

## LCQ7: Mental health services

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (July 14):

Question:

The Chief Executive announced in the 2020 Policy Address that an additional \$300 million would be earmarked under the Beat Drugs Fund to provide targeted and sustained support for persons with mental health needs. The Secretary for Food and Health indicated in January this year that the Advisory Committee on Mental Health (the Committee) was actively carrying out preparatory work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the up-to-date number of meetings held by the Committee on the preparatory work, and the progress made;

(2) whether the Committee has formulated the relevant support initiatives; if so, of the details of each initiative (including the name, content, service provider(s), service targets, expected number of beneficiaries, estimated expenditure and manpower involved, implementation timetable, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness); if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it has estimated the current number of people and percentage of the population in Hong Kong in need of the mental health services provided by the public healthcare system and, among them, the number of those who are being/have been provided with such services by the public healthcare system, together with a breakdown by the age group to which they belong; of the types of such services, as well as the current quotas and the number of persons waiting for them; if it has not estimated, of the reasons for that, and whether it will make the relevant estimation; and

(4) whether it will proactively seek out persons in the community who are in need of mental health services but have not sought assistance, so as to provide them with appropriate support as early as possible; if so, of the details (including the manpower involved); if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Hospital Authority (HA), I set out my reply to the question raised by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan as follows:

(1), (2) and (4) Regarding the additional \$300 million reserved under the Beat Drugs Fund for supporting new mental health initiatives, the Advisory

Committee on Mental Health (ACMH) and its Project Panel have already held three meetings to discuss the implementation arrangements for the scheme. The ACMH has agreed to conduct the scheme in two phases, and has determined the priority areas for the first phase.

Projects to be considered in the first phase are expected to fall into three priority areas, namely training of lay leaders to establish a community network on mental health support; support for carers; and information technology support for the elderly. Apart from these priority projects, other mental health-related projects that are innovative and effective may also be considered under the scheme. Based on the current progress of the preparatory work, the ACMH plans to invite project proposals from relevant organisations in the third quarter of 2021. Such proposals should include the name, content, target service users, estimated number of beneficiaries, expenditures and manpower involved, implementation timetable, etc. of individual projects. The Project Panel will assess the proposals and make recommendations for the ACMH's approval. Like other funded projects, organisations implementing the approved projects will be required to submit regular progress reports, annual audit reports and evaluation reports for the ACMH to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the projects.

When assessing the proposals submitted by organisations, the Project Panel will take into consideration different aspects, including the coverage of target service users, the effectiveness of the proposed support, whether there will be dissemination of messages that promote help-seeking and elements that facilitate those in need to seek help proactively, etc. Details of the projects will be subject to the content of individual proposals. The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) will deploy the existing manpower resources of the ACMH Secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the projects.

The ACMH tentatively plans to embark on the preparation for the second phase of the scheme within 2022 after gaining experience from the first phase implementation.

(3) In 2020-21, the number of psychiatric patients treated by the HA (including in-patients and patients at specialist out-patient (SOP) clinics and day hospitals) with breakdown by age groups is tabulated below:

| Age group         | No. of psychiatric patients treated in 2020-21 |
|-------------------|--|
| Below 18          | 40 100   |
| Between 18 and 64 | 164 900  |
| 65 or above       | 70 800   |
| Total:            | 275 800  |

Note:

1. Referring to age as at June 30 of the year.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

In 2020-21, the numbers of new case bookings triaged by the HA as Priority 1 (urgent), Priority 2 (semi-urgent) and Routine (stable) cases and their respective median waiting time with breakdown by psychiatric SOP services are tabulated below:

| Psychiatric SOP services in 2020-21          | Priority 1                  |                            | Priority 2                  |                            | Routine                     |                            |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | Number of new case bookings | Median waiting time (week) | Number of new case bookings | Median waiting time (week) | Number of new case bookings | Median waiting time (week) |
| Child and adolescent psychiatric SOP service | 447                         | 1                          | 948                         | 3                          | 9 674                       | 64                         |
| Adult psychiatric SOP service                | 2 191                       | 1                          | 7 288                       | 3                          | 18 213                      | 15                         |
| Psychogeriatric SOP service                  | 739                         | <1                         | 2 401                       | 5                          | 5 524                       | 40                         |

The FHB commissioned the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2019 to conduct three territory-wide mental health prevalence surveys covering children, adolescents and elderly persons respectively, with a view to finding out the prevalence and mental health needs of different age groups. The surveys are expected to be completed within 2022. The FHB is also planning for the conduct of a mental health prevalence survey on adults at the next stage. The FHB expects that the data collected in the surveys will provide a clearer picture on the estimated number of persons in need of mental health services, thus helping the Government determine the directions for the long-term development of relevant services.