

LCQ16: Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Chun-sing and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (March 26):

Question:

The Government launched a three-year Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work (the Pilot Programme) on September 23, 2022, to facilitate injured workers' early recovery and return to work. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the current staff establishment and strength of the Work Injury Rehabilitation Office (WIRO), which is responsible for implementing the Pilot Programme, as well as the average number of cases followed up by each of its case manager;

(2) of (i) the number of reported work injury cases received by the Labour Department (LD) in each of the past three years and this year to date and, among them, (ii) the number of cases identified as eligible for participating in the Pilot Programme (and its percentage), and (iii) the number of cases participating in the Pilot Programme (and its percentage in the total number of cases eligible for participating in the Pilot Programme), and set out in Table 1 a breakdown by (a) construction industry, (b) catering and hotel industry (the industry covered since May last year), and (c) transportation and logistics industry (the industry covered since May last year);

Table 1

Case category	2022			2023			2024			This year to date		
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)
(i)												
(ii)		Not applicable			Not applicable							
(iii)		Not applicable			Not applicable							
Total												

(3) in respect of the cases participating in the Pilot Programme mentioned in (2)(iii), of (i) the types of work injury sustained by the injured workers involved, and (ii) the time taken between they agreed to participate in the Pilot Programme and received their first medical consultation from the case doctors, together with a breakdown by industry (i.e. (i) construction industry, (ii) catering and hotel industry, and (iii) transportation and logistics industry);

(4) given that in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Government has indicated that the authorities will (a) analyse and compare the data of the participants of the Pilot Programme against (b) the data of the injured employees who sustain similar work injuries but have not participated in the Pilot Programme, so as to assess the effectiveness of the Pilot Programme, of the respective numbers and ratios of cases in which the employees referred to in the aforesaid (a) and (b) have recovered after treatment, as well as the respective average time taken for recovery, together with a breakdown by industry (i.e. (i) construction industry, (ii) catering and hotel industry, and (iii) transportation and logistics industry);

(5) among the cases participating in the Pilot Programme mentioned in (2)(iii), of the number of those in which employees have recovered after treatment, and set out in Table 2 a breakdown and the respective percentages of such cases by return-to-work status (i.e. (i) engaging in the same kind of work, (ii) engaging in work of a different nature, (iii) return-to-work status under follow-up, and (iv) unable to return to work during the follow-up period for the time being) and the industry to which they belong (i.e. (a) construction industry, (b) catering and hotel industry, and (c) transportation and logistics industry); the main reasons for cases of return-to-work status still being followed up and those of not being able to return to work during the follow-up period for the time being;

Table 2

Return-to-work status	Industry		
	(a)	(b)	(c)
(i)			
.....			
(iv)			
Total			

(6) of the respective numbers and nature of enquiries and complaints received by the authorities about the Pilot Programme since its implementation; and

(7) whether it will consider extending the Pilot Programme to cover more industries, including those with higher risks of work injury such as the manufacturing and retail industries, as well as extending or regularising the Pilot Programme, so as to benefit more injured workers in need; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Labour Department (LD) launched the Pilot Rehabilitation Programme for Employees Injured at Work (Pilot Programme) in September 2022. The Pilot Programme adopts a case management approach to provide timely and coordinated private out-patient rehabilitation treatment services for participating

injured employees to facilitate their early recovery and return to work. Starting from May 9, 2024, the industry coverage of the Pilot Programme has been expanded to the catering and hotel industry and the transportation and logistics industry in addition to the original construction industry, with the aim of benefiting more injured employees.

My reply to the Hon Lam Chun-sing's question is as follows:

(1) As at February 2025, the Work Injury Rehabilitation Office (WIRO) set up by service contractor of the Pilot Programme comprises a total of 10 administrative and professional staff, 11 case managers and three clerical staff. They are responsible for arranging and co-ordinating the rehabilitation treatment services provided under the Pilot Programme, providing case management and return-to-work facilitation services to participants as well as monitoring and administering the day-to-day operation of the Pilot Programme.

Each Pilot Programme participant is assigned with a case manager who will follow up the case and provide support until the employee's injury has reached maximum medical improvement (i.e. recovered) and the employee has returned to work, or until two months after the employee has recovered, whichever is earlier. As at February 2025, a total of 1 803 admitted cases have been or are being followed up by the 11 case managers of the WIRO, which means each case manager has managed about 160 cases on average.

