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Panel on Welfare Services

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 12 July 2010**

Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account of past discussions of the Panel on Welfare Services ("the Panel") and its Subcommittee on Residential and Community Care Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly ("the Subcommittee") on the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders.

Background

2. According to the Administration, the primary objective of the Government's elderly care policy is to help elders age in place. To this end, the Government provides a range of subsidised supporting services, including centre-based day care services provided by the 59 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly and home-based services provided by 85 service teams. They cover personal care, nursing care, rehabilitation exercises, meal delivery and escort services, etc. Users include both elders who wish to stay in the community and those who are on the waiting list for subsidised residential care places.

3. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2010-2011 Budget the introduction of the pilot scheme to enhance the home care services for elders on the waiting list for nursing home ("NH") places.

Deliberations by members

4. At the meeting on 8 March 2010, the Panel was briefed on the pilot scheme on home care services for frail elders. Members noted that about 29% of elders on the waiting list for subsidised NH places were staying at home. Among them, about 36% were using community care services subsidised by the Government. Considering that the majority of elders waiting for NH places were severely

impaired, the Administration advised that, as announced in the 2010-2011 Budget, a one-off funding of \$55 million would be sought under the Lotteries Fund for implementing a three-year pilot scheme on home care services for frail elders waiting for subsidised NH places. The new services would be tried out in six regions namely Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong, Kowloon City and Sham Shui Po districts, where relatively large number of elders were waiting for NH places. The three-year pilot scheme was expected to commence in 2010-2011 and serve a total of 550 elders. The expected number of service users was estimated based on the number of elders waiting for subsidised NH places in the districts concerned.

5. While welcoming the pilot scheme, some members cautioned that the pilot home care services could not cater for the specific needs of elders according to their different kinds of caring needs nor relieve the burden and pressure faced by the family carers in taking care of those elders who required very intensive care at home. Members took a strong view that the pilot home care services should not be regarded as a substitute for the provision of additional residential care places.

6. The Administration advised members that the impairment level and care needs of elders who were on the waiting list for subsidised residential care services were assessed under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. Under the pilot scheme, personalised home care services with greater emphasis on the rehabilitation and nursing care elements would be provided to frail elders. The services would be delivered through NGOs or social enterprises with experience in elderly care and established service networks in the districts concerned, and would be subsidised by the Government according to a fee-charging scale to be set by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"). Members were further advised that elders who joined the pilot scheme would remain on the waiting list for subsidised residential care services. As undertaken in the Chief Executive's 2009-2010 Policy Address, the Government would provide some 1 000 subsidised residential care places for the elderly, including about 800 NH places, in the 2010-2011 Budget. In addition, some 1 000 residential care places for the elderly would be provided upon completion of the 12 development projects for the construction of new contract residential care homes for the elderly.

7. Some members were concerned about the long-term commitment of the Government in providing the enhanced home care services given that one-off funding was provided for the services. The Administration advised that it was open minded on the service scope of the pilot scheme and did not rule out the possibility of increasing the quota of service users or expanding the pilot scheme to cover all districts if the scheme was proven effective. There would be an interim review to be followed by a final review upon the completion of the pilot scheme. Should the review findings of the pilot scheme be encouraging, the Administration would consider financing the projects under the recurrent funding and extending the scheme to other districts after the three-year pilot period. The Administration further advised that in order to allow potential service operators to

make suggestions on the service content and delivery mode for the pilot scheme, SWD would invite service proposals through a non-committal Expression of Interest ("EOI") exercise. In the light of the proposals received, SWD would finalise the detailed service specifications and invite qualified operators to submit formal service proposals.

8. At the Subcommittee meeting on 28 June 2010 when the subject of community care and support services for the elderly was discussed, members were advised that the Administration had conducted in March 2010 a non-committal EOI exercise to invite service proposals from NGOs or social enterprises with experience in elderly care and established service networks in the districts concerned. It was examining the suggestion received during the EOI exercise with a view to finalising the detailed service specifications in August 2010, inviting qualified operators to submit formal service proposals and commencing service in early 2011.

9. The Administration would revert to the Panel on the service content and delivery mode for the pilot scheme at the meeting on 12 July 2010.

Relevant papers

10. Members are invited to access the Legislative Council website at <http://www.legco.gov.hk/> to view the Administration's papers for and the relevant minutes of meetings of the Panel on 8 March 2010 and the Subcommittee on 28 June 2010.

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