

LCQ18: Providing financial support for disabled persons

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

Question:

The Community Care Fund launched the programme of Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled (Special Subsidy) in 2011 to provide severely disabled persons who are living in the community and are not receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) with a special care subsidy to assist them in purchasing care goods and services, or for other purposes related to nursing care. However, some disabled persons have relayed that the costs of buying, repairing and maintaining medical equipment or rehabilitation products are expensive, posing a heavy financial burden on low-income physically handicapped persons (PHPs), bedridden persons with severe intellectual disabilities and persons with hearing impairment who are not receiving CSSA. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as there are views pointing out that in terms of the original intention of the programme and the actual situation, the Special Subsidy has failed to meet the needs of the disabled persons for rehabilitation products, especially when most disabled persons in Hong Kong do not receive CSSA, whether the Government will, by drawing reference from the practice of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme, allow all eligible physically handicapped applicants to receive the same subsidy amount; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that PHPs aged 60 to under 65 are not only unable to apply for the Special Subsidy, but also not eligible to apply for the Old Age Living Allowance, resulting in a "window period" occurred in the welfare policy concerned, whether the Government will optimise the CSSA Scheme, so as to plug the loophole; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as a survey conducted by an organisation has found that more than 80 per cent of disabled persons consider that their expenses on rehabilitation products have an impact on their families, but since the means test for applying for government subsidies are mostly conducted on a family basis, quite a number of applicants are worried that they and their families will be affected and consider that the assessment arrangement concerned undermines the self-esteem of disabled persons and lowers their self-worth, and at the same time, there are also views that assessments conducted on an individual basis can prevent family relationships from becoming an obstacle to the application for subsidies, whether the Government will allow disabled persons living with family members to apply for CSSA independently and only conduct

assessments on the personal income and assets of applicants; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(1) The Community Care Fund launched the Special Care Subsidy for the Severely Disabled in September 2011, which aimed to provide persons with severe disabilities living in the community and not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) with a subsidy for purchasing care goods and services, or for other purposes related to nursing care. The Government will regularise the Special Care Subsidy in October 2023 with the eligibility criteria unchanged, while the monthly full grant will be raised from \$2,000 to \$2,500 to strengthen support to persons with severe disabilities in need.

To support persons with severe physical disabilities who need constant attention and care, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has launched the Integrated Support Service for Persons with Severe Physical Disabilities (ISS) since November 2014. The ISS provides cash subsidy, including the Special Subsidy for Renting Respiratory Support Medical Equipment (RSME) and the Special Subsidy for Purchasing Medical Consumables Related to RSME, on an actual reimbursement basis to eligible RSME dependents. Apart from assisting low-income persons with disabilities not on CSSA to meet expenses of medical equipment or rehabilitation consumables, the ISS also provides assessments by physiotherapists and occupational therapists to ensure the rehabilitation consumables suit the needs of service users.

Besides, the rehabilitation service units and medical social workers under the SWD have all along been co-operating with medical professionals to provide persons with disabilities and their families with emotional counselling, referrals to required services and community resources, and assisting persons with disabilities in need to apply for financial assistance, including charitable trust funds administered by the SWD or set up by other organisations, in order to procure/repair wheelchairs and meet expenses on related rehabilitation consumables. All of the above existing services/subsidies support persons with severe disabilities not on CSSA.

(2) and (3) The Government implements a non-contributory social security system to provide suitable assistance for people with different needs. The system comprises the CSSA Scheme and the Social Security Allowance Scheme (including Old Age Living Allowance, Old Age Allowance, Disability Allowance (DA), Guangdong Scheme and Fujian Scheme).

The DA is non-means-tested and has no age restrictions. It aims to help persons assessed to have severe disabilities meet their special needs arising from disability. Recipients are provided with the Normal or Higher DA (at \$2,005 and \$4,010 per month respectively) according to their severity of disability.

