

LCQ5: Caring and Sharing Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Kwong Chun-yu and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

Applications for the Caring and Sharing Scheme, under which each eligible member of the public will be granted up to \$4,000, closed on April 30. Last month, the Government indicated that the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO), which is responsible for implementing the Scheme, had received about 3.44 million applications and issued to all applicants acknowledgements of their applications. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some members of the public have indicated that they have not yet received any acknowledgement, of the to-date number of members of the public who have indicated that they submitted an application but had yet to receive any acknowledgement;

(2) whether the WFAO has uncovered any case of missing application forms; if so, of the number of forms involved and the causes for that, as well as the remedial measures put in place; if not, why some applicants have not received any acknowledgement; and

(3) of the current average number of applications that the WFAO completes processing each day, and the expected date for completion of the processing of all the applications?

Reply:

President,

The Caring and Sharing Scheme, announced by the Government last year, is implemented by the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. Upon receiving the applications, the WFAO will first enter the basic personal information of applicants for issuing an SMS to acknowledge receipt. The WFAO will then verify the applicants' information with relevant government departments, vet the applications against the eligibility criteria and disburse payments to successful applicants. As at June 25, the WFAO has given bank instructions to disburse payments or encash cash cheques for more than 617 000 successful applications.

My consolidated reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

The WFAO has received about 7 000 enquiries concerning applicants not receiving the acknowledgement. According to the computer system records, the

WFAO confirms that about 10% of the cases are related to non-receipt of applications. The WFAO will allow the applicants concerned to re-submit their applications.

The WFAO issues acknowledgements to applicants based on the information entered. Applicants who have yet received the acknowledgement after submission of application form may make enquires with the WFAO. For those applicants who have not received acknowledgements, we found that some may have been caused by the provision of incomplete mobile phone number or residential address in the application form and some may be attributable to inaccurate mobile phone number entered by the WFAO staff. When handling enquiries of those applicants who have not received any acknowledgement, the WFAO staff will verify all the relevant information with the applicants and make the necessary update to ensure that the applicants can be reached in future.

Currently, the WFAO give out bank instructions to disburse payments to about 28 000 successful applications on a daily basis. With the completion of certain parts of the workflow, which would enable more flexible deployment of manpower, and with the WFAO staff becoming more familiar with the workflow, the number of daily disbursements made will rise gradually. With re-arranged workflow, the latest aim of the WFAO is to complete the processing of all applications by late September this year.

Thank you President.

LCQ15: Evening secondary courses

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The Government currently provides, through the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAEC), financial assistance for adult students taking evening secondary courses offered by approved course providers. Eligible students may receive 30%, 50% or 100% reimbursement of the tuition fees paid. Students who are unable to pay tuition fees in advance due to financial difficulties may apply for loans under the Extended Non-Means-Tested Loan Scheme (ENLS) to settle tuition fees. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of students at various grades taking evening secondary courses under FAEAEC, in each of the past five years;

(2) of the number of evening secondary students taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and, among them, the number of those whose examination results met the general entrance requirements for subsidised undergraduate programmes, in each of the past five years;

(3) of the respective numbers of students whose applications made under FAEAECE were received and approved in each of the past five years; in respect of the number of students whose applications were approved, (i) a breakdown by the percentage of tuition fees reimbursed and (ii) its percentage in the total number of evening secondary students;

(4) of the number of eligible students applying for loans under ENLS, in each of the past five years;

(5) of the current average annual tuition fee of the evening secondary courses offered under FAEAECE; as the Government has implemented for years free day secondary education, whether the Government will implement free evening secondary education;

(6) given that evening secondary students have to compete with day secondary students for admission to subsidised undergraduate programmes, but support in the areas of finance and learning, etc. provided by the Government for the former is less than that for the latter, whether the Government will relax the eligibility criteria of the various subsidy schemes set up for the latter so as to cover the former, and launch scholarship and bursary schemes for the former to encourage them to study; and

(7) whether it will comprehensively review and strengthen the support provided for evening secondary students, with a view to encouraging people with low educational attainment to complete secondary education programme while working at the same time?

