

For information

**Sub-Committee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Residential Respite Service for
Persons with Disabilities Below the Age of 15**

Purpose

This paper is to update Members on the latest development on the extension of residential respite service to persons with disabilities (PWDs) below the age of 15.

Background

2. In response to the Subcommittee's concern over the service gap of residential respite service for PWDs below the age of 15, the then Chief Secretary had, in his reply of 12 June 2007 to the Chairman of the Subcommittee, stated that the then Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food would examine the possibility of enhancing or extending the existing services to help fill this service gap within the existing resources allocated to him. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) has since examined the feasibility of extending the residential respite service in its various residential homes for PWDs.

Development

3. SWD met with the concerned parents' associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating subvented residential homes for PWDs on 10 July 2007 and 15 August 2007 respectively to gather their views on the provision of residential respite service for PWDs below the age of 15. Their views are summarised in the following paragraphs.

4. The parents concerned maintain that special schools, with readily available facilities and the necessary caring expertise, would be in a better position to provide residential respite service for PWDs below the age of 15. If the service is to be provided by the residential care homes for PWDs (RCHDs) for adults under SWD's subventions, they have concerns about the physical settings, programme arrangements and expertise of the caring staff.

5. While some NGOs have experience in providing respite care to children with disabilities to meet the urgent needs of parents, they have practical difficulties in providing residential respite care to children in their RCHDs which are designed for adults. Nevertheless, noting the difficulties faced by parents, some NGOs are ready to try their best to provide residential respite service to the children in need if additional resources, including manpower, are made available to them.

6. A survey was subsequently conducted among the NGOs on the feasibility of extending their residential respite services to PWDs below the age of 15. While one NGO prefers to continue to provide residential respite service through its special school, seven NGOs have tentatively agreed to extend the service to PWDs below the age of 15 in some of their adult homes with additional resources provided. Some NGOs have also assessed that they can only admit PWDs aged 11 to 15 but not those younger.

Follow-up Plan

7. With the generally positive response from the NGOs, SWD plans to implement a scheme to extend the existing residential respite service to accommodate PWDs below the age of 15. NGOs have been invited to consider the feasibility of implementing the extension scheme in their RCHDs. SWD would examine the need to effect necessary changes in these RCHDs to cater for the needs of PWDs below the age of 15 including, for instance, additional furniture and equipment such as toys, beds and beddings, modification to toilets and adjustment of activity programmes. Details of the extension scheme would be confirmed upon further discussion with NGOs. Apart from the existing RCHDs, the provision of respite service for PWDs below the age of 15 will also be included in new rehabilitation projects coming on stream as appropriate. SWD will keep the parents' associations informed about the details on the implementation of the extension scheme.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.