Persons with disabilities in financial hardship may consider applying for the CSSA Scheme. The CSSA Scheme aims to provide a safety net of last

resort for those who cannot support themselves financially due to old age, ill-health, disability, single parenthood, unemployment, low-earnings or other reasons to help them meet their basic needs. The CSSA Scheme has no age restrictions and provides recipients with disabilities with relatively higher standard rates ranging from \$3,820 to \$7,400 per month depending on age, family conditions and severity of disability. CSSA recipients with disabilities are also provided with a number of supplements and special grants to cater for their special needs, e.g. grant to cover costs of medical, rehabilitation, surgical appliances and hygienic items.

While applications for the CSSA Scheme are made on a household basis in accordance with the principle that members of the same family should support each other, the SWD may consider allowing a person to apply for the CSSA Scheme independently in view of special circumstances of the case. Where a person indicates the need to apply for the CSSA Scheme independently due to problems among family members (e.g. poor relationship), the SWD will refer the case to social service units for assistance. If the situation does not improve with the assistance of social workers, the SWD may consider allowing the applicant in need to apply for the CSSA Scheme independently on a discretionary basis in view of special circumstances of the case.

Food Safety Day 2023 stresses importance of observing “Five Keys to Food Safety”

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department kick-started its annual Food Safety Day 2023 campaign today (June 7) to raise awareness of the simple actions that the food trade and the public can take to prevent foodborne illnesses and curb the emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). As food businesses fully resume operations after the pandemic, it is crucial for everyone to adopt good food hygiene practices to reduce the risk of the spread of infections along the food chain.

On World Food Safety Day today, the CFS will join Codex Alimentarius Committee China to attend the virtual event held by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the Codex Alimentarius Secretariat. To tie in with World Food Safety Day 2023, the CFS sets the "Five Keys to Food Safety" as the theme for Food Safety Day 2023. The Five Keys represent five scientifically proven measures that can significantly reduce the incidence of foodborne illnesses:

- Choose safe raw materials;

- Keep clean;
- Separate raw and cooked food;
- Cook thoroughly; and
- Keep food at safe temperatures.

"In general, the major contributing factors of food poisoning outbreaks are consumption of raw food, inadequate cooking, storage time and temperature abuse, and cross-contamination including food to food, equipment to food, and person to food," a spokesman for the CFS said. "It is therefore critical for food handlers to make consistent compliance with the Five Keys a priority to reduce the risk of food poisoning and create a safer food environment."

Separately, as AMR bacteria might be present in ready-to-eat foods, the CFS has launched a [thematic webpage](#) on AMR since 2019 to provide a one-stop area for the public and trade to access the latest publicity materials. An extended version of the Five Keys, which elaborates on how each key could address AMR in food, can be found on the thematic webpage.

To prevent foodborne diseases, the trade and the public are urged to maintain proper hand hygiene as well as observe the "Five Keys to Food Safety" while preparing and handling food. For details of the events under Food Safety Day 2023, please visit the CFS's website (www.cfs.gov.hk).

[Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley](#)

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (June 7). 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.

Red flags hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach

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 (June 7) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

[Hong Kong Customs detects incoming passenger drug trafficking case involving suspected cannabis buds at airport \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (June 5) detected an incoming passenger drug trafficking case at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 1.2 kilograms of suspected cannabis buds with an estimated market value of about \$240,000.

A 32-year-old male passenger arrived in Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday. During customs clearance, Customs officers found 24 bags of suspected cannabis buds, with a total weight of about 1.2kg, inside his checked-in suitcase and hand-carry baggage. Most of the drugs were concealed inside some snacks packaging while the rest were concealed inside different items. Customs officers arrested the man subsequently.

An investigation is ongoing.

Following the resumption of normal travel and exchanges with the Mainland and other parts of the world, the number of visitors to Hong Kong has also been increasing steadily. Customs will continue to apply a risk assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

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).

