

# LCQ16: Supporting the admission of elderly people with infectious diseases to residential care homes for the elderly

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (January 31):

Question:

It has been reported that an elderly person in his seventies was infected with *Candida auris* in a public hospital, and the hospital concerned subsequently discharged the patient on the grounds that the patient did not pose a risk to public health. However, as the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) required residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) to adopt infection control precautions, it was difficult for the patient to find a suitable RCHE to reside, and even when some RCHEs were willing to accept the patient, the RCHEs had to charge additional fees to meet the CHP's requirements (e.g. arranging a separate room to accommodate the patient). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the total number of separate beds available in public RCHEs throughout the territory;

(2) of the number of public RCHEs which received subsidies from the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for the purchase of anti-epidemic mobile cabins during the COVID-19 epidemic, and whether all such cabins have been retained to date; if so, of the number of such cabins;

(3) of the circumstances, other than having infectious diseases, under which public RCHEs will require elderly residents to undergo isolation;

(4) of the current average waiting time for applications for admission to public RCHEs, and the average waiting time for applicants who are required to undergo isolation;

(5) whether the SWD will consider arranging for public RCHEs to prioritise the admission of elderly people with infectious diseases, so that these elderly people can receive appropriate care as early as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) whether the SWD will consider subsidising individual public RCHEs to set up additional anti-epidemic mobile cabins, so as to support them in admitting elderly people with infectious diseases; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) as it is learnt that there have been an increasing number of outbreaks of multidrug-resistant fungal/bacterial infections in public hospitals, whether the SWD will consider providing assistance to those elderly people who need to be admitted to RCHEs and are confirmed patients of these infections, such as providing a certain amount of subsidy directly to the elderly people who have contracted bacterial infections in public hospitals, so as to assist them in finding suitable RCHEs to reside; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

I reply to the respective parts of the question as follows:

(1) and (3) As at end-December 2023, there were 822 residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) across the territory (including 813 RCHEs licensed under the Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance (Cap. 459) and nine scheduled nursing homes listed under the Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance (Cap. 633)). These RCHEs are operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private organisations, providing about 36 500 subsidised and 42 500 non-subsidised residential care service places. Among these RCHEs, subsidised services are provided by 126 subvented homes, 49 contract homes, 197 private homes participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme, five self-funding homes participating in the Nursing Home Place Purchase Scheme (among the aforementioned homes, 181 homes also participate in the Residential Care Service Voucher (RCSV) Scheme for the Elderly), and 21 private or self-funding homes participating in the RCSV Scheme only. In accordance with the agreements of subsidised services, all these homes must provide shared accommodation for residents.

As for isolation measures, the Code of Practice for Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) stipulates that all RCHEs must be equipped with proper isolation facilities as follows: a designated isolation room must be provided for every 50 places; if there are more than 50 places, an additional isolation room/facility must be provided for every additional 50 places (or fewer); for RCHEs with 200 places or more, four isolation rooms/facilities (including at least one designated isolation room) must be provided. The designated isolation room/facility enables RCHEs to implement isolation measures for residents in need (including those who are sick or infected/suspected of being infected with communicable diseases) to prevent the spread of communicable diseases and protect residents, staff and visitors.

(2), (6) and (7) To support RCHEs in the prevention and control of Multi-Drug Resistant Organisms (MDROs) and strengthen the protective measures taken by RCHE staff in rendering care to infected residents, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides subsidies to RCHEs taking care of infected residents or residents who are carriers of specific types of MDROs (including *Candida auris*). These RCHEs may purchase personalised items for infected residents (e.g. thermometers, blood pressure monitors, pillowcases, bed sheets, etc.) and such a one-off subsidy is capped at \$900 per infected

resident. The RCHEs may also purchase personal protective equipment and disinfection supplies for staff and such a monthly subsidy is capped at \$5,750 per infected resident. The subsidies are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and will be provided until the RCHEs receive confirmation from the Hospital Authority or the Centre for Health Protection that the residents concerned are no longer carriers of MDROs. In addition, the SWD and the Department of Health organise training courses to brief RCHE staff on the latest information on infection prevention and control to enhance RCHEs' infection control capability.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SWD collaborated with the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (HKJCCT) to fund some 290 RCHEs and 130 residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) to acquire about 540 and 170 anti-pandemic mobile cabins (mobile cabins) respectively. In terms of dimensions and space, a mobile cabin is generally smaller than a single room in an RCHE. The mobile cabin does not have sufficient space and facilities for RCHE staff to provide daily care services to residents who are bedridden and have more nursing needs. The mobile cabin hence cannot be a substitute for the isolation room. During the pandemic, the mobile cabins were only used for temporary isolation of confirmed cases or residents identified as close contacts, or for short stay during visits to residents. The SWD does not have information on the number of mobile cabins retained by residential care homes, nor any plan to provide more mobile cabins.

