

LCQ8: Manpower situation of the elderly service sector

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (April 3):

Question:

Regarding the manpower situation of the elderly service sector, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the respective numbers of care workers and health workers currently employed by (i) subvented residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and (ii) private RCHEs in Hong Kong;

(2) of the number of workers imported in each of the past two years by the elderly service sector under the Supplementary Labour Scheme, and the current (i) median monthly wage and (ii) average weekly working hours of such kind of workers;

(3) whether it knows the numbers of (a) certificate courses on care workers training and (b) certificate courses on health workers training organised respectively by the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council in the past two years, and set out the following information on such courses: (i) title, (ii) the type to which the course belonged, (iii) the professional field to which the course belonged (e.g. health care and residential care), (iv) mode of study, (v) duration of training, (vi) originally estimated and actual numbers of enrolled trainees, (vii) number of graduates, and (viii) percentage of trainees employed by the elderly service sector upon graduation; and

(4) given that the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has implemented the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services since July 2015 to encourage young persons to join the elderly service sector, of (i) the quota take-up and dropout rates of the Scheme so far, and (ii) among the participants in each intake of the Scheme, the number of those who have completed the two-year part-time course under the Scheme; whether SWD will review and improve the remuneration package of the participants to increase the attractiveness of the Scheme?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has not conducted any systematic statistical analysis on the information requested, and is therefore not able

to provide it.

(2) In 2017 and 2018, employers of the elderly care service sector were approved to import 1 510 and 1 409 care workers respectively in respect of their applications under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS). According to the requirements under SLS, employers should pay wages to imported workers at a level no less than the relevant median monthly wage as compiled by the Census and Statistics Department for SLS. The median monthly wage currently applicable to the imported care workers is \$13,000 (nine hours of work (excluding meal break) per working day). The Labour Department has no information on the average weekly working hours of imported care workers.

(3) Information on vocational education and training courses relating to the elderly service sector (including certificates in care worker, certificates in health worker and relevant courses) organised by the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council in the past two years is at Annex.

(4) SWD launched the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services (the Navigation Scheme) in July 2015, providing a total of 1 000 training places in phases starting from 2015-16 to encourage young people to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. As at end-December 2018, a total of 1 018 trainees had been recruited by service operators of the Navigation Scheme in phases. Amongst them, 314 trainees had graduated, 287 were still participating in the scheme, while 417 had left. In 2019-20, service operators will continue to recruit trainees having regard to their respective programme arrangements. It is expected that an additional 200 training places will be provided.

The Government will continue to provide a total of 1 200 training places under the Navigation Scheme in the five years starting from 2020-21, and will enhance the existing scheme with a view to attracting more young people to enroll and further encouraging them to join the elderly and rehabilitation care services. Enhanced measures include enlarging the age range of trainees, reducing the weekly working hours of the trainees to enable them to cope with the work of the course more effectively, and increasing the salary of the trainees, etc, so as to attract more young people to join the social welfare care sector.