

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Labour and Welfare
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
for Examination of the 2011-12 Draft Estimates
to be held on 24 March 2011**

Welfare and Women

Chairman and Honourable Members,

In 2011-12, government recurrent spending on social welfare and women's interests will reach \$42.2 billion, accounting for 17.4% of the total recurrent government expenditure of the same year, second only to education. In comparison with the revised estimate for 2010-11, there is an increase of 11% (i.e. \$4.2 billion), representing the largest rise among all policy areas. This reflects our commitment to supporting the disadvantaged. Providing support to the elderly and those with disabilities is our main focus in caring for people's livelihood this year as unveiled in the Budget Speech. Now, let me highlight how our Bureau will make use of the resources.

Strengthening elderly care services

2. In 2011-12, the Government's estimated expenditure on elderly services, excluding that on public housing and public health services, amounts to \$4.39 billion, representing an increase of \$460 million (or 11.8%) compared with the revised estimate of \$3.93 billion last year. Additional resources allocated are for implementing a series of new measures to strengthen elderly care services in terms of both quality and quantity.

Increase the provision of subsidised residential care places for frail elders

3. In response to the trend of an ageing population, the Government has been allocating additional resources to increase the provision of subsidised residential care places in recent years. In 2011-12, the Government will increase recurrent funding by \$131 million (full year) to provide 1 270 additional subsidised residential care places, including –

- (a) \$69 million additional recurrent funding for increasing a total of 234 subsidised nursing home (NH) places and 243 long-term care (LTC) places offering a continuum of care, to be achieved by raising the ratio of NH places in existing contract residential care

homes for the elderly (RCHEs), utilising available space in existing subvented RCHEs and constructing a new contract RCHE; and

- (b) \$62 million additional recurrent funding for providing 793 higher-quality care-and-attention (i.e. EA1) places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS).

These places will come into service gradually from 2011-12 to 2014-15. These are over and above our commitment to supply more than 1 000 new places by the end of the 2013-14 financial year. In other words, about 2 300 residential care places will come into service within four years.

Enhance the quality of private RCHEs participating in EBPS

4. Since physiotherapy and rehabilitation training are provided to elderly residents in most of the subvented RCHEs, in order to enhance the quality of private RCHEs participating in EBPS, the Government will increase recurrent funding by \$40 million (full year) in 2011-12 to raise the unit subsidy of EA1 places, so that the concerned RCHEs can arrange physiotherapy treatment and rehabilitation training for frail elders. The new initiative will benefit more than 3 600 elders who are occupying EA1 places. It will also help enhance the quality of private RCHEs and encourage more quality private homes to join EBPS.

Strengthen the support for demented and infirm elders

5. We strive to provide comprehensive, user-oriented and integrated LTC services for demented and infirm elders. We will allocate an additional \$45 million recurrent funding, of which \$29 million will be used to increase the amount of Dementia Supplement (DS) provided to subvented RCHEs and private RCHEs participating in EBPS, and to provide DS to day care centres/units for the first time. It is estimated that about 4 500 demented elders residing in RCHEs and about 440 elders using day care services will benefit. The remaining \$16 million will be used to increase the amount of Infirmary Care Supplement for subvented RCHEs and EBPS homes. It is estimated that more than 1 300 infirm elders will benefit.

Increase the provision of day care and home care service places

6. To support elders who age in place, we will increase recurrent funding by \$76 million in 2011-12 to provide 1 500 additional Enhanced Home and Community Care Services (EHCCS) places and 185 day care service places for the elderly. The additional places are expected to come

into operation within 2011-12 and 2012-13. The additional EHCCS places represents a significant 32% increase over the existing provision of 4 699 places.

Territory-wide implementation of the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients

7. In collaboration with the Hospital Authority (HA), the Government launched the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients (IDSP) on a trial basis in 2008 to provide one-stop support services for elderly patients discharged from hospitals and also for their carers (including pre-discharge planning, post-discharge rehabilitation, home support services, and carer training), with a view to reducing the chance of unplanned hospital re-admission, enabling the elders to continue to age in the community and providing further support to their carers. As the response to IDSP has been positive, the Government will allocate an additional \$148 million recurrent funding to make it a regular service, and strive to extend its coverage from the current three districts to all districts within 2011-12. It is also expected that the number of elders served per year will increase from 8 000 to 33 000.

8. These initiatives will help address the growing demand for subsidised residential and community care services arising from an ageing population, and further enhance the quality of elderly care services.

Enhancing rehabilitation and support services for persons with disabilities and their carers

9. The rehabilitation policy of Hong Kong aims to promote the development of the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their full integration into the community. In 2011-12, the overall recurrent expenditure for rehabilitation services will be around \$3.694 billion, up 10% over the revised estimates of \$3.357 billion for the current financial year. Specifically, additional allocation is provided for various rehabilitation services, medical social service and rehaus services.

