

LCQ15: Measures to support daily lives of persons with disabilities

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

Some wheelchair-bound people have relayed that the number of restaurants equipped with barrier-free facilities in Hong Kong is inadequate and quite a number of restaurants are unable to receive wheelchair-bound people, making it difficult for them to eat out. Regarding measures to support the daily lives of persons with disabilities (PWDs), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of complaints received by the Government in the past five years from PWDs about inadequate barrier-free facilities at venues frequented by them in their daily lives (including but not limited to restaurants, shopping malls, supermarkets, markets and banks, etc.);

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the number of restaurants equipped with barrier-free facilities across the territory (and its proportion in the number of restaurants across the territory) as well as the number of wheelchair-friendly seats provided by such restaurants, together with a breakdown by District Council district;

(3) whether it has plans to formulate policies to encourage restaurants to provide barrier-free facilities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has plans to allocate more resources to the Integrated Home Care Services under the Social Welfare Department so that eligible persons (including PWDs) can receive meal service expeditiously; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau, the Environment and Ecology Bureau, and the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, I set out below a consolidated reply to the Member's question:

(1) and (2) In the past five years, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department received the following number of complaints from persons with disabilities concerning insufficient barrier-free facilities at restaurants and markets:

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Restaurants | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Markets | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Other than restaurants and markets, the Government does not maintain the complaint figures on insufficient barrier-free facilities in other premises. We also do not have the statistics on the number of restaurants providing barrier-free facilities.

(3) The Government strives to create a barrier-free environment for persons with disabilities, with a view to enabling them to access to premises and make use of the facilities and services therein on an equal basis with others, thereby facilitating their full integration into the community.

As far as buildings on private land are concerned, to align with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487), regulation 72 of the Building (Planning) Regulations under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) prescribes design requirements for barrier-free access and facilities for persons with disabilities to ensure that reasonable barrier-free access and facilities are provided in relevant premises to cater for the needs of persons with disabilities. The regulation came into effect in 1984 and is applicable to new buildings built thereafter. If alterations and additions (A&A) works are to be carried out in existing buildings built before the regulation came into effect, such works must also comply with the requirements of the regulation. The Buildings Department has issued the "Design Manual: Barrier Free Access" to provide guidance on barrier-free access and facilities, which is subject to review from time to time. All new buildings or A&A to existing buildings, including restaurants, must comply with the design standards as set out in the latest editions of the Building (Planning) Regulations and the Design Manual, for example, the provision of appropriate access route and accessible toilet.

(4) At present, there are 61 Integrated Home Care Services (Frail Cases) (IHCS(FC)) and 31 Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) teams providing community care services, including meal services and personal care plans for frail elderly persons. To facilitate ageing in place, the Government increased the number of service places of the IHCS(FC) and EHCCS from about 8 000 in October 2019 to about 13 000, and shortened the average waiting time from about 20 months at the end of October 2019 to about six months at the end of March 2023.

In addition, the Integrated Home Care Services (Ordinary Cases) (IHCS(OC)) provides home support services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities in need, individuals and families with social needs. The Home Care and Support Services for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment (HSMI), also implemented by the IHCS teams, was launched in December 2017 on a pilot basis and has been regularised by the Government since January this year. The HSMI aims to provide home care and support services to elderly persons with mild impairment who are waitlisted for IHCS(OC). The two services provide a total of about 20 000 service places, including meal service, escort service and simple nursing care.