Reply:

President,

The Government launched the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAECE) in 2005/06 school year with the aim of providing an affordable pathway to facilitate adult learners to complete mainstream secondary school courses and helping those learners with financial difficulties pursue their studies.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Ho Kai-ming is as follows:

(1) The respective numbers of learners at various grades taking courses offered by evening secondary schools participating in the FAEAECE from the 2014/15 to 2018/19 school years are as follows:

School year	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
2014/15	58	53	105	455	476	589
2015/16	54	62	112	354	446	525
2016/17	56	54	103	338	428	423
2017/18	41	46	108	362	429	440
2018/19#	46	47	114	352	433	465

Note: The figures refer to the respective numbers of learners at various grades as at June 30 of the school years concerned, including those who have withdrawn from the courses.

The figures in the 2018/19 school year refer to the numbers of learners as at April 30, 2019, including those who have withdrawn from the courses.

(2) According to the information provided by the approved course providers participating in the FAEAEC, the respective numbers of evening secondary learners taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) through these providers in the 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years are tabulated as follows:

School year	Number of evening secondary learners taking the HKDSE through the approved course providers
2016/17	255
2017/18	261
2018/19	366

Note: Since not all approved course providers can provide relevant information on the period before the 2016/17 school year, we can only provide the figures regarding the past three school years.

The Education Bureau (EDB) does not maintain information on the examination results of evening secondary learners who took the HKDSE.

(3) The FAEAEC aims to reduce the financial burden on adult learners and provide incentives to encourage them to complete the courses. Under the FAEAEC, adult learners who are enrolled in junior and senior secondary courses provided by approved course providers and who meet the eligibility criteria are eligible for 30% reimbursement of the tuition fees, irrespective of their financial situation. To assist those with financial difficulties, full reimbursement or half reimbursement of the tuition fees are provided for eligible learners who are assessed to be eligible for full grant or half grant respectively in the means test administered by the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA). The Student Finance Office of the WFSFAA processes the reimbursement of tuition fees based on the institutions' information on the number of eligible learners under the FAEAEC and other relevant information. The information on the reimbursement of

tuition fees to learners under the FAEAEC in the past five school years is tabulated as follows:

School year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19@
Total number of learners	1 736	1 553	1 402	1 426	1 457
Total number of learners with tuition fee reimbursement (As a percentage of the total number of learners)	765 (44.1%)	751 (48.4%)	631 (45.0%)	640* (44.9%)	537 (36.9%)
Number of learners broken down by percentage of tuition fee reimbursement (As a percentage of the total number of learners): (a) Full reimbursement	240 (13.8%)	206 (13.3%)	164 (11.7%)	157 (11.0%)	121 (8.3%)
(b) Half reimbursement	90 (5.2%)	75 (4.8%)	54 (3.9%)	56 (3.9%)	46 (3.2%)
(c) 30% reimbursement	435 (25.1%)	470 (30.3%)	413 (29.5%)	427* (29.9%)	370 (25.4%)

@ The figures refer to the information as at May 31, 2019. Some applications for tuition fee reimbursement are being processed.

* The figures do not include two eligible learners who did not collect the tuition fee reimbursement cheques by the specified date.

Note: The percentages in (a) to (c) may not add up to the percentages shown in the second row due to rounding.

(4) Learners attending eligible courses under the FAEAEC may apply for student loans under the Extended Non-Means-Tested Loan Scheme. The numbers of loan applicants in the 2014/15 to 2018/19 school years are tabulated below:

School year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*
Number of loan applicants	1	1	0	2	0

* As at May 31, 2019.

(5)-(7) At present, the Lutheran Church Hong Kong Synod Limited, the Hong Kong College of Technology Group Limited and the Kwun Tong Lutheran Evening School are approved course providers participating in the FAEAEC for the provision of evening secondary courses in designated centres. The average

annual tuition fees of the evening secondary courses offered by these providers in the 2018/19 school year are as follows:

Grade	Average annual tuition fee	Average additional cost for taking Applied Learning course (if applicable)
S1 to S3	\$10,950	N/A
S4	\$12,737	N/A
S5	\$12,737	\$10,877
S6	\$12,717	Such courses are not offered

In addition to the FAEAEC, to provide more support for learners taking evening secondary courses, the EDB has, since 2014/15 school year, earmarked an annual provision for approved course providers to provide support services to learners and teachers, such as conducting enriched learning activities, enhancing language training, providing Other Learning Experiences, student guidance and professional development and training of teachers. The amount of provision is calculated based on the number of learners. In the 2018/19 school year, the amount of funding for each learner was capped at \$1,000.

