

LCQ10: Rehabilitation services for pre-school children

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides three types of rehabilitation services for pre school children with disability respectively through (i) the Early Education and Training Centre (EETC), (ii) the Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre (IP/KGs) and (iii) the Special Child Care Centre (SCCC). It is learnt that due to the shortage of service places of SCCC, quite a number of children waiting for such services attend ordinary kindergartens and kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres (collectively known as KGs). Furthermore, SWD provides On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (OPRS), under which inter-disciplinary service teams from non-governmental organisations provide on-site training services for children with mild disability who are studying in participating KGs. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) Whether it knows the annual numbers of children waiting for SCCC services in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years whilst studying in KGs, and the number of KGs involved;

(2) Whether it knows, among the children mentioned in (1), the respective annual numbers of (i) those receiving EETC services, (ii) those receiving OPRS and (iii) those not receiving any of these two types of services, in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years (set out in the table below);

	2017-2018 school year	2018-2019 school year
(i)		
(ii)		
(iii)		
Total		

(3) Of the annual numbers of children in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 assessed to be in need of SCCC services; among such children, the respective numbers of (i) those waiting for the services provided by IP/KGs, (ii) those waiting for EETC services, (iii) those waiting for OPRS, and (iv) those not waiting for any of those services (set out in the table below); and

	2017-2018 school year	2018-2019 school year
(i)		
(ii)		
(iii)		
(iv)		

(4) Whether the Education Bureau (EDB) has provided additional resources to KGs which have admitted children who are waiting for SCCC services, so as to ensure that those children can receive appropriate education, training and care; if so, of the details; if not, whether EDB will, by making reference to the approach adopted by it for supporting non-Chinese speaking students with special educational needs, provide additional resources to those schools?

Reply:

President,

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

(1) and (2) Pre-school children on the waiting list of special child care centres (SCCCs) may also apply for and receive transitional services of early education and training centres (EETCs) or on-site pre-school rehabilitation services (OPRS) until they are allocated SCCC places. Besides, pre-school children waiting for SCCCs and who have not received transitional services may apply for non-means-tested training subsidies under the Training Subsidy Programme for Children on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services (TSP), so that they can receive self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services operated by recognised service providers as soon as possible to facilitate their learning and development.

In 2017-18 and 2018-19, there were 1 984 and 2 205 pre-school children on the waiting list of SCCC services respectively. Details of these pre-school children who received other pre-school rehabilitation services or training subsidies under the TSP are set out in the table below:

	2017-18 (as at March 31, 2018)	2018-19 (as at March 31, 2019)
Number of children who received other pre-school rehabilitation services or training subsidies under the TSP while on the waiting list of SCCC services		
Integrated Programme in Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centre	56	63
EETCs	176	165
OPRS	N/A (Note)	427
Training subsidies under the TSP	922	1 111

Total	1 154	1 766
-------	-------	-------

Note: OPRS commenced in October 2018. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) does not have statistics on the number of applicants who received services under the Pilot Scheme on OPRS while on the waiting list of SCCC.

The SWD does not have information on the kindergartens (KGs) where children on the waiting list of SCCC are attending and the number of KGs involved.

(3) Pre-school children may ascertain the level of their disabilities and their special needs as well as the type of pre-school rehabilitation services required through assessments by relevant government departments/bodies, including child assessment centres of the Department of Health (DH), and the Hospital Authority (HA); or paediatricians/clinical psychologists/educational psychologists/psychiatrists, etc. in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or private practice. In 2017 and 2018, the Child Assessment Service of the DH arranged pre-school and school placements for training, remedial and special education for 14 294 and 17 539 children aged under 12 who were suspected to have problems during their growth respectively. The DH does not maintain a breakdown by age of children who underwent assessments, nor does it maintain a breakdown of various types of support services for which the children concerned were referred. In 2017-18 and 2018-19, there were 218 and 232 cases referred for SCCC after assessment by the HA respectively. The Government does not have statistics on the number of cases where children were assessed by paediatricians/clinical psychologists/educational psychologists/psychiatrists, etc. in NGOs or private practice to be in need of SCCC services.

Pre-school children with disabilities or special needs may register their applications in the Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services of the SWD for designated services according to their assessment results. Those diagnosed as or suspected of having moderate to severe disabilities will be put on the waiting list of SCCC services, and they may also wait for and receive other pre-school rehabilitation services as transitional services. The SWD does not have statistics on the number of cases assessed to be in need of SCCC services and not on the waiting list of any pre-school rehabilitation services.

(4) In view of the fact that children attending ordinary KGs and on the waiting list of SCCC services may wait for and receive other pre-school rehabilitation services as transitional services, and that the EDB has been providing KG teachers with structured in-service training to enhance their professional capacity of catering for learner diversity, and has also enhanced the teacher-to-pupil ratio in KGs to strengthen support for teachers to address the developmental needs of KG students, the EDB indicated that it has no plan to provide additional resources for KGs at this stage.