

LCQ22: Special child care centres

Following is a question by the Hon Holden Chow and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

Special child care centres (SCCCs) subvented by the Social Welfare Department provide whole day training and care services for children with moderate to severe disabilities who are aged two to under six and have not yet started primary school education. It is learnt that as at November 30, 2023, the last application dates of selected cases for SCCC services in the Tuen Mun District were February and March 2021, representing a longer waiting time as compared to most districts. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the average waiting time, number of service places and number of persons waitlisted for SCCC services in each of the 18 districts across the territory in each of the past five years (set out in a table);

(2) of (i) the number of persons waitlisted for SCCC services in each of the 18 districts across the territory who received cross-district services, and (ii) the number of persons waitlisted for SCCC services in the Tuen Mun District who received services in other districts, in each of the past five years (set out in a table);

(3) whether it has plans to shorten the waiting time of persons waitlisted for SCCC services in the Tuen Mun District, such as by setting up more SCCC in the Tuen Mun District; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the plans and measures in place to provide support for (i) children waitlisted for SCCC services, and (ii) ordinary kindergartens that have admitted children waitlisted for SCCC services?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Holden Chow is as follows:

(1) In the past five years, the numbers of service places and waitlisted children for the Special Child Care Centres (SCCCs) based on the 11 administrative districts of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) are set out in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively at Annex. The average waiting time for SCCC is set out in Table 3. The SWD does not keep information on the waiting time by district.

(2) There is no locality restriction on the application for SCCC services. Parents may choose to receive services at an SCCC outside their district of residence having regard to individual circumstances, such as the availability of transport facilities, location of their work/carers' residence and characteristics of various SCCC. The SWD will allocate service placement according to parents' prioritised choices of SCCC/districts/areas. The SWD does not keep information on the number of cross-district places allocated to waitlisted applicants by district.

(3) The Government has been keeping in view the waiting time for SCCC, and adopting a multipronged approach to increase the provision of pre-school rehabilitation service places. The Government has since March 2022 incorporated the planning ratios of various rehabilitation services into the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Among them, the planning ratio for pre-school rehabilitation services is 23 service places per 1 000 children aged 0 to 6 so as to facilitate the continual development of the services. In 2022-23, the SWD established a new SCCC-cum-Early Education and Training Centre (EETC) in Tuen Mun District to provide 60 SCCC places and 96 EETC places as planned. The EETC commenced operation in March 2023 while the SCCC is expected to commence operation in the second quarter of 2024. Moreover, the SWD has also planned to establish a new SCCC at the Wu Shan Road Public Housing Development in Tuen Mun to provide 60 SCCC places. The SCCC is expected to commence operation in 2027-28.

(4) To enable children on the SCCC waiting list to receive training and support as early as possible, they may concurrently apply for and receive EETC services or On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS) as transitional services, pending placement of SCCC service. The multi-disciplinary service teams of the OPRS will also provide support services for teachers/child care workers of kindergartens/kindergarten cum child care centres participating in OPRS.

Waitlisted children not receiving transitional services may, without being subject to any means test, apply for a training subsidy under the Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services, with a view to enabling them to receive training as early as possible by acquiring self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services run by recognised service providers.

Red flags hoisted at some beaches

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 (March 27) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (March 27). 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.

[CHP investigates imported case of measles infection and reports investigation progress of two previously announced cases of measles infection](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (March 26) investigating an imported case of measles infection and reported the investigation progress on two [previously announced cases](#) of measles infection. The CHP reminded the public that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles, and people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received a measles vaccination during childhood should review their vaccination history.

The new case involves a 57-year-old female with good past health. She developed tiredness, generalised weakness, muscle pain and headache since March 16 and rash since morning on March 20. She attended the Accident and Emergency Department (AED) of Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) in the afternoon on the same day and was later admitted for treatment. Her respiratory and blood specimen samples tested positive for the measles virus upon nucleic acid testing and immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibodies to measles virus respectively. The patient is in stable condition and has been discharged. According to information provided by the patient, she travelled to Malaysia from March 4 to 15 during the incubation period. The patient did not have contact with measles patients in Hong Kong and the case has been identified as an imported case.

The CHP is actively conducting epidemiological investigation and it was revealed that the patient had visited the following venues during the communicable period:

1. King Yat Hin, 8/F, Harbour Plaza Metropolis, 7 Metropolis Drive, Hung Hom from 7pm to 10pm on March 19 (attended the anniversary dinner for MTRC staff);
2. Waiting hall of the AED of PYNEH from 2pm to 3pm on March 20.

As measles is highly infectious and the transmission risk at crowded environment is higher (especially for those who have not completed measles vaccination), the CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2371) for contact tracing of the case and appealed to persons who had visited the abovementioned venues during the said period of time (including staff of the venues) to call the hotline. Officers of the CHP will assess their conditions and offer suitable advices. The hotline will operate from 9am to 5.30pm starting from tomorrow (March 27), Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). The CHP is continuing its contact tracing and follow up investigation with the patient's working unit and hospital she was admitted.