Increase the number of places of rehabilitation services

10. The Government will provide additional funding of about \$100 million in 2011-12 to enhance various rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.

11. Pre-school services provide early training and support for children with disabilities (including autistic children) and their families. There are 5 845 places at present. In the Budget Speech, an additional allocation of \$36.58 million is proposed for providing 610 new places. Coupled with the allocation for recurrent expenditure already earmarked, the Government will provide a total of 926 additional places for pre-school services in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

12. Residential care services are also provided for persons with disabilities who cannot live independently and those who cannot be adequately cared for by their families/carers. There are 11 682 subvented residential care places in 2010-11. In 2011-12, additional funding of \$13.6 million will be allocated to provide 91 new places for residential care services. Coupled with the allocation for recurrent expenditure already earmarked, the Government will provide a total of 1 046 additional residential care places in 2010-11 (576 places) and 2011-12 (470 places). In tandem with the implementation of the licensing scheme for residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs), the Government has launched the pilot Bought Place Scheme for private RCHDs with a view to encouraging private operators of RCHDs to upgrade the service standard of these homes, shortening the waiting time for services by increasing the overall supply of subsidised residential care places, and helping the market develop more service options. With the allocation earmarked under the Lotteries Fund, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will purchase some 150 to 233 residential care places.

13. To strengthen the abilities of persons with disabilities in securing suitable employment, the Government strives to provide them with vocational training and employment support services. At present, there are a total of 16 629 places for day training and vocational rehabilitation services. Additional funding of \$17.54 million will be allocated for providing 251 new places for day training vocational rehabilitation services in 2011-12. Coupled with the allocation for recurrent expenditure already earmarked, the Government will provide a total of 986 places for day training and vocational rehabilitation services in 2010-11 and 2011-12.

Strengthen rehasub service

14. In tandem with the Government's on-going efforts to improve the accessibility of public transport for persons with disabilities, Rehasub provides point-to-point scheduled and dial-a-ride transport services for persons with disabilities who have difficulties in using public transport. The rehasub fleet currently comprises 119 vehicles, running 76 scheduled routes,

three feeder routes and the Dial-a-ride service. Having regard to service demand and to enhance service quality, the Government will provide additional funding of about \$18.89 million to increase the rebus fleet to 123 by acquiring four new buses, replace 17 old ones, and procure a new server system and a new uninterruptible power supply system for its information management system in 2011-12. The Government will also allocate \$40.94 million to subsidise the recurrent expenditure of the rebus service. This allocation represents more than 80% of its operating cost.

Enhancing social rehabilitation services and medical social services for persons with mental health problems

15. The Government is mindful of the needs of persons with mental health problems and their families/carers, and keeps under regular review the operation and provision of community support services in response to changing demand. As pledged under the 2009 Policy Address, SWD has since October 2010 revamped the existing community support services and set up Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness across the territory with a view to providing district-based and one-stop integrated services. In 2011-12, the Government will allocate \$39.37 million to strengthen the manpower of these centres to provide comprehensive and accessible services to persons in need, and to dovetail with the HA's "Case Management Programme" to provide suitable support for patients with severe mental illness living in the community.

16. The Government will also allocate \$14.6 million to provide 26 psychiatric medical social workers to enhance the psychiatric medical social services to dovetail HA's new initiatives for ex-mentally ill patients. In addition, additional funding of \$2.15 million will be allocated to provide five psychiatric medical social workers to enhance the services for autistic children and their families. With the addition of 31 psychiatric medical social workers, the total number of psychiatric medical social workers will be increased to 243 in 2011-12.

Upgrading barrier-free facilities of Government premises

17. In response to the Formal Investigation Report on Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises released by the Equal Opportunities Commission on 7 June 2010, the Government will accelerate the upgrading of the barrier-free facilities in existing Government and Housing Authority premises and facilities. We will carry out a comprehensive retrofitting

programme costing \$1.3 billion to upgrade the barrier-free facilities in about 3 700 existing Government premises and facilities and about 300 premises under the Housing Authority. Among them, around 3 300 premises and facilities will have retrofitting works completed by June 2012.

18. Apart from upgrading the barrier-free facilities in terms of hardware, the Government will also strengthen the daily management of these facilities and raise the awareness on accessibility issues of the venue management on the software side. To this end, with effect from April this year, individual bureaux and departments will designate an Access Co-ordinator to facilitate the coordination of accessibility issues within the bureaux/departments. Moreover, an Access Officer would also be appointed for each venue/facility to handle accessibility issues at the venue.

