities will include the prevention of video gaming addiction in the policy, and roll out relevant preventive education, guidance and support services; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Hospital Authority (HA), relevant bureaux and departments, the consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Pui-leung is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB), the Department of Health (DH), the HA and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) do not maintain statistics on requests for assistance in connection with youth's video gaming addiction.

(2) The EDB, the DH, the Hong Kong Police Force and the HA have not compiled statistics on suicide cases in connection with video gaming.

Concerning support for parents, the EDB, together with the Hong Kong Education City and the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, have jointly organised a series of parent seminars each year, inviting experts and social workers to brief parents on parenting for the e-Generation, information literacy, youth online culture, online risks and tips for handling internet addiction of children, and ways for protecting children from cyber-bullying. In addition, videos and articles on how to help children use electronic products properly and how to handle internet addiction of children are available on the one-stop parent education website "Smart Parent Net" ([www.parent.edu.hk/en/home](http://www.parent.edu.hk/en/home)) launched by the EDB for parents' reference.

(3) Upon consultation with relevant bureaux, relevant bureaux advised that they have at present no plan on regulating video games with the aim of preventing video gaming addiction.

Although problems arising from video gaming addiction is a concern for the community, its causes and impacts (including those on local adolescents and adults) require further research. At present, the medical sector has not yet reached a broad consensus on the methods on effective diagnosis, treatment or prevention of "gaming disorder". In comparison, at this stage, the impacts of addiction to smoking or alcohol on public health and the healthcare system are, from a public health perspective, problems that require a higher priority in handling and could be effectively prevented. The Government will continue to monitor the impacts caused by video gaming addiction at the public health level.

As for cases of severe mental disorders caused by video gaming addiction, patients can receive the HA's existing services in psychiatric treatment and support. The HA does not maintain statistics on the number of psychiatric patients in connection with video gaming addiction.

In response to the problem of addiction of minors to online games, the DH set up the Advisory Group on Health Effects of Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products (Advisory Group) in 2013, comprising representatives from the EDB, the SWD, the DH, the social welfare sector, and the relevant Colleges of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, etc. The Advisory Group published the Report of Advisory Group on Health Effects of Use of Internet and Electronic Screen Products (the Report) in 2014, with recommendations for children, adolescents, parents and teachers on the healthy use of the internet and electronic screen products. The Report has been uploaded onto the website of the DH.

The DH has also produced a set of four modules of recommendations for parents, teachers, and primary and secondary school students respectively and set up a designated website as a convenient platform for members of the public to obtain relevant health information. Contents of the website include excessive use of the internet and healthy use of electronic screen products. The Adolescent Health Programme provided by the DH's Student Health Service promotes the psychosocial health of adolescents in secondary schools through

outreaching activities, which include topics and seminars targeting students and parents on the healthy use of the internet and electronic screen products.

(4) The objective of the Healthy School Policy (HSP) is to help students reach a state of physical, mental and social well-being. The main focus is to help students develop a healthy lifestyle, positive attitude and values, acquire practical life skills and skills to resist temptation, etc. Schools may formulate a school-based HSP in the light of their own situation and students' needs to foster a healthy school environment conducive to the healthy development of students.

The EDB provides the Information Literacy for Hong Kong Students learning framework and information kits on e-learning for schools, as well as professional development programmes for teachers to cultivate students' ability and attitude to use information and communication technology effectively and ethically. The EDB also co-operates with other Government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to enhance students' information literacy through student activities and competitions, and has commissioned an NGO to set up a telephone hotline to provide individual support for parents, teachers and students in need. The 2021 Policy Address proposes to enhance the media and information literacy of teachers and students, and optimise the use of the Quality Education Fund to support schools in promoting related education. The EDB also encourages schools to incorporate programmes and organise activities with themes such as "Internet Addiction" and "Prevention of Internet Pitfalls" as appropriate, to promote the use of the internet in a proper and safe manner, as well as enhance students' awareness of cyber crimes. To help students develop habits on using the internet and electronic products properly, teachers should share the negative impacts on addiction to internet and using electronic products with students to encourage reflection and solve problems in a collaborative manner. Furthermore, schools are staffed with professionals, including guidance personnel, school social workers and school-based educational psychologists to provide students in need (including those who are addicted to online games) with necessary support and referral services.