(2) and (3) According to the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO), an employer must notify the Commissioner for Labour of any work accident within 14 days after the accident occurs or after it comes to his knowledge. The LD and the WIRO will, based on the reported work injury cases, preliminarily identify injured employees who are suitable for the Pilot Programme, proactively invite them to participate in the Pilot Programme and arrange interviews to ascertain their eligibility for and willingness to participate in the Pilot Programme. Thereafter, the case manager will schedule an appointment for the employee to meet with the case doctor. Once the case doctor ascertains after clinical assessment that the employee's injury is suitable for treatment under the Pilot Programme, the relevant rehabilitation treatment will begin immediately. The injuries of the participants mainly involve contusion/bruise, sprain/strain and fracture, etc., accounting for about 80 per cent of all cases.

As at February 2025, a total of 1 803 injured employees participated in the Pilot Programme. The relevant admission rates (Table 1) and time required for first medical consultation (Table 2) are as follows:

Table 1

	2022	2023	2024			2025 (as at February)		
Industry#	(a)	(a)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)

(i) Reported work injury cases*	4 466	3 291	3 273	4 570	3 053	375	615	435
(ii) Cases preliminarily identified as suitable for participation in the Pilot Programme	697 [^]	2 498	1 717	586 [@]	656 [@]	148	121	102
(iii) Admitted cases and rate (iii/ii)	131 (19%)	524 (21%)	470 (27%)	250 (43%)	273 (42%)	52 (35%)	55 (45%)	48 (47%)

(a) construction industry^{1/4} (b) catering and hotel industry^{1/4} (c) transportation and logistics industry

* Numbers of non-fatal employees' compensation claims involving incapacitation of employees for more than three days as a result of work injuries reported under the ECO and received by the LD

[^] The Pilot Programme was launched on September 23, 2022.

[@] The Pilot Programme was expanded to the catering and hotel industry and the transportation and logistics industry on May 9, 2024.

Table 2

Time from preliminary identification to first medical consultation	Construction industry	Catering and hotel industry	Transportation and logistics industry	Number of participants (Rate)
Seven days or below	483	93	92	668 (37%)
Above seven days to 14 days	502	135	147	784 (43%)
Above 14 days to 21 days	105	49	43	197 (11%)
Above 21 days	87	28	39	154 (9%)
Total	1 177	305	321	1 803

(4) The LD has conducted a preliminary evaluation on the first two years of operation of the Pilot Programme (i.e. from September 2022 to September 2024), and compared the data of the injured construction employees participating in the Pilot Programme against that of the injured construction employees who sustained similar work injuries but did not participate in the Programme. The findings show that the participants had a higher rate (75 per cent vs 62 per cent) of reaching maximum medical improvement (i.e. recovered) upon treatment during the evaluation period and the median time required for recovery was also shorter (123 days vs 192 days), which met the objective of

the Pilot Programme. Besides, the majority of participants were satisfied with the case management and rehabilitation treatment services provided under the Pilot Programme. Since many cases in the catering and hotel industry and the transportation and logistics industry are still being followed up, the LD will analyse the participants from these two industries in the future evaluation.

(5) Under the Pilot Programme, if participants have not returned to work within two months after recovery, the case manager will obtain updates on their return-to-work (RTW) status in the subsequent three months. As at February 2025, a total of 1 354 employees' injuries have reached maximum medical improvement upon treatment (i.e. recovered). Their RTW status is as follows:

Return-to-work status		Construction industry	Catering and hotel industry	Transportation and logistics industry	Aggregate figures
Perform same type of work*	Number of participants (Rate)	388 (43%)	107 (51%)	131 (57%)	626 (46%)
Perform other types of work*	Number of participants (Rate)	78 (9%)	7 (3%)	17 (7%)	102 (8%)
RTW status still being followed up	Number of participants (Rate)	106 (12%)	71 (34%)	59 (26%)	236 (17%)
Yet to RTW as at the end of follow-up	Number of participants (Rate)	254 (28%)	14 (7%)	21 (9%)	289 (21%)
Unable to contact for RTW follow-up	Number of participants (Rate)	86 (9%)	12 (6%)	3 (1%)	101 (7%)
Total		912	211	231	1 354

* Irrespective of employment with the original or a different employer

In cases where participants have not returned to work during the follow-up period, the majority cited personal reasons (such as considering themselves not yet suitable to resume work or preferring to take more rest), followed by medical considerations (such as undergoing treatment for other injuries), while some were in search for a job or on work trial, etc.

(6) As at February 2025, the WIRO received 232 enquiries mainly seeking information on the Pilot Programme's content and eligibility for participation. There were also three complaints that mainly concerned the performance of individual rehabilitation professional or case manager.

(7) The LD has no plan to expand the Pilot Programme to more industries at present. The LD will continue to closely monitor the operation of the Pilot Programme, collect relevant information and data for analysis and evaluation, draw conclusion from the experiences gained during the implementation of the Pilot Programme and its effectiveness, and consider the direction for future development based on the results.