Social Security

19. The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the Social Security Allowance Scheme form the mainstay of the social security system in Hong Kong. Excluding one-off additional payments, the estimated total expenditure of these two schemes in 2011-12 is \$29.4 billion, which is around 12% higher than the revised estimate last year, representing about 12% of the total recurrent government expenditure and about 70% of the recurrent welfare expenditure.

Providing Support to Elders, Persons with Disabilities and Persons in Ill-health

20. We propose to raise the standard rates under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme for adult recipients aged below 60 with disabilities and in ill-health to the same level as those for elderly CSSA recipients in similar health conditions. This will more effectively help the recipients concerned. The proposal will involve an additional annual recurrent expenditure of about \$328 million and is expected to benefit about 55 000 recipients.

21. A Community Living Supplement is currently payable to severely disabled CSSA recipients. We propose to extend the supplement to cover recipients with disabilities at non-severe level, recipients in ill-health and elders. We also propose to increase the monthly supplement from the existing \$120 to \$250 to better support the recipients' stay in the community. This proposal will involve an additional annual recurrent expenditure of about

\$590 million and is expected to benefit about 190 000 recipients.

Providing extra allowance to recipients of CSSA, Old Age Allowance and Disability Allowance

22. To help ease the pressure of inflation and rising prices on people's livelihood, we propose to provide an extra allowance to CSSA recipients, equal to one month of the standard rate CSSA payments; and an extra allowance to Old Age Allowance (OAA) and Disability Allowance (DA) recipients, equal to one month of the allowances. This proposal will involve an additional expenditure of about \$1.9 billion. We estimate that about 1.1 million people (including 460 000 CSSA recipients, 510 000 OAA recipients and 130 000 DA recipients) will benefit.

Enhancing services for children and youth

Regularise and extend the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project

23. Since October 2008, SWD has been implementing the three-year Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP) on a pilot basis using a total of \$45 million additional funding provided in the 2008-09 Budget. Under the NSCCP, carers in the neighbourhood are hired and trained to take care of children at the carers' homes or at centres run by the service operators. The pilot NSCCP is coming to an end in March this year. SWD has conducted a review on its operation and effectiveness in late 2010. The review findings show that the NSCCP has achieved its objectives and is a desirable model for flexible child care service worth further pursuing. The Government has decided to regularise the NSCCP and extend its coverage from the current 11 administrative districts of SWD to all 18 districts to benefit more families in need. Following the regularisation and extension of the service coverage, the NSCCP will be provided on an on-going basis with recurrent funding of around \$33 million per year. The number of child care places that it can provide at one time will increase substantially by 280 from at least 440 to at least 720.

Extend the Comprehensive Child Development Service

24. The Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) is a joint initiative of the Labour and Welfare Bureau, Education Bureau, Department of Health, HA and SWD launched in 2005. The service makes use of Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) and other service units as

platform to identify at an early stage at-risk pregnant women and needy mothers and children. Mothers and children so identified are referred to the appropriate health and welfare service units to receive follow-up and support services. The CCDS currently covers about half of the total population in Hong Kong. To enhance the support for needy children and their families, we will extend the CCDS to all 18 districts. Additional recurrent funding involved will be around \$48 million each year.

Launch pilot Cyber Youth Outreaching Projects

25. In view of the changing lifestyle and service needs of young people, SWD will subsidise NGOs to implement the Cyber Youth Outreaching Projects on a pilot basis with funding support from the Lotteries Fund. Under the projects, social workers will reach out to youths in need, particularly those identified as at-risk or hidden, through the internet for timely intervention and provision of support services. The pilot projects will be implemented for three years from 2011 to 2014. SWD will also commission a consultant to conduct an evaluation study to examine the effectiveness of the pilot project and the feasibility of interfacing this new service mode with the existing youth services and make recommendations on the way forward. A total amount of \$17 million has been earmarked from the Lotteries Fund for the pilot projects and evaluation study.

Women's Interests

26. The Government has been working closely with the Women's Commission to promote women's well-being and interests through a three-pronged strategy, viz. the provision of an enabling environment, empowerment of women and public education. In 2010-11, with the assistance of the Commission and after consultation with the public and relevant stakeholders, the Government prepared its third report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Hong Kong. In 2011-12, we have earmarked \$26.7 million to promote women's interests and support the Commission's work, representing an increase of 29% (\$6 million) compared with the revised estimate of \$20.7 million last year. The provision includes resources for the implementation of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme to encourage women to pursue life-long learning and self-development, as well as the production of TV series to enhance the public's awareness of gender-related issue.

27. Chairman, this concludes my opening remarks. My colleagues and I shall be happy to respond to questions from Members.

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