

LCQ3: Resettlement arrangements for residents in residential care homes for elderly in Dills Corner Garden

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (April 22):

Question:

To take forward the Kwu Tung North New Development Area project, the Government will clear, by two phases, the 15 private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) in Dills Corner Garden (DCG), and will construct on a nearby site a purpose-built multi-welfare services complex with seven contract RCHEs to rehouse the eligible residents affected by the clearance. According to the Government, as it is expected that the RCHEs concerned will not be commissioned until 2023, the Government will make transitional arrangements for the affected residents, and will establish an inter-departmental working group for maintaining close liaison with the operators of all RCHEs in DCG, in the hope that there will be "no time gap" between the clearance and resettlement. It has been reported that the first-phase clearance will commence in the second quarter of this year, affecting a total of around 140 residents in four RCHEs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the specific measures in place to achieve the aforesaid "no time gap" objective;

(2) of the latest progress of the transitional arrangements made for the residents affected by the first-phase clearance, including the number of transitional residential places and, among them, the respective numbers of EA1 and EA2 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme; whether it has examined if such places meet the care needs of the residents concerned; given the rampant Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic at present, whether it will examine postponing the first-phase clearance to avoid the residents being exposed to greater infection risks caused by their relocation;

(3) when it will conduct registration for the residents affected by the two phases of clearance in order to confirm their eligibility for admission to the new contract RCHEs;

(4) of the number of meetings held by the aforesaid working group to date, and the date of the last meeting held; the plans of the working group on enhancing its coordination with the operators of the various RCHEs in DCG; and

(5) whether it will examine awarding the contracts for operating the new RCHEs through restricted tendering under which only the operators of all

RCHEs in DCG are invited to bid for the contracts, so as to maximise the number of affected residents who, upon moving into the new RCHEs, will continue to be taken care of by the existing RCHE staff with whom they are familiar?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Development Bureau, my reply to the Member's question is as follows:

The Dills Corner Garden (DCG) will be cleared in two phases. The first phase of clearance affecting four residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) will take place in end-June 2020. The second phase affecting the remaining RCHEs will tentatively be conducted in 2023. Having regard to the wish of some affected elderly residents to be accommodated in the vicinity of DCG, the Government commenced the construction of a new Multi-welfare Services Complex (the Complex) in the neighbouring Area 29 in December 2019. The Complex, which is expected to commence operation before the second phase clearance in 2023, will comprise seven contract RCHEs. Five of these RCHEs providing around 1 250 places (including both subsidised and non-subsidised places) will be made available to elderly residents of existing RCHEs in DCG, which are sufficient to accommodate the total of around 900 existing residents.

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has arranged registration for all elderly residents of RCHEs affected by the first phase clearance on March 17, 2020. A total of 150 residents (including two residents of EA2 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS)) were confirmed to be eligible for moving into the contract RCHEs after the commissioning of the Complex.

The Government understands that residents affected by first phase clearance generally wish to continue living in DCG during the transitional period (i.e. before the commissioning of the Complex). In this connection, the Government is converting Block 3, which is not affected by first phase clearance, to provide additional residential care places. Along with the remaining vacant places in DCG, over 150 residential care places (including those under EBPS) will be available which is sufficient to accommodate all elderly residents affected by first phase clearance.

The Government will closely monitor the epidemic situation of COVID-19 and maintain close liaison with RCHE operators concerned with a view to preparing for first phase clearance in end-June 2020, including taking precautionary measures to protect the affected elderly residents.

An inter-departmental working group was set up by the Government in 2014 on the clearance of DCG. The working group convened a total of seven meetings with the operators concerned. At the 7th meeting held on October 3, 2019, the Government explained to the operators arrangements of the clearance and assistance to be provided to the affected residents. SWD staff have contacted

residents affected by the first phase clearance to explain the relocation arrangements and Government's assistance multiple times. On October 23, 2019, SWD staff delivered notification letters in person to affected residents, who were subsequently provided with follow-up assistance by social workers to address their needs. On March 17, 2020, when conducting registration for the affected residents, SWD staff delivered notification letters in person and explained again the relocation arrangements. SWD has also set up an enquiry hotline since October 2019 for affected elderly residents and their families to make enquiries on clearance related matters.

Apart from the inter-departmental working group meetings, representatives of government departments have discussed multiple times with the operators on issues of their concern and the relocation arrangements for residents affected by the first phase clearance. On January 22, 2020, representatives of government departments attended a case conference with Legislative Council (LegCo) members to discuss the relocation arrangements and Government's assistance. On March 6, 2020, representatives of government departments met with the RCHE operators and LegCo members to follow up on the Government's assistance. The Government calls on all operators to work with the interests of elderly residents in mind, and secure the relocation arrangements for affected residents as soon as possible through joint efforts.

The seven contract RCHEs in the Complex are not intended for lease. In line with the established policies and with a view to ensuring the service quality of all contract RCHEs, the Government will invite service providers to bid for service contracts of the RCHEs concerned through open tender in accordance with the "fair and impartial" principle, so as to select the tenderers that can provide the best services for the elderly residents. All eligible private organisations and non-governmental organisations, including the existing DCG operators, can participate in the open tender.

The Government will incorporate in the tender assessment specific criteria on the bidder's plan for handling and intake of elderly residents and staff of existing RCHEs in DCG, so as to ensure that appropriate arrangements will be made for the elderly residents and staff.