Separately, Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan earlier reported a case of measles infection involving a 14-month-old girl. Her blood sample tested positive for the measles virus upon nucleic acid testing and IgM antibodies testing at the hospital by that time. Upon the notification, the CHP has conducted epidemiological investigations and adopted prevention and control measures (including contact tracing and providing health and medical surveillance advice to the contacts). The CHP later arranged the sample for genetic sequence typing at its Public Health Laboratory Services Branch. It was found that the sample tested positive for IgM antibodies while tested negative for nucleic acid testing, which is inconsistent with that of Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan. The CHP then reevaluated the case. Upon seeking advice from experts, the CHP confirmed that it is not a measles infection case. The CHP could not exclude that the earlier measles vaccination of the girl contribute to the abovementioned inconsistent sample testing results.

According to the latest test results, the CHP will also delete another epidemiologically linked case announced on the same day. The CHP has approached Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan and requested further information so as to understand the testing procedures of samples and the reasons for the positive nucleic acid test results of measles virus. The CHP has already notified the family members of the girls of the review results as well as removed the medical surveillance of the contacts.

After removing the two cases above, a total of six cases of measles infection have been recorded in Hong Kong this year (four of them being imported cases), while there were one to three cases annually from 2020 to 2023. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the number of measles cases had risen worldwide over 300 000 cases reported in 2023, a roughly 80 per cent increase from 2022. The Western Pacific region recorded a total of about 5 000 cases in 2023 which represented more than 2.5 times increase when compared with 2022, with persistent transmission found in the Philippines and Malaysia. In view of the continuous increase in measles cases, the WHO has urged parents to bring their children to get vaccinated as early as possible to prevent measles from spreading.

The CHP reiterated that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. During the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years, parents, schools and healthcare workers in Hong Kong continued to support childhood immunisations, striving to maintain the immunisation coverage rates at a high level. As revealed by the vaccination uptake of primary school students and the findings of the territory-wide immunisation surveys regularly conducted by the DH, the two-dose measles vaccination coverage has been consistently maintained at a high level, well above 95 per cent, and the local seroprevalence rates of measles virus antibodies reflect that most of the people in Hong Kong are immune to measles. On the whole, the information available indicates that the risk of large-scale outbreak is considered to be low in Hong Kong. However, it is possible for some not fully vaccinated people to get infected and transmit the measles virus to susceptible people (including children aged below one who are not due for the first dose of measles vaccine).

A spokesman for the DH reminded members of the public that delays in vaccination will weaken the protection for children against measles, and parents are reminded to maintain up-to-date vaccination for their children for comprehensive and timely protection. All people who are non-immune to measles, especially foreign domestic helpers, people working or studying in tertiary institutions, and workers of sea/land/air border control points who may be at higher risk of contracting an imported case, should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine. In general, people can be considered as non-immune to measles if they (i) did not have the infection confirmed by laboratory test before, and (ii) had not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines in the past, or have unknown vaccination status or unknown immunity against measles. On the other hand, as measles was endemic in Hong Kong and most parts of the world before 1967, people born before 1967 are considered to have acquired immunity to measles through natural infection.

The spokesman supplemented that, members of the public who are planning to travel to places with a high incidence or outbreaks of measles should review their vaccination history and past medical history, especially people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received a measles vaccination during childhood. Those who have not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines, with unknown vaccination history or unknown immunity against measles, are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccinations at least two weeks before departure.

Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus. It can be transmitted by airborne droplets or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons, and, less commonly, by articles soiled with nose and throat secretions. A patient can pass the disease to other persons from four days before to four days after the appearance of a skin rash.

The spokesman advised, "The incubation period (the period from infection to appearance of illness) of measles ranges from seven days to 21 days. Symptoms of measles include fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes. If symptoms arise, members of the public should wear surgical masks, stop

going to work or school and avoid going to crowded places. They should also avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below one. Those suspected to have been infected are advised to seek medical attention as early as possible and reveal relevant contact history of measles to healthcare professionals."

Besides being vaccinated against measles, members of the public should take the following measures to prevent infection:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Clean used toys and furniture properly; and
- Persons with measles should be kept out of school till four days from the appearance of a rash to prevent the spread of the infection to non-immune persons in school.

For more information on measles, the public may visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). Members of the public who are going to travel can visit the website of the DH's [Travel Health Service](#) for news of measles outbreaks outside Hong Kong.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected dangerous drugs worth about \\$17 million \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 25) and today (March 26) conducted anti-narcotics operations in Chai Wan and Tai Po and seized a total of about 30.35 kilograms of suspected dangerous drugs with a total estimated market value of about \$17 million. Two men were arrested.

Yesterday afternoon, Customs in Chai Wan intercepted a 32-year-old and an 18-year-old men who were moving a batch of carton boxes. After examination, about 30kg of suspected ketamine was found concealed inside a batch of protein power packages inside the boxes. The duo was then arrested.

After a follow-up investigation, Customs officers today escorted the 32-year old man to a residence in Tai Po for a search. Inside the premises, Customs officers seized about 350 grams of suspected crack cocaine, a small

amount of suspected ketamine and a batch of drug packaging paraphernalia.

An investigation is ongoing.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