As learners attending evening secondary courses for adults are different from secondary students, it is difficult to make a comparison. Currently, there are different government financial assistance schemes for learners with different educational attainment/taking different courses. As pointed out in the first paragraph of the reply, the objective of the FAEAEC is to provide an alternative form of financial assistance to assist adult learners in completing mainstream secondary school courses and help those learners with financial difficulties pursue their studies. We believe that needy learners are already provided with appropriate financial assistance through the FAEAEC and the support services funded by the EDB. The Bureau has no plan to offer free evening secondary education at the current stage.

[Lifesaving services at Golden Beach and Cafeteria Old Beach resume](#)

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has announced that the lifesaving services at Golden Beach and Cafeteria Old Beach in Tuen Mun District resumed today (June 26). The lifesaving services at these beaches were suspended earlier due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty.

LCQ12: Traffic control at junction of Cornwall Street and Beacon Hill Road

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The southern end of the two-way Beacon Hill Road (the minor road) in Kowloon Tong is connected to the Cornwall Street (the major road). Although the latter is a two-way east-west road with heavy traffic and vehicles travel on it at a rather high speed, no traffic light has been installed at that road junction. Some members of the public have relayed that due to the sharp bend at the entrance/exit of the minor road and drivers' views being blocked by a building or mound on the roadsides, there is a certain degree of danger for eastbound vehicles on the major road to make a left turn into the minor road and vehicles on the minor road to make a left turn into the major road. In addition, westbound vehicles on the major road intending to make a right turn into the minor road, as well as vehicles intending to make a right turn into the major road (westbound) after leaving the minor road, have to cut across several lanes on the major road, which frequently causes dangerous situations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of traffic accidents which occurred at the aforesaid road junction in each of the past five years, and the details of each accident (including the causes of the accident, classes of vehicles involved and the resultant casualties); and

(2) whether it will install traffic lights at the road junction to control traffic; if so, of the details; if not, the measures to be put in place by the Government to enhance the road safety there?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) According to the records of the Transport Department (TD), the numbers of traffic accidents which occurred during the period from January 2014 to May 2019 at the junction of Cornwall Street and Beacon Hill Road, the resultant casualties as well as the classes and numbers of vehicles involved are tabulated at Annex. These traffic accidents were mainly caused by driver contributory factors, including "driving inattentively", "turning right/left negligently" and "failing to comply with the stop/give way traffic signs". At present, the road junction concerned is not a traffic black spot.

(2) TD has been keeping in view the traffic condition at the junction of Cornwall Street and Beacon Hill Road, and has on numerous occasions reviewed the feasibility of modifying the road junction to a signalised junction. Given the high traffic volume and busy traffic condition on Cornwall Street, and that the junction of Cornwall Street and Beacon Hill Road is only about 90 metres away from the signalised junction of Cornwall Street and Kent Road, the installation of traffic lights at the former road junction to control traffic will give rise to traffic congestion.

The existing speed limit of Cornwall Street eastbound near Beacon Hill Road is set at 50 kilometres per hour. Along the traffic lanes of that road section, a total of six "Slow" road markings have been painted, and traffic signs "Side road ahead" and "Reduce speed now" have also been erected to enhance the alertness of motorists and road safety. In addition, motorists travelling into or out of the junction of Cornwall Street and Beacon Hill Road have adequate sightline. TD will continue to monitor the traffic conditions of the road junction concerned and implement appropriate traffic improvement measures as necessary in a timely manner.

