

## Press Releases

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LCQ18: Support services to ethnic minorities

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Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Kwok-che and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, in the Legislative Council today (May 13):

Question:

In connection with the provision of social services to ethnic minorities, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the respective numbers of cases in each of the past three years in which the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provided family and child protective services, clinical psychological service, social security service and probation service to ethnic minorities, as well as the respective numbers of cases in which integrated family services were provided to such people by SWD and subvented non-governmental organisations; if such figures are not available, whether the Government will start collecting the relevant data from this year onwards; if it will not, of the reasons for that;

(b) whether SWD had provided training to the staff concerned in the past three years to heighten their sensitivity to the cultural differences between various ethnic groups; if it had, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c) apart from establishing regional support service centres for ethnic minorities, how the Government helps them overcome the difficulties they encounter in using social services?

Reply:

President,

As the question has not defined "ethnic minorities", the term is taken to mean non-Chinese persons in the ensuing reply.

(a) According to data captured by the Computerised Social Security System of the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the number of cases involving ethnic minority recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Scheme (CSSA) and Social Security Allowance (SSA) in the past three years is as follows :

CSSA

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Financial Year	No. of Ethnic Minority Cases
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2006-07	7 703
2007-08	7 517
2008-09	7 557

SSA

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Financial Year	No. of Ethnic Minority Cases		
	Old Age Allowance	Disability Allowance	Total
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2006-07	1 783	796	2 579
2007-08	1 974	844	2 818
2008-09	2 230	910	3 140

The existing data collection system of SWD does not comprehensively collect data on the number of ethnic minority cases handled through other services (including Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) operated by SWD). SWD is conducting a study on a new "Client Information System". The System will retain information on service users' nationality and ethnic origin, etc. When the System comes into operation next year, it should be able to help SWD capture such data.

As regards IFSCs operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), any local resident (including persons of different ethnic origins), in case of need, may approach the centres for assistance. SWD had not requested the centres to report the number of cases involving ethnic minorities in the past three years. SWD has no plan at this stage to revamp the existing statistical information system and obtain such figures from the NGOs.

(b) SWD has been providing relevant training for its and NGOs' staff to enhance their capacity and sensitivity in handling work relating to ethnic minorities. SWD had arranged a series of training programmes for them in the past three years, including training programmes on working with ethnic minority groups / asylum seekers and torture claimants and child protection special investigation for children of ethnic minority background.

(c) The Government is committed to promoting racial equality and harmony, as well as providing necessary support services to ethnic minorities, so as to facilitate their integration into the community. Apart from the four support service centres set up by the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, respective Government departments have been introducing various measures to assist ethnic minorities in using social services.

For instance, to assist ethnic minorities who have difficulty communicating either in Chinese or English in using the social welfare services they need, SWD produces service leaflets in ethnic minority languages and arranges interpretation services where necessary. Besides, social welfare service units in the districts also organise group and community activities, including visits, social and recreational activities, community educational programmes, support groups, voluntary services etc., to enhance the ethnic minorities' knowledge of, and encourage their participation in, their communities in order to facilitate their social integration. The service units also encourage ethnic minorities to make use of mainstream services where necessary.

The Labour Department (LD) has similar arrangements. Apart from providing various services, including employment services, enquiries on labour legislation and employees' rights and benefits, as well as services of the Occupational Health Clinics, in both Chinese and English, LD will, where necessary, also arrange translation and interpretation service to citizens who speak neither Chinese nor English, including the ethnic minorities. Special counters have also been set up at its 12 Job Centres to provide ethnic minorities with readily accessible service. Employment briefings tailor-made for ethnic minorities are organised by these Job Centres from time to time. Apart from producing various pamphlets, concise guides and publicity leaflets in Chinese and English, LD also prints some publications and information in other languages.

On medical services, the Hospital Authority (HA) has engaged a service contractor to provide patients with interpretation service (including on-site and telephone interpretation service) in four common ethnic minority languages. Such interpretation service will be expanded to cover eight more common languages starting from June 2009. HA will also provide interpretation service to patients of ethnic minorities through volunteers and consulate offices. Although information provided to the public by the

Department of Health (DH) is generally in both Chinese and English, information in other languages, including some minority languages, is also provided for selected health topics as appropriate. DH will also arrange interpretation service for its clients as required.

To address the training needs of the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) and the Vocational Training Council (VTC) have organised dedicated vocational training courses for them using English as the medium of instruction. Subject to demand and the availability of resources, ERB and VTC will provide in-class interpretation service, where necessary and appropriate, to facilitate teaching and learning.

In terms of mainstream education, the Government also attaches great importance to providing support for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students, in particular ethnic minority students, with a view to facilitating their early integration into the local education system and the community. The Education Bureau has implemented appropriate support measures for NCS students and their parents. For instance, information on the local education system, applications for Primary 1 and Secondary 1 places under relevant school places allocation systems and the executive summary of the Supplementary Guide to the Chinese Curriculum for the NCS students have been translated into major ethnic minority languages. Simultaneous interpretation service is provided when conducting briefing sessions and, where necessary, interpretation service of major ethnic minority languages can be arranged.

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