To assist RCHEs and RCHDs in improving long-term ventilation conditions, the HKJCCT is funding eligible private homes (including contract homes operated by private organisations) and self-financing homes in need through the Jockey Club Facilities Enhancement Scheme for Pandemic Preparedness at Residential Care Homes, to carry out improvement works on ventilation equipment and systems based on the recommendations of the SWD, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, and the Buildings Department following joint on-site inspections of the homes. In addition, subvented homes may use the Lump Sum Grant, the Lump Sum Grant Reserve, or apply for the Lotteries Fund to carry out relevant improvement works according to actual needs. Contract homes operated by NGOs may apply to the Lotteries Fund or use the service fee paid by the Government to the operating organisations to carry out relevant improvement works.

(4) As at end-December 2023, the average waiting time for subsidised residential care services for the elderly is as follows:

	Average waiting time (in months) (average waiting time of elderly persons admitted in the past three months) (Note 1)
Subsidised nursing home place	11
Subsidised care-and-attention place (Note 2)	9

Note 1: Average number of months from waitlisting on the central waiting list to admission for normal cases admitted to subsidised places in the past three months.

Note 2: Elderly persons using the RCSV subsidised by the Government are admitted to RCHes participating in the RCSV Scheme without waiting.

As mentioned above, isolation rooms are infection control facilities of respective RCHes for residents in need (including those who are sick or infected/suspected of being infected with communicable diseases) and are not allotted through waitlisting. The SWD does not have information on the residents' waiting time for isolation room in RCHes.

(5) Allocation of subsidised residential care services for the elderly is based on the assessment result, service choice and waitlisting order of applicants under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services and the Central Waiting List for Subsidised Long Term Care Services.

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## **Lockhart Road Sports Centre to be closed early at 6pm on February 9**

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 31) that all facilities and counter services of Lockhart Road Sports Centre in Wan Chai District will be closed early at 6pm on February 9 for repairing works of the electricity supply system at Lockhart Road Municipal Services Building. During the closure period, the public may use the similar facilities of Harbour Road Sports Centre and Wong Nai Chung Sports Centre in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venue or contact venue staff directly.

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## **Appointments to new term of Committee on Taxi Service Quality**

The Government today (January 31) announced the appointments of non-official members to the Committee on Taxi Service Quality (CTSQ), including the reappointments of 17 non-official members and appointments of five new members, for a new term of three years with effect from February 1, 2024.

The Government has appointed Ms Susanna Shen Shuk-ching as the vice-chairman of the CTSQ, and has reappointed another 16 incumbent members, namely Mr Au Yeung Kan, Mr Chan Kam-hung, Miss Sonia Cheng Man-yee, Mr Choi Tak-kai, Mr Ho Chi-keung, Mr Andy Ko Siu-leong, Mr Lee Chun-keung, Ms Leung Kar-ming, Mr Aaron Ng Hoi-shan, Ms Katie Poon, Dr Ryan Wong Cheuk-pong, Mr Wong Po-keung, Ms Amy Wong Pui-shan, Mr Jeremy Young Chit-on, Mr Yum Tai-ping and Mr Peter Yung Kwok-ho.

The five new members are Ms Cally Chan Shan-shan, Mr Stanley Li Sai-wing, Mr Ng Kong-wai, Dr Tony Sze Nang-ngai and Mr Yiu Pak-leung.

A spokesman for the Transport Department said, "Coming from a diverse background, the appointed members have rich experience in their professions or sectors. We believe that they can offer valuable advice to the CTSQ."

The Government thanked the outgoing members, Mr Holden Chow Ho-ding, Ms Agnes Nardi Kar-wai, Dr Lilian Pun Cheng Shuk-ching, Mr Wong Yat-fung and Mr Yiu Si-wing for their contributions to the CTSQ.

The CTSQ serves as a multi-party platform to discuss strategies and measures to drive changes to enhance the service quality of some 18 000 existing taxis. It consists of non-official members from various sectors including the taxi trade, Legislative Council, District Councils, academia, the information technology sector, the Consumer Council, the Hong Kong Tourism Board and groups representing persons with disabilities.

The membership of the CTSQ, with effect from February 1, 2024, is as follows:

Chairman

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Commissioner for Transport

Vice-chairman

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Ms Susanna Shen Shuk-ching

Non-official members

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Mr Au Yeung Kan

Mr Chan Kam-hung

Ms Cally Chan Shan-shan

Miss Sonia Cheng Man-yee

Mr Choi Tak-kai

Mr Ho Chi-keung

Mr Andy Ko Siu-leong

Mr Lee Chun-keung

Ms Leung Kar-ming

Mr Stanley Li Sai-wing

Mr Aaron Ng Hoi-shan

Mr Ng Kong-wai

Ms Katie Poon

Dr Tony Sze Nang-ngai  
Dr Ryan Wong Cheuk-pong  
Mr Wong Po-keung  
Ms Amy Wong Pui-shan  
Mr Yiu Pak-leung  
Mr Jeremy Young Chit-on  
Mr Yum Tai-ping  
Mr Peter Yung Kwok-ho

Official member

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Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Logistics 12

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## **Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (January 31) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

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## **Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley**

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (January 31). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp

outside the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

## 2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Traffic along eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

## B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

### 1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

### 2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic diversions will be implemented from about 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;

- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

#### C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

#### D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.