LCQ20: Default on maintenance payments

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Che-cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The Social Welfare Department (SWD), in calculating the amounts of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) payments payable to CSSA recipients who are concurrently receiving maintenance payments, makes a deduction of the maintenance payments they may receive. If the CSSA recipients can prove to SWD that they have commenced legal proceedings to recover the arrears of maintenance payments, the deduction of their CSSA payments may be suspended. Some social welfare organisations have pointed out that it is very time-consuming to provide such a proof, and such recipients,

who are mainly single parents, will immediately fall into financial difficulties once they are owed their maintenance payments. Besides, the work on implementing the maintenance order system falls within the remit of the Home Affairs Bureau and yet SWD, which provides support to single parents, is under the Labour and Welfare Bureau, resulting in a lack of coordination for and effectiveness of the relevant work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number of maintenance orders granted by the court in the past five years, with a tabulated breakdown by the group to which the amount of monthly maintenance payments belonged (i.e. below \$2,000, \$2,000 to \$3,999, \$4,000 to \$5,999, and \$6,000 or more);

(2) of the respective numbers of requests for assistance (i) received and (ii) handled by SWD and non-governmental organisations in the past three years concerning default on maintenance payments;

(3) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of cases in the past three years in which legal proceedings were commenced to recover arrears of maintenance payments;

(4) whether it will dispense with the requirement for CSSA recipients to submit proof of having commenced legal proceedings, and stipulate that as long as they make a statutory declaration stating that they are owed their maintenance payments, the deduction of their CSSA payments will be suspended;

(5) whether it will put the work on implementing the maintenance order system under the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau so as to enhance the coordination for the work relating to default on maintenance payments and the support for the single parents concerned; and

(6) whether it will consider setting up a dedicated department to strengthen the support for single parents who are owed their maintenance payments?

Reply:

President,

After consulting the Judiciary, the Legal Aid Department (LAD), the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD), a consolidated reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the Judiciary, it does not keep information on applications for maintenance orders, granting of maintenance orders, nor the respective amount of maintenance payments.

(2) and (4) In assessing the amount of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) payments to be granted to a CSSA recipient, SWD will first assess his/her recognised needs. If the applicant has assessable income (including maintenance payments), the CSSA payments will be suitably deducted. Before the maintenance payments have been successfully recovered by the recipient, SWD will not, on account of such payments, reduce or stop the

CSSA payments for which he/she is eligible. However, the recipients should declare on the designated undertaking their intention to take action in filing claims for maintenance payments.

SWD does not keep information on the number of CSSA cases involving default in maintenance payments.

(3) According to the statistics provided by the Judiciary, the number of judgment summons hearings and applications for Attachment of Income Orders (AI0) regarding the recovery of arrears of maintenance in the past three years are as follows:

	2016	2017	2018
Number of judgment summons hearings	844	839	783
Number of applications for AI0	12	14	9
Number of AI0s made	7	13	14

Note: AI0s might not be made in the same year as the applications were received.

LAD provides legal aid for eligible applicants who pass both the means and merits tests to recover arrears of maintenance. The number of judgment summons proceedings issued for cases handled by in-house lawyers of LAD is shown below:

	2016	2017	2018
Number of judgment summons proceedings issued	126	99	95
Number of cases closed	116	161	141
(i) Number of successful cases (%)	82 (71%)	104 (65%)	89 (63%)
(ii) Number of unsuccessful cases (%)	34 (29%)	57 (35%)	52 (37%)

Notes:

1. Cases may not be closed in the same year as the judgment summons proceedings were issued.
2. LAD does not keep statistics on the number of judgment summons proceedings issued for cases handled by lawyers in private practice on LAD's panel.

(5) The Home Affairs Bureau is responsible for the work on implementing the maintenance order system. The Government has no plan to transfer the work to the Labour and Welfare Bureau at present.

(6) The Government is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of the system of collecting maintenance payments and enforcing maintenance orders. The measures taken so far include relaxing the requirement for the court to make an AI0, imposing interest or surcharge against defaulting maintenance payers,

allowing designated government departments to disclose the addresses of maintenance payers upon the request of legal professionals, increasing the amount of monthly maintenance that may be exempted from the Director of Legal Aid's First Charge, streamlining the referral procedures for CSSA applicants to apply for legal aid for recovery of arrears of maintenance, as well as strengthening efforts in publicity and education.

In addition, the Government commissioned through the Family Council a research team in June 2018 to conduct a consultancy study on various issues related to marriage and divorce, including whether it is appropriate to set up a dedicated department to handle maintenance-related matters, in order to facilitate our consideration of the way forward. The consultancy study is expected to be completed in 18 months (late 2019/early 2020).